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Fellowship adopts European strategy,
plans to appoint first 'missioners'

By Greg Warner

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship moved a step closer to doing mission work in Europe March 13 when its Coordinating Council adopted a strategy for partnership with European Baptists and picked its first two "missioners."

Members of the council were told they soon will be asked to employ Charles and Kathie Thomas, the Southern Baptist missionaries to Romania who resigned in January to protest what they said was a new agenda for missions at the Foreign Mission Board.

Jimmy Allen, co-chairperson of the council's global missions ministry group, said appointment of the Thomases will await a formal request from the Baptist union in France, where the couple served as FMB missionaries for 17 years and plan to return under Fellowship sponsorship.

"The detail of that has to be done with French Baptists," Allen told Associated Baptist Press.

Under Fellowship policy for Europe, the moderate-conservative organization will send "missioners" only at the request of the European Baptist Federation and/or the Baptist union in each country.

Allen told council members the Fellowship has already received a "verbal request" from the EBF and the French union. The council likely will be asked to vote on appointing the Thomases at its next meeting in late April.

To lay the groundwork for the Fellowship's European mission effort, the council endorsed the five principles of "mission partnership" adopted by European Baptist leaders in January and voted to negotiate formal contracts defining the "working relationships" with European Baptist groups.

The council also agreed to start an annual global-missions offering to help fund their projects. The global missions ministry group, which expects to spend about \$900,000 on worldwide projects in 1992, asked the council to budget \$2.5 million for the expanded mission efforts in 1993, with half of

that earmarked for European missions.

At its last meeting in January, the Coordinating Council voted to hire Southern Baptist missionaries in Europe who are dissatisfied with the current direction of the Foreign Mission Board and who fit into the Fellowship's strategy for Europe.

Meanwhile, Charles and Kathie Thomas, who last September became Southern Baptists' first missionaries in Romania, resigned in January in protest of the FMB's defunding of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland. The defunding represented an abandonment of traditional mission philosophy by FMB trustees, the Thomases said.

"They didn't know we were voting (to hire missionaries) and we didn't know they were resigning," recalled Fellowship moderator John Hewett.

Hewett and other Fellowship leaders later met with Charles Thomas while on a February fact-finding trip to Europe, which led to the decision to appoint the Thomases. "They are among the most courageous people I know," Hewett told council members.

In addition to appointing the Thomases, the Fellowship's strategy calls for hiring a stateside missions coordinator and European-based coordinator for missions on the continent. No candidates were announced, but Fellowship leaders acknowledge they would like to hire Keith Parker, former FMB area director for Europe, to fill the overseas post.

Parker and Isam Ballenger, FMB vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, announced in January they will take early retirement because they can no longer work with FMB trustees, whom the pair said are using the FMB to pursue a fundamentalist "global agenda."

Although both Ballenger and Parker were forced by trustees to leave their FMB duties earlier than planned, both are still on the FMB payroll.

"We've not offered Keith Parker a job and he can't even talk to anybody until July," explained Allen.

Ballenger is expected to be elected to the faculty of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (Va.) in April.

Allen acknowledged the Fellowship has received "free consultation from Isam Ballenger and Keith Parker" in drafting its European strategy.

Fellowship leaders said adopting the European statement of principles for mission partnership was critical for the future of the Fellowship's work in Europe.

The statement was drafted by leaders of 22 national Baptist unions in Europe, who met in Dorfweil, Germany, in January. It is a response to the FMB's defunding of the Ruschlikon seminary, which is owned by the European Baptist Federation.

The European leaders said they consider the principles to be essential for any "real partnership" in missions and asked the FMB for response. Trustees of the FMB did not respond to the statement specifically but said they are open to discussing future relationships with the Europeans.

"The Foreign Mission Board absolutely gave the back of their hand to the Dorfweil statement," said Hewett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C.

The five principles for partnership call for mutual respect and courtesy, spiritual freedom that recognizes diversity, moral integrity that honors commitments made, genuine consultation that aims at mutual consent, and reciprocal sharing "in which the partners learn, work and grow together."

"What we're saying is those principles are our principles," Hewett said before the statement was adopted unanimously by the council.

"We think it is very important that we affirm this commitment," said Jean Bond of Mississippi, a former FMB missionary and co-chairperson of the global missions group. "The Europeans said to us, 'We are interested in the partnership and in knowing what you feel about these principles.'"

"This is the sticking point," added Cecil Sherman of Fort Worth, Texas,

who said the Europeans have been hurt by their dealings with the FMB. "The basis for our working with them is this (statement), and they are waiting to see if we are going to play fair," said Sherman, who was elected coordinator of the Fellowship in January.

Participants in the Fellowship's general assembly, set for April 30-May 2 in Fort Worth, Texas, will be asked to approve the partnership statement, as well as the Fellowship's purpose and strategy statement for global missions, which was adopted by the council in January.

The global missions offering, approved unanimously by the council, will not be timed to compete with existing mission offerings of the Southern Baptist Convention. However, according to the recommendation adopted, churches that don't want to support those established offerings will be offered alternatives.

Allen said the Fellowship will need to provide \$1.25 million in each of the next three years in order to fund the European initiative. That will provide support for up to 10 missionary couples, he said. The Fellowship is expected to offer financial support for FMB missionaries currently serving at the Ruschlikon seminary if they resign or are fired.

To "kick start" the European effort, the global missions ministry group said it would seek 100 churches to pledge \$1,000 a month for three years. "If enough of us do that we can make this happen," Allen said.

Council members agreed to spend some of the Fellowship's \$165,000 in "safety net" funds to support Southern Baptist missionaries who leave the Foreign Mission Board to work for the Fellowship. However, they also decided to draft guidelines for use of the funds, which were intended for terminated Southern Baptist agency employees, and to consider phasing out the fund.

The potential hiring of the Thomases and other missionaries does not violate the mission purpose statement adopted in January, the council was told. Although the statement called for hiring missionaries for "specified periods of time," council leaders said it did not preclude employing long-term missionaries if the term of service is defined. Allen noted European Baptists are not interested in short-term missionaries.

While the Fellowship's initial missions effort will focus on Europe, other mission fields will not be ignored, leaders said. Half of the \$2.5 million requested for missions in 1993 would be spent on non-European projects, including \$300,000 each for three emphases: urban missions, unreached people groups and ministry to internationals in the States and overseas.

Another \$200,000 is targeted in 1993 for hunger, other relief and development, while \$150,000 is earmarked for administration. Mission leaders admitted the plans to spend that money have not been detailed yet.

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Fellowship council hears
words of advice, warning

By Greg Warner

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship should welcome compromise but avoid manipulation, leaders of the organization told its Coordinating Council.

"Compromise is sometimes good, sometimes bad. Telling the difference...is an exceedingly spiritual exercise," Cecil Sherman told fellow members of the council, which met March 12-14 in Atlanta.

In January, the council elected Sherman, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, as the Fellowship's first coordinator, the organization's top administrator. He will begin his duties April 1.

Sherman, who led a devotional during the council meeting, said he grew up in a religious context which always viewed compromise "as a wicked thing." He said he later realized, however, that "all of us are into some kind of compromise, whether we own up to it or not." While everyone is "pulled by ideals," he said, all make concessions along the way.

Sherman acknowledged there are differences of opinion within the 82-member Coordinating Council about what Fellowship should be and do. As the one-year-old moderate-conservative organization moves from "raw idealism" to the nuts and bolts of ministry, he said, compromise will be necessary.

"When you flesh out ideals, that's when we you need devotionals on compromise," he concluded.

Later Fellowship moderator John Hewett said the organization must be on guard against manipulation from within.

"A process this open is always open to manipulation," warned Hewett, who will soon complete his term as the Fellowship's first moderator, a one-year elected position that entails chairmanship of the council.

The Coordinating Council, the most powerful entity within the Fellowship, sets the budget, conducts business and otherwise functions on behalf of the organization between annual general assemblies. Most council members are nominated by participants in the state and regional caucuses held during the annual assembly, but participation in the caucuses is not controlled.

"I hope we don't have people who will want to capture the Fellowship," Hewett said, noting Fellowship participants had only recently left behind the "manipulation and control" of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Hewett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., warned that if he discovers manipulation of the system within the Fellowship's ranks, "I will go public and tell everything I know.... That's not fair to the spirit of this organization."

Council members spent most of their three-day meeting conducting business, which included laying the groundwork for the Fellowship's new mission work in Europe. Among other matters:

-- Details were announced for the Fellowship's general assembly, set for April 30-May 2 in Fort Worth, Texas. This will be the organization's first meeting in the West. About 6,000 people attended the first assembly last year in Atlanta, which also will be the site of the 1993 gathering.

Despite lingering bitterness over losing the battle for control of the Southern Baptist Convention, assembly speakers have been encouraged not to "bash fundamentalists," Hewett said. "If you are bitter...don't use our platform for your therapy."

At least eight Southern Baptist agencies and institutions will buy exhibit space at the assembly's resource fair, including four Southern Baptist seminaries and the Sunday School Board. At least 45 exhibitors have committed to participate. Several seminaries and colleges will hold alumni meetings.

-- A breakfast for laypersons will be held May 2, the last day of the assembly, sponsored by the council's ministry group for equipping the laity. Also during the assembly, the group will conduct workshops to help churches start denominational relations committees.

-- The council's literature ministry group will give assembly participants a list of church curriculum materials available from a variety of sources, since some churches are seeking alternatives to materials from the Sunday School Board.

Roger Lovette of Memphis, Tenn., co-chairperson of the literature group, said his committee had studied the offerings of 17 curriculum publishers. "The best alternative for us is Smyth & Helwys by far," he said, referring to the new Baptist publisher based in Greenville, S.C. Smyth & Helwys now publishes an adult Sunday school curriculum and will unveil a fully graded

curriculum in the fall. Lovette encouraged churches "to look closely at what they are doing."

-- Council members learned the Fellowship's first scholarships for theological education will be awarded immediately to students at three schools. The new Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (Va.) will receive money for two \$1,000 scholarships for the current semester, while Candler School of Theology at Emory University and Duke Divinity School each will receive money for one \$1,000 scholarship.

The Richmond seminary, founded by the Alliance of Baptists, "deserves a substantial portion of our support," said Paul Duke of Kirkwood, Mo., co-chairperson of the council's theological education ministry group. He added that Candler and Duke are the only non-Baptist schools with specialized programs for Baptist students.

For the 1992-93 school year, the Fellowship will award \$15,000 in scholarships to at least six BTSR students, while Candler and Duke will be offered \$5,000 each for Southern Baptist students. Duke said another \$5,000 will be reserved for Southern Baptist students seeking theological education at any other schools, except the six Southern Baptist seminaries, "which are already subsidized" by the SBC.

-- Council members heard they can expect to take in \$6.9 million during 1992 in support of the Fellowship's budget. The projection is based on Fellowship receipts for January and February, which totaled \$1.2 million. However, about \$5.1 million of that amount is budgeted to go to traditional Southern Baptist agencies, leaving about \$1.8 million for Fellowship programs. Several council members underscored the need for Fellowship churches to shift their contributions from the regular budget, which primarily funds Southern Baptist agencies, to the other two budgets, which provide more money for Fellowship projects.

-- The council approved the formal merger of the Fellowship with the Baptist Cooperative Missions Program, which was established in 1990 to allow churches to bypass normal Southern Baptist channels with their contributions. Since formation of the Fellowship, it has been the recipient of money sent to BCMP.

Directors of BCMP, who also approved the merger March 12, were recognized during the council meeting. Hewett said the directors "went out on a limb" to form BCMP, "without which this movement wouldn't exist."

-- Plans were announced for a special emphasis on world hunger, probably in the fall. Hunger-awareness materials will be produced and distributed to churches.

-- Council members discussed the need for a videotape describing the Fellowship and its ministries. The council's communications workgroup is seeking churches and individuals to underwrite the cost of production.

-- A 12-person committee was appointed to continue discussions with the Alliance of Baptists about a possible merger with the Fellowship.

In a press conference after the council meeting, Sherman described the Fellowship and Alliance as "different expressions of the same group." "This conversation will go on for a while," he said. "I don't know if it will lead to a merger or no, but the conversation will remain necessary and instructive for both groups."

-- Council members were told the Fellowship has been granted "agency status" by the Southern Baptist Annuity Board, which will qualify the Fellowship to participate in the Annuity Board's insurance and retirement programs.

-- The council voted to study the feasibility of providing endorsement to chaplains that serve in civilian settings. Endorsement for military chaplains is impossible, the council was told, because the Fellowship is not recognized as a denomination by the U.S. Defense Department.

Fellowship to send Ballenger
on farewell trip to Europe

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Isam Ballenger will visit his former mission field on behalf of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship but not to recruit missionaries for the group's European mission initiative, CBF leaders say.

Ballenger, a former Foreign Mission Board vice president, announced in January he would take early retirement rather than continue working with FMB trustees, whom he said were using the missions agency to advance the "global agenda" of Southern Baptist fundamental-conservatives.

As a result of his comments, Ballenger, who was vice president for FMB work in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, was denied the customary farewell visit to the mission field by angry trustees, who said they were concerned Ballenger would repeat his criticism to missionaries on the field.

He now is expected to visit Europe at the request and expense of the Fellowship, which announced in January it would hire some of the FMB's missionaries in Europe who fit into the Fellowship's mission strategy.

"It is our expectation that those conversations with missionaries and national (Baptist) leaders will share information and help communicate and interpret what the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is doing in Europe," said Jimmy Allen, co-chairperson of the Fellowship's global missions group. Allen and other CBF leaders spoke to reporters following the March 12-14 meeting of the Fellowship's Coordinating Council.

Ballenger, who left the board in February and is expected to be elected professor of missions and world religions at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond (Va.) in April, has consulted with Allen's committee on the CBF's European strategy.

Although Ballenger likely will visit parts of the Middle East and North Africa, the Fellowship will pay for only the European portion of his trip, Allen said.

Allen emphasized Ballenger "is not recruiting missionaries for the Fellowship." John Hewett, Fellowship moderator, agreed.

"We need someone who knows Europe very well who can bring us up to date on where European Baptists are," Hewett said. "But he sure has not been empowered to recruit missionaries. We need to be real prudent that we don't recruit faster than we can support."

The Fellowship is expected to place its first two missionaries in Europe by the end of the year and hopes to appoint up to 20 more in 1993.

In a telephone interview from Richmond, Ballenger said he would be willing to make the trip under Fellowship sponsorship.

"Probably my biggest disappointment (in leaving the FMB) was the action of the trustees not to let me return to Europe," said Ballenger, a 28-year missions veteran. "They thought I would speak ill of them. But I think their action has spoken louder than I would have spoken. Some Europeans said that it certainly shows a lack of professionalism on the part of trustees."

"I do feel a need to take leave of the missionaries and nationals with whom I've worked all these years," he added. "And I feel the need to encourage them rather than discourage them."

"I would want to avoid creating divisiveness -- any more divisiveness -- in Europe and certainly would not want to create divisiveness among the missionaries. I would want to encourage those who are with the Foreign Mission Board and not lure anyone away from the board."

He added, however, he would be glad to help missionaries dissatisfied with the FMB to find ways "to continue in service," even through the Fellowship.

In addition to hiring missionaries, the Fellowship plans to employ a global missions coordinator. But CBF leaders declined to speculate on whether

FMB President Keith Parks might eventually fill that role. Parks, who also has criticized recent actions by FMB trustees, is scheduled to meet privately with trustees March 19-20 to determine if he will continue as president.

Fellowship Coordinator Cecil Sherman declined to comment on what the Fellowship would do if Parks is no longer employed by the FMB. "We care very much what happens to Keith Parks, but that does not speak to the need to fill this (global missions) position," Sherman said.

Hewett added the CBF "is not playing cat and mouse with the mission coordinator's job" and would have filled it sooner if the money had been available.

"Right now, it's my judgment that it's presumptuous for us to do very much more than to pray for Keith and Helen Jean Parks and hope they can emerge with some measure of human dignity and Christian charity next weekend in Dallas," Hewett said. "We care very deeply about what happens to Keith Parks, but our mission strategy is not dependent on what happens to Keith Parks."

Fellowship leaders reported on meetings they had recently with leaders of the European Baptist Federation. Sherman said the talks with the Europeans convinced him "we were in the company of like spirits."

He said the Fellowship is committed to "doing missions in Baptist ways," which includes "a high regard" for the people they are trying to reach and the Baptists with whom they cooperate.

Not only did the CBF leaders talk to the Europeans about sending Fellowship missionaries to Europe, Hewett said, "we also asked them to send us some missionaries."

"I think that's the new world order for Christian missions," he explained. "Missions is not a one-way street across the Atlantic going east. It goes in every direction where there are Christians willing to cooperate with each other."

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Baptist volunteers involved
in multiple relief efforts

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP)--From Southeast Texas to the Middle East to the former Soviet republics, Southern Baptists are ministering through multiple disaster relief projects.

On March 8, volunteers aboard the Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Mobile Unit established an emergency food service for Houston-area flood victims. The mobile unit is an 18-wheel, tractor-trailer rig equipped with a self-contained field kitchen.

Headquartered on the grounds of St. George Catholic Church, near Houston's Intercontinental Airport, Baptist volunteers are preparing more than 1,000 hot meals a day for persons forced from their homes in floodplains near the San Jacinto River, according to Bob Dixon, executive director of the Texas Baptist Men organization and coordinator of the Texas Baptist Emergency Task Force.

At about the same time, the Baptists' Temporary Emergency Child Care Unit was set up at a north Houston bank. TECC has been approved by the state's Department of Human Resources as a licensed child-care center in disasters. Child care is offered by Texas Baptist volunteers, providing parents time to clean their homes and businesses.

And as rains swelled the Trinity River 50 miles to the east, the Southeast Texas Baptist Regional Disaster Relief Mobile Unit was set up at

Keneffick Baptist Church, near Liberty, Texas, to prepare meals for about 700 flood victims daily.

A few days earlier, at the request of the Foreign Mission Board, six Southern Baptist volunteers journeyed to Ajloun, Jordan, to repair a Jordanian Baptist conference center damaged by an ice storm.

A series of freak winter storms in recent weeks felled massive trees which snapped electrical and telephone wires, according to John LaNoue, Texas director of Baptist Young Men and off-site coordinator of the volunteers. Frozen pipes also burst, disrupting plumbing at the center.

The volunteers are clearing the conference center property of fallen trees, replacing overhead electrical and telephone wires with underground wiring, and repairing damaged plumbing. They arrived in Amman, Jordan, on March 3 and started work in Ajloun just six days after the Foreign Mission Board relayed the request to Texas Baptists through the SBC Brotherhood Commission.

Former Southern Baptist foreign missionary Tommy Adkins of Fort Worth is team leader and translator. Adkins served in Jordan in the early 1980s after a lengthy missions tenure in Gaza and Hong Kong.

Adkins said Graydon Hardister, Southern Baptist worker in Amman, Jordan, told him the area has received five heavy snowfalls since Christmas. All roads into Ajloun were closed for one week, but Hardister finally was able on Feb. 28 to deliver food to Baptists stranded at the conference center. The city was without electricity until March 8.

"When we arrived in Ajloun... (Southern Baptist worker) Charles Browning told us that there were 85 trees damaged, and at the peak, the snow was 42 inches deep. Enough had melted for the roads to be passable," Adkins reported in a March 10 fax message.

Later this month, Brotherhood representatives will conduct a fact-finding tour of several former Soviet republics to locate sites for about 50 potential construction and food distribution projects.

The fact-finding mission will begin a few weeks before the launching of Project Brotherhood, a food distribution effort in Moscow initiated by the Baptist World Alliance and coordinated by the Brotherhood Commission. About 40,000 families are expected to benefit from the delivery and distribution of 570 tons of USDA surplus food.

Five-person volunteer teams from Tennessee, Missouri, Georgia, Mississippi and Texas will begin arriving in Moscow on April 11 at two-week intervals to work alongside representatives of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in repackaging food, monitoring distribution and maintaining records.

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Bush-Quayle letter to church
encourages campaign support

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A Bush-Quayle re-election letter mailed to a Baptist church in Oklahoma has raised questions about whether the president is encouraging a church to do what the Internal Revenue Code forbids: support or oppose a political candidate.

A March 3 letter from President George Bush addressed to "Church First Baptist" in Stillwater, Okla., asks for support "to finish the revolution we began in 1980."

In the pre-Super Tuesday letter, Bush notes that he has "promoted strong traditional family values and protection for the unborn, while no Democrat candidate is prolife. I support lower taxes and less regulation. I have

appointed conservative judges who interpret the law, not make it."

Rodney McGothlin, pastor of the Stillwater church, questioned the Bush-Quayle campaign's apparent solicitation of church support.

"It does sound as if the president is asking us to do something illegal," McGothlin wrote in a letter to the Baptist Joint Committee.

McGothlin cited a March 5 article in the Baptist Messenger, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, that outlined what churches and other tax-exempt organizations can and cannot do in political campaigns.

McGothlin also noted the Bush letter's emphasis on issues such as abortion and traditional family values and said it appears to be targeted at a specific audience.

"These are things we're hearing about among Baptists in Oklahoma," he told Associated Baptist Press.

In response to McGothlin's letter, BJC General Counsel Oliver Thomas wrote the president asking him to correct any impression that the Bush-Quayle campaign is seeking re-election support from churches.

"If this was an isolated incident in which a single letter was accidentally mailed to a church, little harm has resulted," Thomas wrote. "If, on the other hand, your letter was intentionally sent to a list of churches asking them to do what the tax code forbids -- namely support a political candidate -- it represents a more serious problem."

Thomas wrote that a letter intended for named individuals who happened to be pastors "would be appropriate for a political mailing" and consistent with tax laws. But, he added, the letter to the Stillwater church gave no indication it was intended for an individual rather than a church.

"If, as the pastor of this particular church interpreted it, the letter was intended for the church, you are asking a religious organization not only to take sides in a temporal matter about which people of faith disagree but to take action that, if reported to the IRS, would be likely to result in the loss of the organization's tax exemption," Thomas wrote.

"It would be tragic if a church lost its exempt status as a result of doing something that had not only the blessing but the encouragement of the president of the United States," he added.

Spokesmen for the Bush-Quayle national and Oklahoma campaign offices said they did not know whether the letter was sent to other churches or ministers. A spokesman at the Oklahoma office expressed doubt whether a large list of churches was targeted but said ministers may have been.

In announcing a settlement earlier this year with Jimmy Swaggart Ministries over a 1987 endorsement of then-Republican presidential candidate Pat Robertson, the IRS signaled its intention to monitor churches' compliance with the law's ban against the endorsement or opposition of political candidates by tax-exempt organizations.

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-- By Larry Chesser

Senate measure would provide
incentives for charitable gifts

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate narrowly approved an economic-recovery measure March 13 that would impact charitable donors.

The Senate bill, approved 50-47, would make it more attractive for Americans to donate gifts of appreciated property to charitable institutions.

The Senate tax package (H.R. 4210) would temporarily repeal a 1986 provision that subjected the appreciated portion of some gifts to the alternative minimum tax. The new proposal would provide only a two-year

window, affecting contributions made in 1992 and 1993.

The U.S. House of Representatives previously approved by a narrow margin a similar tax package that contained a provision that would permanently repeal the 1986 rule.

Representatives of charitable organizations, including Baptist institutions, say the 1986 tax provision has caused a decline in large gifts to universities, hospitals and other institutions.

The Senate bill also proposes a permanent extension of present law that limits itemized deductions, including charitable contributions, for higher-income individuals. Itemized deductions for high-income taxpayers are reduced by an amount equaling 3 percent of their adjusted gross income in excess of \$105,250 in 1992.

Brent Walker, associate general counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee, said, "The extension of the 3 percent floor, while unfortunate, doesn't hurt many churches -- yet. But it represents a move in the wrong direction. The next step is likely to be an increase in the 3 percent or a decrease in the \$105,000. That would be a disaster.

"Needless to say, we like the House bill a lot better," he added. "It only extended the 3 percent floor for two years."

A Senate-House conference committee, which must iron out the differences between the two bills, is hurrying to accommodate President Bush's March 20 deadline for the economic-recovery legislation. While Congress may make the deadline, Bush has promised to veto any bill that increases taxes. Both the Senate and House measures would increase taxes for upper-income Americans while providing tax breaks for middle-income and lower-income families.

Given the close votes in both chambers, Congress probably could not override a veto (which takes a two-thirds majority in each chamber), leaving an uncertain future for economic reform legislation.

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--By Pam Parry

Senate bill would repeal
limits on job bias suits

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A Senate panel approved two bills March 11 designed to broaden the Civil Rights Act of 1991 and to repeal caps on damages women can be awarded in job-bias suits.

The 1991 civil rights law allows -- for the first time -- women, the disabled and religious adherents to collect compensatory and punitive damages as victims of discrimination. Previously only victims of intentional racial discrimination were allowed to collect damages beyond attorneys' fees and back wages.

However, the 1991 act imposed limitations on the amount of punitive damages victims of non-racial bias could obtain, with caps ranging from \$50,000 to \$300,000 depending on the company's size. No caps were put on racial bias.

The new bills, approved on a voice vote by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, are designed to give women, the disabled and religious adherents the same legal protections as victims of racial discrimination by lifting those caps.

Supporters of the Civil Rights Act agreed to the caps last year as part of a compromise between Congress and the White House following a heated two-year battle over the bill. The administration opposed the bill and vetoed a similar measure in 1990 because it said the legislation fostered reverse discrimination against whites.

Following intense hearings for Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas in which racial and sexual discrimination became issues, Bush agreed to a "compromise" civil rights bill, which was signed into law Nov. 21.

The two new bills, The Equal Remedies Act of 1991 and the Justice for Wards Cove Workers Act, have not come to the Senate floor for debate.

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-- By Pam Parry

Southern Baptists to serve
as BJC scholars-in-residence

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Jack and Frances Prince, longtime Southern Baptists, will spend the fall as scholars-in-residence at the Baptist Joint Committee.

Jack Prince, who plans to retire this summer as pastor of West Hills Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn., will work with the BJC denominational relations and development department. Frances Prince, assistant commissioner of the Tennessee State Department of Education, will help the BJC with educational and other legislative issues.

At the time of his retirement, Jack Prince will have served 40 years in the pastoral ministry, with 32 of those years at West Hills Baptist Church. A native of Stonega, Va., he holds a bachelor of arts degree from Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., and master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

He has served in a variety of denominational leadership positions, including vice president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

A native of Athens, Tenn., Frances Prince administers a \$90 million budget with the Tennessee State Education Department. As assistant commissioner, she directs an evaluation program for teachers and administrators. A 34-year veteran of elementary school teaching, she earned a bachelor of arts degree in music from Carson-Newman College and has done graduate work at the University of Louisville and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

She has provided leadership in her local church and denomination.

"A wealth of energy, experience and expertise comes to the BJC with the Princes," said James Dunn, BJC executive director. "This sort of gift of themselves is the greatest contribution that can be made to the cause of religious liberty."

The Princes, who have four children, will begin their association with the BJC in September.

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-- By Pam Parry

Criswell fields questions
at Kentucky Bible school

By Mark Wingfield

MAYFIELD, Ky. (ABP) -- Ordaining divorced men is sometimes acceptable but seldom practical, according to W. A. Criswell, who also charged that America lacks moral stamina and Southern Baptist "moderates" are a "dead group."

Criswell, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, spent nearly two hours March 6 answering questions from students of Mid-Continent Baptist Bible College and pastors attending the school's first annual Criswell Preaching Series in Mayfield, Ky.

The legendary 83-year-old pastor spoke to a variety of subjects, ranging from the future of Southern Baptist institutions to the future of America. However, the majority of questions he answered related to the work of the local church and the pastorate.

Among his comments:

-- On divorce. Criswell said he personally has no problem with divorced men serving as pastors or deacons, if there were good reasons for the divorce. However, he said he discourages divorced men from becoming pastors because of inevitable church conflict. First Baptist Church of Dallas does not ordain divorced men, he said.

-- On America. "I think the United States is facing an ultimate bankruptcy. We have already mortgaged our children and our children's children. I do not think America has the inner moral stamina to face the future."

-- On the Southern Baptist Convention controversy. "It's going to continue because of the deep-seated cleavage between us who are Bible-believing and those half-Infidels. In time, they'll gradually move out and be non-committal to anything. They're that way anyway."

-- On missions ventures by SBC moderate-conservatives. Criswell said "moderates" talk about their commitment to missions only to "bolster up their ego." In reality, he said, moderates are "a dead group. They are dead every way you can measure it."

-- On Southern Baptist colleges. Criswell said he has lost hope for the theological integrity of traditional Southern Baptist colleges. "I've washed my hands of them. You're not going to get Baylor back.... There's not a thing you can do about it. It's gone."

The alternative, he said, is to support schools like Mid-Continent and Criswell College in Dallas. Both are private Bible colleges not directly supported by the Southern Baptist Convention or their respective state conventions.

-- On conflict in the church. Criswell said he had to learn the hard way how to deal with church conflicts. "When I was young, I used to confront a situation just like that," he said. "What I do now is carefully pray for God to give me wisdom to go around it."

-- On ethnic church-starting. "There's no difference in them and us," Criswell said. "You have to do it personally, heart-to-heart, home-to-home, family-to-family. It's the same anywhere in the world."

-- On unmarried pastors. Criswell said he thinks it is fine for unmarried men to serve as pastors. "Paul boasted of the fact he didn't have to wag around a wife," he quipped. "Some of the greatest preachers of all time never married."

-- On family. "If I had my life to live over again, I would take more time with my family," he said. "I made a mistake in that. I think any pastor makes a colossal mistake when he neglects his family for the sake of the ministry."

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Preachers are God's gift,
Criswell tells students

MAYFIELD, Ky. (ABP) -- Preachers are God's gift to the church, W. A. Criswell told a Kentucky audience March 6.

Criswell, longtime pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, spoke to students of Mid-Continent Baptist Bible College in Mayfield, Ky., as well as pastors from Western Kentucky and surrounding states. He was the inaugural speaker for the college's Criswell Preaching Series.

"The riches of Christ are not to be found in buildings or monetary strength," he said, "but in God-called preachers.

"The New Testament church moves on the feet of those who preach the Good News. The whole kingdom of God is placed in our hands. If people are saved, it is because we deliver to them the message of God."

The pastor's assignment from God is to preach truth, Criswell said.

He told the students and pastors they should always offer an invitation for decisions when they preach: "Let the preacher preach for a verdict like a lawyer before a jury."

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CLARIFICATION: Please replace the first two paragraphs of the March 12 story "New Orleans Seminary to begin..." with the following:

NEW ORLEANS (ABP) -- In a move to meet what was described as a sizeable educational need, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees voted last week to launch an on-campus bachelor of arts program for older students.

In making the move, the New Orleans school becomes the first Southern Baptist seminary to offer on-campus bachelor of arts and bachelor of general studies degrees, although some of the other seminaries do offer associate-level degrees and equivalency programs. New Orleans leaders said their new program is designed for a yet-unreached market, offering bachelor degrees to students 25 years or older who have not completed a college-level degree.

***** END *****