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Parks says SBC in danger
of losing missions purpose

By Greg Warner

INDIANAPOLIS (ABP) -- Diverted by more than a decade of controversy, Southern Baptists may be abandoning their primary purpose of sharing the gospel with the world, Keith Parks warned the Southern Baptist Convention June 10.

Parks, a missions leader known for his stirring messages, stirred some convention-goers to anger as he blamed Southern Baptists' 13-year preoccupation with denominational differences for eroding their worldwide outreach.

"Has the controversy accelerated our purpose of sharing the gospel with the world?" Parks asked. "I would have to answer 'no!'"

An estimated 200 people walked out in apparent protest during Parks' annual address -- the last he will deliver after 13 years as president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board. A 37-year veteran of global missions, Parks will retire this fall, three years earlier than planned, because of philosophical differences with FMB trustees over how to do missions work overseas.

While some messengers called his address a needed word of warning, others accused the FMB president of abusing the normally upbeat missions report. "His gaul has no limit!" one woman told friends.

Parks' remarks were one of the few disturbances in an otherwise tranquil annual SBC meeting, during which control of the denomination by fundamental-conservatives went virtually unchallenged.

But Parks was not the only Baptist missions leader to issue words of warning during the week. Dellanna O'Brien, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, told members of the missions auxiliary June 8 they could no longer be silent while "anger and distrust (are) tearing the heart out of our denomination."

"There is no way to calculate the negative effects of the convention controversy on world missions.... How our Father's heart must grieve at our unfaithfulness! It is enough! No longer can we put missions on the back burner while the pot of denominational enmity and dissension boils over."

But it was the 64-year-old Parks whose remarks got the most attention. Although his criticisms of the controversy were not entirely new, the setting

was; his annual report to the SBC usually focuses on the urgency of missions. Messengers who expected Parks quietly to depart the denominational scene clearly were caught off guard by the frankness of his address.

Although the SBC was created for the purpose of missions, Parks said, and Southern Baptists give more than half their national budget to that cause, missions no longer is the focus of the annual SBC meeting.

Parks' point was reinforced by the largely empty arena, where only a third to a half of the 17,986 people who registered for the convention returned for the foreign missions report -- once the highlight of the three-day annual meeting.

The fact that many more people are present to elect a president than to hear about missions "suggests current messengers do not consider missions as our primary purpose," Parks told the Wednesday night audience.

Instead of Baptist mission efforts and financial contributions increasing, as a result of the controversy, "more and more (missionary) candidates are dropping out of the appointment process and more and more Baptists are reluctant to continue giving."

At a time of unprecedented responsiveness to the Christian message worldwide, Parks said, "we are killing our witness."

"I tremble that we as Southern Baptists are so fragmented, so full of anger, so short on love, we may be passed while God finds someone else."

Southern Baptists are destroying their witness by lack of love and balance, he said.

Although the Bible cites love as the most distinctive characteristic of Christians, Parks said, "We are not demonstrating love even to the whole Southern Baptist family."

Historically, the SBC has benefitted from a balance between two Baptist traditions -- the evangelism-oriented Sandy Creek tradition and the ministry-oriented Charlestonian tradition, Parks said. That "unplanned balance" has allowed the SBC to avoid both the "spiritual sterility" of the far left and the "dogmatic rigidity" of the far right, he said.

But now, Parks charged, one tradition dominates the SBC, upsetting the balance. Presumably that is the Sandy Creek tradition, which has produced the most conservative Southern Baptists who have taken control of the SBC bureaucracy during 13 years of controversy.

"When there is organized control enforced by intimidation and reward and punishment, we impoverish our richness and lose our biblical balance," Parks charged.

That imbalance subjects the SBC to extremism, jeopardizes its future and erodes the resources needed to reach the world with the gospel, he said.

"We desperately need the whole family."

For Southern Baptists to repair their damaged missions venture, Parks said, the SBC's elected leaders must lead the way.

"It will require enthusiastic, discernible, tangible support by elected Southern Baptist Convention officers who deliberately bring missions, not just evangelism, back to center stage of our convention."

Parks said pastors -- "especially those of trend-setting churches" -- must respond to the call to be missionaries, encourage others to respond, and lead their churches to fund SBC mission work.

He said churches giving less than 3 percent of their undesignated receipts to SBC causes won't get the job done. That comment seemed directed at recent SBC presidents and other elected leaders whose churches give well below the SBC average of 8 percent to denominational causes. Newly elected SBC president Edwin Young told reporters earlier that his church -- Second Baptist of Houston -- gives between 2 percent and 2.5 percent of undesignated receipts to the SBC's Cooperative Program.

In her address to WMU, O'Brien came to Parks' defense, lamenting the fact "that we have forced out of service the man whom God used effectively to

lead us in the foreign missions program of our denomination for the past 12 years...."

She noted WMU has raised \$1.7 billion for Southern Baptist missions in its 104-year history, and added, "We have earned the right to be heard, to confront, when decisions are made which hurt the cause of missions." She said changes in Foreign Mission Board philosophy have hurt relations with Baptists overseas and caused anxiety among missionaries.

"It is time to confront our brothers with our impatience with divisiveness, with our refusal to play little games when there are those dying in sin because of our lack of faithfulness. It is enough!"

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Convention messengers target
Freemasonry for investigation

By Trennis Henderson and Greg Warner

INDIANAPOLIS (ABP) -- Southern Baptists declined to launch a special investigation of the teachings of Freemasonry, deciding instead to instruct their Home Mission Board to study the fraternal order for a third time.

After authorizing the study of the Masons' "compatibility with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine" June 10, messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution containing thinly veiled accusations against Freemasonry.

Neither the Home Mission Board president nor the man who campaigned for the convention-level investigation were pleased with the outcome.

"I am disappointed in the decision," HMB President Larry Lewis said after messengers amended the original motion in order to instruct the HMB -- instead of a special SBC committee -- to conduct the study.

Lewis said the study will hurt HMB missions. "Any position we take -- either pro Masons or against Masons or neutral -- will generate a certain amount of ire and wrath and thus hurt missions," Lewis said.

Studies indicate 12 percent of Southern Baptist pastors and an even higher percentage of deacons are Masons. Masonic organizations also support Southern Baptist education and other efforts. The HMB depends heavily on donations to its annual missions offering and the denomination's Cooperative Program budget, both of which could suffer if the HMB or SBC are seen as targeting Masons.

Larry Holly, a physician from Beaumont, Texas, who has waged a personal battle against Freemasonry for several years, said he too was "disappointed" in the amended action. He added, however, he will cooperate with the HMB study, hopefully offering input.

"I'm just going to pray and trust the Home Mission Board will deal with it," Holly said. But he added his fight is not over, suggesting he would seek changes in the HMB report if he finds it unsatisfactory. "The fat lady hasn't sung yet."

In a similar study in 1985, the HMB's interfaith witness department concluded Freemasonry is not a religion or cult, and on that basis declined to critique it.

Holly opposes Freemasonry, he said, because of its cult-like activities, secrecy and the fact it teaches that other religions are as valid as Christianity. He called Freemasonry "a force of darkness that is preventing revival" in the SBC.

Prior to this year's annual meeting, Holly sent copies of a 58-page booklet opposing Freemasonry to 5,000 SBC leaders at a cost he estimated at \$8,000. Holly has described the spirit of Freemasonry as "wicked, godless,

anti-Christian."

"Let every Southern Baptist beware, who having bowed his knee to the Masonic altar, has thereby betrayed the Lord," the booklet states.

On the first day of the June 9-11 Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis, Holly presented a motion calling for the convention to establish an ad hoc committee to study Freemasonry.

When the motion came up for debate June 10, Holly declared: "The issue is not how many Masons will stand up and profess belief in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The issue is: What do Southern Baptists actually know about the Masonic Lodge?"

Holly, a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont and a former trustee of the SBC Sunday School Board, said all Southern Baptists interested in truth should support the ad hoc study, including Masons who consider the fraternal organization to be harmless.

"With this study, you will have the opportunity to disprove the accusations which I and others have made," he said.

Alvin Rowe, pastor of First Baptist Church, Rockledge, Fla., offered an amendment calling for the Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department -- rather than an ad hoc committee -- to study the issue. After accepting the amendment overwhelmingly, messengers passed the amended motion by an equally wide margin.

The amendment was "a clever ploy," Holly said afterward, since it was "obvious" from the floor discussion that his motion was going to pass. He said his attempts to speak against the amendment were not acknowledged, as SBC president Morris Chapman quickly called for a vote.

In 1985 Holly introduced a proposed resolution which described Freemasonry as a "spiritually devastating and ungodly brotherhood of satanic darkness."

That resolution was referred to the HMB, which responded that Freemasonry was not within its assigned responsibility. A 1991 motion calling for an investigation of Freemasonry also was referred to the HMB. Agency trustees again chose not to study the issue, opting to return the matter to messengers for their consideration.

Fred McPeake, a Mason and messenger from Knoxville, Tenn., said Holly's motion "begins with a premise based on error that Freemasonry is a religion."

"It is not a religion, nor is it a substitute for religion, nor is it a false religion," said McPeake, executive director of the Scottish Rite of Masons in a 24-county region of Tennessee. "It is not in conflict with the Baptist faith."

McPeake said it would be "a waste of time, a waste of needed funds to get involved in investigating a fraternity that is well known and has been well known for years and years."

Other messengers cited the faithful churchmanship of Masons and benevolent work conducted by Masonic organizations.

Holly told Associated Baptist Press he does not favor efforts to keep Masons out of SBC churches or to keep churches with Masons out of the SBC. But Masons should not be given leadership positions in churches, he said.

Holly acknowledged that his own father is a Mason who has been led by Masonic teaching to believe he is "good enough" to get into heaven without personally accepting Jesus Christ.

While he and his father disagree about Masons, Holly said, he still has "a wonderful relationship" with his father. "He's the finest man who ever walked the face of the earth," the younger Holly said.

Contacted by Associated Baptist Press in his Natchitoches, La., home, Billy Holly would neither confirm nor deny his involvement in Masons. An Episcopalian, the senior Holly said he is on "perfect terms" with his son and holds "no ill feelings," despite their differences over Freemasonry.

He said his son, Larry, learned well the lesson the father taught his

children: to develop their own opinions and defend them fervently. "When any boy gets grown and becomes a man, he can do his own thinking," Billy Holly said.

Following passage of the amended motion, a messenger asked how the convention could expect the HMB to study the issue when it had previously declined to do so. SBC president Morris Chapman responded that messengers, by their action, had "instructed" the HMB's interfaith witness department to conduct the study and report back to messengers during next year's annual meeting.

Moments after approving the motion, messengers adopted seven resolutions without debate. A resolution "on Christian witness and voluntary associations" urges Southern Baptists "to refrain from participation or membership in organizations with teachings, oaths, or mystical knowledge which are contrary to the Bible and to the public expression of our faith in Jesus Christ, which must be above all reproach."

During a press conference following the vote, resolutions committee chairman Al Mohler said the resolution "certainly included Freemasonry but is much broader than Freemasonry."

Mohler, editor of the Christian Index of Georgia, said committee members determined "we needed to address the basic moral, discipleship issue" concerning every Christian's responsibility to measure all personal relationships and associations "by biblical criteria."

"Christians are encouraged in their discipleship to declare openly their faith and to live lives which are transparent before the world, bearing testimony to Jesus Christ," Mohler said. "Whatever mars or impedes or compromises that testimony is, by its very nature, problematic for the Christian in terms of discipleship."

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Gay Christian says action
by SBC 'sacrifices people'

By Mark Wingfield and Greg Warner

LOUISVILLE, Ky (ABP) -- Southern Baptists who won the vote to expel two churches that are sympathetic to homosexuality lost much more, said one gay Southern Baptist minister.

The decision "really sacrifices people," said Quinn Chipley, an ordained pastoral counselor in Louisville, Ky., and member of Honesty, a group for homosexual Christians. "This may be the most difficult thing for Baptists to accept."

"Gay and lesbian Southern Baptists are not people who were raised Methodist or something else," explained Chipley, a member of Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville. "They are the sons and daughters of good Baptist families, and they are good Baptist people, they are Christians. It's basically casting out their own (people) with very little attempt to understand their experience."

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis voted overwhelmingly June 9 to oust two North Carolina churches, one that blessed the marriage-like union of two homosexuals and one that licensed a homosexual divinity student to the ministry.

Southern Baptists also sacrificed their traditional way of dealing with churches, Chipley said. In addition to ousting the two congregations, messengers to the SBC amended the convention's constitution to exclude any church that affirms homosexuality, marking the first time that a moral issue has been used to limit membership in the denomination.

"It's going to send a clear message to the gay and lesbian community

that they are not welcome in the churches," said Chipley, a graduate of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The decision also signals the "absolute unwillingness" of many people to re-examine the homosexual issue biblically and the "enormous failure of people who are sympathetic to open dialogue but afraid to speak out," he said.

The SBC decision may cause a few congregations to leave the denomination, Chipley said.

One church that won't have a choice about leaving is Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, N.C., one of the two churches expelled.

"Binkley Church has been very disappointed with the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention over the last several years," the church said in a prepared statement. Therefore, the church has quit participating in the annual conventions.

The statement said Binkley is still affiliated with the American Baptist Churches, "a body which is older and at present truer to our Baptist principles."

A church spokeswoman said the American Baptist Churches have not objected to the church's action. The spokeswoman declined further comment.

Mahan Siler, pastor of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, which also was ousted, could not be reached for comment.

In Indianapolis, where the SBC action on homosexuality drew a lot of media attention, a local gay organization denounced the decision.

"Gays and lesbians in this country can no longer stand silent as the country's largest Protestant church spews out hatred in the name of God," said Chris Gonzalez, a member of Gays and Lesbians Working Against Violence.

"We will not accept organized bigotry and the SBC action to devalue our lives based solely on our sexual orientation," Gonzalez said during a June 10 press conference at a downtown bar.

Howard Warren, a Presbyterian minister and self-described "unrepentant homosexual," said he and other homosexuals at the press conference do not consider homosexual behavior to be sinful.

"What has happened in the Southern Baptist church is beyond homophobia, fear and ignorance," Warren said. "It is hatred, hatred of 10 percent of God's beautiful rainbow of sexual orientation that God creates and loves."

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Paul Pressler survives
challenge to leadership

By Greg Warner

INDIANAPOLIS (ABP) -- Paul Pressler, the most powerful figure in Southern Baptists' fundamental-conservative movement, turned back the most serious challenge to his leadership June 9 by easily winning election to a trustee post at the Foreign Mission Board.

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis defeated a substitute nominee, despite the fact most top leaders of the fundamental-conservative movement were opposed to Pressler's nomination. The election was described by some in the movement as a struggle for control of the movement's direction.

Pressler was nominated to the post by the SBC Committee on Nominations, even though he recently completed seven years' service on the powerful SBC Executive Committee. Leaders of the fundamental-conservative movement, most of whom were elected to SBC leadership with Pressler's support, said allowing one person to serve so long on two key boards could reflect badly on the movement, which was built on the premise of returning power to mainstream

Baptists.

The alternate nomination did not come from fundamental-conservative leaders, however. Instead Cleeta John Rogers of Oklahoma City, Okla., nominated his brother, Eugene Rogers, a deacon in Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas.

No committee-approved nominee has been replaced on the floor of the convention during the past 10 years, according to longtime SBC observers.

The margin of victory for Pressler was estimated at two-to-one by many observers, including key Pressler supporter Paige Patterson of Dallas.

But Pressler described the victory as "overwhelming" and complained that a Baptist Press news release downplayed the vote margin and cast him in a negative light.

In a post-election confrontation with Baptist Press director Herb Hollinger in the SBC newsroom, Pressler reportedly threatened to have Hollinger fired over the story. Pressler was an outspoken critic of Baptist Press while on the Executive Committee, which oversees the SBC news service and fired its director and editor in 1990.

A revised version of the story was later released, correcting what Hollinger conceded were some inaccuracies. The story used Pressler's estimate for the margin of victory, four to one.

After Pressler's nomination to the FMB post in April, seven top leaders of the fundamental-conservative movement -- including at least four recent SBC presidents -- advised Pressler to decline the nomination during two conference calls with the Houston judge.

During the conference call, which was first reported in Associated Baptist Press, Pressler said he would consider declining the nomination. The leaders said later they would not oppose Pressler's nomination on the floor.

"There was a great deal of propaganda and erroneous information that was disseminated by Associated Baptist Press in an effort to discredit me," Pressler said after his election. "And I am absolutely amazed to get somewhere between 75 percent and 85 percent of the vote, where for 15 years I've been vilified in the state Baptist papers, where I've not been fairly represented.

"But I'm so glad that the messengers of this convention saw through the propaganda," he continued. "I am overwhelmed and overjoyed with such a marvelous vote of affirmation."

The former SBC presidents tried once before to distance themselves from Pressler in 1988, when they called a press conference to "clarify the agenda" of the movement.

Pressler designed the strategy followed by fundamental-conservatives in gaining control of the SBC's agencies and institutions. But many of the movement's leaders are uncomfortable with the hardball political style and often confrontational tactics that strategy employed.

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-- This story includes information from Lacy Thompson

Young continues conservative sweep,
pledges to focus on evangelism

INDIANAPOLIS (ABP) -- Ed Young won the Southern Baptist Convention presidency last week, maintaining fundamental-conservative dominance of the SBC political process.

Young, who carried the endorsement of top fundamental-conservative leaders, defeated fellow fundamental-conservative Nelson Price and a

non-aligned candidate, Jess Moody.

Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, received 9,981 votes (62 percent). Moody, pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Church in Chatsworth, Calif., got 3,485 votes (21 percent), and Price, pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., collected 2,619 votes (16 percent).

Young's pre-convention theme focused on missions and evangelism, urging the convention to move beyond its theological/political battle and get on with proclaiming the gospel. Moody sounded a similar theme, using his non-aligned status to appeal for unity. Price said he could be a non-party conservative president who would "congeal the body, heal wounds and allow the convention to concentrate on carrying out the commission of our Lord."

More than the others, Moody's nominator -- comedian Jerry Clower of Yazoo City, Miss. -- also appealed for peace in the convention.

Clower said he travels across the country and constantly meets laypeople who want the SBC's "preacher fight" to end. "There are 39,000 of y'all (pastors), but there are 15 million of us, and we want it stopped," he charged.

After his election, Young repeated his pre-convention theme, saying he wants the convention to "put down the guns and go fishing."

He told alumni of his alma mater, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary: "This is a time of revival like never before in the history of Christianity. It's happening all over the world. Are we in on it? It seems most Southern Baptists are not even aware of it. Theologically speaking, that ought to scare the hell out of us."

He added Southern Baptists need to tone down their rhetoric toward each other. "I am tired of the 'us-them, you-they' terminology," he said. "When it comes to describing those going with God and kingdom business, from now on, the terminology will be 'we.'"

He expressed similar sentiments in comments in his post-election press conference, telling reporters he wants to do away with pejorative labels, such as fundamentalist and liberal. "I'm a Southern Baptist, Bible-believing preacher," he described. "Let's throw away all those labels."

Young also said he wants to be more inclusive of African-Americans, Hispanics and other ethnic groups within the convention. He stressed he wants to be a bridge-builder by "seeking wisdom and input from everybody," including institutional leaders, as he makes presidential appointments.

Young did not extend that inclusiveness to another group that has gained a high profile within the convention in recent months -- homosexuals. He said he agreed with the convention's decision not to seat messengers from two churches that have affirmed homosexuality.

"Homosexuality clearly contradicts biblical teachings," he insisted, adding he questions whether a church that affirms homosexuality "is a New Testament church."

Speaking further on moral issues, he affirmed the stand taken by U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle -- who earlier had addressed the SBC annual meeting -- when he challenged the nation to higher moral values.

Young said Quayle has been "brutalized by the press" for his comments regarding an out-of-wedlock birth on the TV show "Murphy Brown." Rather than being anti-feminist, Young added, Quayle offered "a hard word (that) men -- husbands -- need to be responsible."

The new president stressed the need for missions and evangelism within the SBC. And laypeople need to be empowered, he added: "We've got to turn our people loose to be salt, light and leaven in the world and make our ministry valid. I'll do whatever I can to lift up Christ around the world."

In other officer elections, Southern Baptists elected two evangelists as vice presidents.

-- Messengers selected Jay Strack, an evangelist from Dallas, as first vice president by acclamation.

-- Joe Aulds, an evangelist from Ruston, La. defeated Glenn Mollette, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pikeville, Ky., for the second vice presidency in a run-off. Aulds received 3,013 votes (58 percent) to Mollette's 2,164 (42 percent). An evening run-off Tuesday was ruled invalid because a quorum of messengers was not present.

-- Lee Porter, SBC registration secretary for 15 years, won re-election over Bob Bender, pastor of First Baptist Church of Ada, Okla. Porter, associate pastor of St. Andrew Baptist Church in Panama City, Fla., got 3,739 votes (62 percent) to 2,294 (38 percent) for Bender.

-- Nashville businessman David Atchison was re-elected to a second one-year term as recording secretary, by acclamation.

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-- By Marv Knox

SBC messengers speak
through 15 resolutions

By Mark Wingfield

INDIANAPOLIS (ABP) -- Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting expressed their opinion on 15 issues through resolutions June 9-11.

SBC resolutions are non-binding statements that reflect the opinion of a majority of messengers attending that convention. All 15 statements offered by the convention's resolutions committee passed with little opposition.

The resolutions are:

-- On God the Father. The resolution notes that "God is a Spirit, beyond any human gender" but declares God "revealed himself to us as Father." It calls on "all Christians to remain faithful to biblical language concerning God, understanding that the revelation of God as Father is central and essential to Trinitarian faith."

-- On the Cooperative Program. The resolution states that "entities related to the convention have a binding responsibility" to support the denomination's unified budget and urges those entities and their employees "to maintain support of the Cooperative Program and avoid any conflict of interest, real or perceived, which would be occasioned by any participation with any organization, program or meeting which would compromise support of the Cooperative Program." The apparent target was the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate-conservative organization that allows churches to bypass the Cooperative Program.

-- On autonomy. The resolution affirms the autonomy of Baptist churches, associations and conventions but claims there is a "responsibility to maintain the integrity and scriptural discipline of every Baptist body in terms of faith, practice, membership and programs, thus protecting the witness and purity of the church and denomination."

-- On religion in public schools. Although not explicitly calling for government-sponsored prayer, the resolution notes some Supreme Court decisions "have been greatly misunderstood and grossly misapplied...to mean that the United States Constitution prohibits voluntary prayer and Bible reading in America's public schools." It commends the recent trend of the Supreme Court to move from a "strict separationist" doctrine to an "accommodationist" doctrine of religious liberty and calls on the U.S. Congress to expand the Equal Access Act "to maximize the free-exercise rights of public school students."

-- On voluntary associations. With veiled references to Freemasonry, the resolution calls on Christians to avoid membership in any group "which

conflicts with clear biblical teaching, including those teachings concerning the taking of oaths, the secrecy of activities, mystical knowledge or racial discrimination."

-- On Boy Scouts. The resolution supports the Boy Scouts of America for refusing to allow homosexuals to serve as Scout leaders.

-- On condom distribution. The resolution condemns distribution of condoms in public schools and calls on schools to implement "abstinence-based educational programs" instead.

-- On fetal-tissue experiments. The resolution asks Congress to sustain the Bush administration's ban on research using fetal tissue from elective abortions, claiming such research is unethical and allows "aborted babies to be exploited for scientific and commercial purposes."

-- On TV morality. Without mentioning Vice President Dan Quayle or his criticism of the "Murphy Brown" sitcom, the resolution says TV viewers are "bombarded with themes, plots, images and advertisements which promote and glorify sexual promiscuity, violence and other forms of immorality." It calls on Christians to "express outrage" to television networks and others for this "misuse of the public airwaves and cable access."

-- On euthanasia and assisted suicide. The resolution speaks against euthanasia and assisted suicide and opposes efforts to designate food and water as "extraordinary treatment" that can be withheld upon request by a dying person.

-- On urban evangelism. The resolution notes the racial diversity of America's cities and the need for innovative strategies in evangelism and calls for greater inclusiveness of ethnic leadership in planning mission strategies.

-- On religious freedom for all. The resolution calls on President Bush to influence Middle East nations and others "to provide genuine religious freedom" for Christians.

-- On Eastern Europe. The resolution commends the Foreign Mission Board's "Green Alert" response to new opportunities in Eastern Europe since the fall of communism and encourages all Baptist churches to "marshall their resources and mobilize their members" to seize the opportunities quickly.

-- On the Lord's Day. Linking the "moral breakdown in our society" with disregard for the Sabbath, the resolution advocates "proper use of the Lord's Day to strengthen families and give proper recognition to God as Creator."

-- On appreciation. The resolution expresses appreciation to the host city, state convention and officers who worked in preparation for the SBC's annual meeting.

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Messengers' 24 motions deal
with Freemasonry, other issues

INDIANAPOLIS (ABP) -- A proposal to study Freemasonry got the most attention, but messengers to the June 9-11 Southern Baptist Convention presented a total of 24 motions.

Motions are parliamentary proposals which, if approved, would be binding upon the convention or affected agencies.

Nineteen of the motions were referred to trustees of various SBC agencies. Four were declared out of order, and one was put to a vote.

The motion on the study of Masonry, which would have created a special committee to undertake the project, was amended. Messengers agreed to instruct the SBC Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department to conduct the study and report back to the convention in 1993.

Some of the referred motions, and the agency or agencies to which they were referred, are:

-- To direct the Foreign Mission Board to encourage Keith Parks to remain as president until 1995 and to instruct FMB trustees to resign if they cannot work with Parks. Foreign Mission Board.

-- To request SBC institutions to consider limiting severance benefits for employees. Another motion would direct institutions to "limit severance and entertainment benefits to a maximum of \$200." All SBC entities.

-- To limit the salary of SBC employees to a maximum of \$100,000. All SBC entities.

-- To create a committee to study insurance for ministers who are victims of burnout. Sunday School and Annuity boards.

-- To request the Annuity Board to consider reducing insurance deductibles and copayment limits. Annuity Board.

-- To study implementation of a voting system to allow all Southern Baptists to vote on SBC matters. Executive Committee.

-- To ask the Executive Committee to stop paying the conference hall expenses for the Woman's Missionary Union's annual meeting. Executive Committee.

-- To direct the Christian Life Commission to provide free to churches "videotapes which show the horror of abortion and the glory of new life." Christian Life Commission.

-- To tell the Sunday School Board to use the King James Version of the Bible in all its literature. Sunday School Board.

-- To limit nominations for convention officers to people whose churches give at least 10 percent to the Cooperative Program unified budget and are involved in Bold Mission Thrust. Executive Committee.

Among the motions ruled out of order was one to name W.A. Criswell, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, as president emeritus of the SBC. Such an office does not exist.

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-- By Marv Knox
