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Lack of SBC race statement  
concerns Baptist ethicists

By Lacy Thompson and Greg Warner

(ABP) -- A crop of 15 resolutions approved by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention covered topics ranging from euthanasia to the Boy Scouts but included nothing on the racial tension that has gripped the nation in recent weeks.

That omission disappointed many Southern Baptist ethicists.

Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said one of his biggest disappointments from the recent convention was the absence of a statement against racism. "Given our past, I'm not sure that we can speak too often on that," he said.

Robert Parham, director of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville, Tenn., said the SBC's "thundering silence" on the race issue showed "a failure of moral vision."

Albert Mohler of Atlanta, chairman of this year's Committee on Resolutions, said the committee chose not to act on the issue because members felt they could not improve on a 1989 resolution in which the SBC condemned racism.

But Phil Strickland, executive director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, said a fresh statement was needed, "particularly in this time of tension."

In late April, an all-white jury acquitted four Los Angeles policemen of unlawfully beating black motorist Rodney King. Ethnic Los Angeles erupted in violence and rioting, and President Bush sent in the federal troops to establish control.

In ensuing days, as King-related events dominated national news, Baptist groups responded with words and actions.

-- Leaders of the Baptist World Alliance announced former President Jimmy Carter would head up a special commission to study the causes of racism, the biblical answer to racism and what Baptists can do to help defeat racism.

-- Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, called for persons to fulfill their Christian and civic duty in working to eradicate the "cancer of racism" from society.

-- Members of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship adopted their first-ever resolution, repenting of "historic complicity" in perpetuating the sin of slavery and pledging to work for the eradication of racism in churches and the nation.

-- Baptists in the District of Columbia called on persons to examine their hearts and "ferret out attitudes of prejudice which drive wedges between us."

But the Southern Baptist Convention did not address the race issue during its June 9-11 meeting in Indianapolis.

Land said the Christian Life Commission submitted a resolution to the Committee on Resolutions for consideration and encouraged them to pass it. "But they felt we (the SBC) had spoken strongly enough on the issue in prior conventions," he said.

Mohler, editor of the Christian Index of Georgia, said his committee discussed the racial issue at length before deciding not to seek to augment the 1989 statement.

"We felt the racial issue per se had not changed in light of the Los Angeles riots or the civil disturbances or the Rodney King verdict," he explained.

Mohler said the committee's decision was deliberate but it was not an intentional neglect of the issue.

"We felt we could not improve upon that 1989 statement," he said. "There was significant interest within the committee about bringing forth a resolution on racism. There was a unanimous determination the convention needed to make an appropriate statement on racism. We spent considerable time discussing how racism ought to be addressed within a resolution and found we could not state an appropriate stance on the issue in a way that would improve upon the 1989 resolution."

Mohler characterized the 1989 resolution as a "remarkable statement that has not received adequate attention."

In that 1989 statement, convention messengers "affirm our intentions of standing publicly and privately for racial justice and equality."

They also resolved to "repent of any past bigotry and pray for those who are still caught in its clutches, to bear witness to the devastating impact of racism, (and) to reach across racial boundaries."

"The problem of racism has been one of long standing, one this denomination has had to address and is called to address in a very courageous way," Mohler said. "And we felt as a committee that the 1989 resolution was an extremely fine statement."

Southern Baptists have always emphasized the idea that resolutions only reflect the opinion of the messengers meeting in a particular year. However, Mohler insisted it is an overstatement to limit a resolution to one convention.

"That's where the resolutions originate and are adopted," he said, "but in no other action of the convention do we assume that there is no continuity from one meeting to the next. Otherwise, the convention must speak to every issue of concern every year in order to have an effective voice, and that's an impossibility."

Concerning the race issue, however, the CLC's Land disagreed. "I'm not certain that we can revisit it too many times," he said.

"I'm dismayed we haven't made more progress on race (in this country) since the 1960s," Land said. That lack of progress is not surprising, Land said, noting racism is not a political or judicial problem but a sin problem. "It has to be addressed spiritually."

Parham of the Baptist Center for Ethics complained that the annual

meeting spent much time on the issue of Freemasonry -- passing both a motion and a thinly veiled resolution directed at Masons -- while neglecting racism altogether.

"Why should the Southern Baptist Convention invest so much moral energy in such an esoteric issue as whether or not Masons are Christians while it ignores the most volatile and pressing issue of the day -- Christian racism."

"Our urban centers are bubbling with rage, and the Southern Baptist Convention issued thundering silence," Parham lamented. "It's a failure of moral vision, a failure of courage."

Mohler pointed out the racial issue was addressed in two other 1992 resolutions approved by messengers.

One affirms ministries to all people within the nation's cities and emphasizes the need for racial and ethnic diversity in those ministries. "We wanted to make a strong statement about the necessity of ethnic leadership being moved to the forefront of denominational strategizing," Mohler said.

A second resolution calls on Christians to avoid membership in voluntary associations that conflict with clear biblical teaching, "including those teachings concerning the taking of oaths, the secrecy of activities, mystical knowledge or racial discrimination." Mohler said the resolution would include private clubs that discriminate on the basis of color.

Mohler suggested the two resolutions focused on the issue in ways that had not been adequately addressed by previous conventions.

Strickland of the Texas CLC agreed the resolution concerning voluntary associations is helpful but expressed doubts that most people will see racism as the target. Instead, they will see the resolution with its references to secrecy and oaths as a slap against Masons, he predicted.

Strickland and others also noted messengers were not asked to reaffirm the 1989 resolution.

"The '89 resolution was helpful, but the issue of racial discrimination is one that we need to continue to speak to at every opportunity," Strickland said. "And particularly in this time of tension we need to take every occasion we can to affirm our oneness in Jesus Christ and our commitment to work together and minister together."

At the same time, Strickland acknowledged, race is an issue that needs to be addressed not only at the national level but through "a lot of deliberate action at the local level."

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Binkley rethinks gay statement;  
Pullen laments ouster by SBC

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (ABP) -- One of the two churches ousted from the Southern Baptist Convention June 9 for condoning homosexuality has backed away slightly from its position, at least temporarily, while the other church has registered a "parting concern" about the convention's action.

Members of Olin T. Binkley Baptist Church in Chapel Hill, N.C., voted 151-24 June 14 to rescind a statement affirming homosexuality until church members have more time to consider the issue. Binkley's pastor said the reconsideration is not related to the church's ouster by the SBC and will not affect the church's decision to license a gay divinity student to preach -- the action that first drew SBC ire.

Meanwhile, Mahan Siler, pastor of Pullen Memorial Church in Raleigh, N.C., said he is concerned that by expelling Binkley and Pullen Southern Baptists "are making as a condition for cooperation in Christian ministry a particular position in regard to homosexuality."

The SBC's action discounts the fact that homosexuality is an issue over which "devout, learned Baptists disagree," Siler said in an open letter to Southern Baptists. "In the face of this complex issue, dogmatism is unwarranted."

The decision by Binkley Church to rescind its earlier statement on discrimination against homosexuals is a matter of procedure, said pastor Linda Jordon.

"That did not mean that we reject the statement," Jordon said. "There is much more discussion that needs to take place."

Binkley's members met April 5 to decide whether or not to license Duke divinity student John Blevins to the gospel ministry, Jordon said, and not to adopt a church statement on homosexuality in general.

The statement was submitted by a church member for approval during the April 5 debate. The vote to rescind the statement, Jordon said, will give church members time to consider the issue thoroughly.

Since the April action, seven of Binkley's 20 deacons have resigned in protest.

The Binkley statement said homosexuals have been subjected to discrimination, harassment, misunderstanding, intimidation and violence. Such reactions from heterosexuals contradict biblical love, the statement said, and "greatly restrict the ability of lesbians and gay men to form the life-affirming relationships that we all desire."

It is unclear if Binkley's action will have any effect on its standing with the SBC, which called for the two churches to "respond to the teachings of the holy Scripture by rescinding their actions."

In his open letter, Pullen's pastor Mahan Siler acknowledged the "cost" for Pullen to deal openly with the homosexual issue "has been higher than most of us expected." But he said he does not regret the church's decision earlier this year to bless the marriage-like union of two homosexual men.

Siler said the SBC's position on homosexuality assumes: that homosexuals choose their sexual orientation rather than discover it; that the church should persuade homosexuals to abandon their orientation or remain celibate; that no distinction is warranted between "promiscuous" and "monogamous" homosexual behavior; that violence against homosexuals is not a major social issue; that the homosexual lifestyle means any homosexual expression; and that "being gay and being Christian are incompatible identities."

Siler also lamented what he called the lack of a climate of respectful debate over Baptist differences. "I hope, within the Baptist tradition of dissent, you will support safe places for continuing dialogue in the common search for the mind of Christ," he wrote Southern Baptists.

In response to Siler's letter, an SBC official defended the convention's action. "Pullen prescribes affirmation for 'committed' and 'monogamous' homosexual relationships; Southern Baptists prescribe repentance and redemption," said Mark Coppenger, vice president of the SBC Executive Committee.

Both the Pullen and Binkley churches were ousted from the state Baptist convention in North Carolina in May. Pullen also was disfellowshipped from its local Baptist association. Binkley is not a member of a local association.

IRS reportedly investigating  
Drummond's seminary dealings

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- The Internal Revenue Service is investigating the financial dealings between Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and its retiring president, Lewis Drummond.

An IRS agent met on campus June 15 with Drummond and Paul Fletcher, Southeastern's vice president for internal affairs. Fletcher confirmed he participated in the meeting but added, "I will not talk about that."

Both Fletcher and trustee chairman Roger Ellsworth confirmed the IRS inquiry concerns Drummond's personal finances and not the seminary's.

"I'm sure if it had anything to do with the seminary I would have heard about it," said Ellsworth, a pastor in Benton, Ill. "As far as I'm concerned, this is a personal matter. I don't plan to have anything to do with it."

Drummond could not be reached for comment.

For more than a year, Drummond has been under criticism by some trustees for excessive expenses in remodeling and furnishing his office and the seminary-owned president's house. He agreed to repay \$28,000 of the \$200,000 spent on the house, although it is not known how much of the money has been repaid.

When he announced his retirement, trustees reportedly agreed to treat his repayment of the expenses as a gift to the seminary -- an arrangement that apparently attracted IRS attention.

The IRS is also believed to be investigating travel expenses paid by the seminary for Drummond's wife, Betty.

The IRS would not confirm the investigation. A spokesman said IRS policy forbids comment on investigations.

Drummond, who was under fire during much of his four-year presidency because of Southeastern's financial and academic problems, will leave his post at the end of June. Paige Patterson of Dallas was recently elected to succeed him.

When he retired, Drummond sought an agreement from trustees to "view all alleged irregularities as mistakes and to avoid publicity of these errors." Though not spelled out publicly in the retirement agreement, this was accomplished through what one trustee called "a gentleman's agreement."

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-- By Greg Warner

Louisiana approves  
casino gambling

BATON ROUGE, La. (ABP) -- By bare minimum margins, the Louisiana legislature voted recently to establish a land-based casino in New Orleans.

And by the end of the legislative session on June 22, state legislators well may pass a constitutional amendment that would facilitate the spread of casinos throughout the state.

The action providing for a casino in New Orleans represents the climactic step for a state that has seen legalized gambling proliferate in recent years. In the last two years, the legislature and voters have approved a lottery, riverboat gambling and the legalization of video poker machines.

In an ironic twist, most of the push came under the administration of a governor who had vowed to resist the further legalization of gambling. However, the final step came under the new administration of Gov. Edwin

Edwards, who long has supported the idea of a New Orleans casino.

Despite passage of the casino measure -- with no votes to spare in the state House and only one to spare in the Senate -- the question of when or even if a casino will be built in New Orleans remains in doubt. Observers on both sides of the issue agree the newly approved measure will have to be taken to court to see if it stands up under the state constitution.

The Louisiana constitution stipulates that the state legislature is to "define and suppress" gambling. In taking their recent action legislators simply defined casino gaming as not gambling.

That being the case, observers agree that casino companies will wait until the courts confirm the constitutionality of that definition before investing millions of dollars in opening a casino. Meanwhile, gambling opponents are hoping the courts will side with them on the issue.

"The state constitution says the legislature is to 'define and suppress' gambling," explained C. B. Forgotston, a New Orleans attorney and lobbyist against the casino. "Well, if we have bingo, horse racing, riverboat gambling, a lottery, video draw poker machines and a casino, what are we suppressing? There should be controls somewhere."

Meanwhile, at press time, the state Senate had approved a constitutional amendment that would limit New Orleans to one casino but allow legislators to establish one anywhere else in the state with a simple majority vote. The bill was moving through House committees and was expected to reach the floor by the end of the week.

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-- By Lacy Thompson

Communism will remain dead,  
Yeltsin assures Congress

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The idol of communism, which spread strife, enmity and brutality everywhere, has collapsed never to rise again, the president of the new Russian Federation assured the U.S. Congress.

Russian leader Boris Yeltsin addressed a joint session of Congress June 17 during his first formal summit with President George Bush.

"The experience of the past decades has taught us: Communism has no human face," Yeltsin said. "Freedom and communism are incompatible.... It is in Russia that the future of freedom in the 21st century is being decided. We are upholding your freedom as well as ours."

Yeltsin expressed pride in the ordinary citizens of Russia who fought for freedom, as well as appreciation for Bush and the American people "for their invaluable moral support."

"There is no people on this earth who could be harmed by the air of freedom....," he added. "Liberty sets the mind free, fosters independent and unorthodox thinking and ideas."

"But it does not offer instant prosperity or happiness and wealth to everyone."

Speaking about the past economic conditions that led to the previous totalitarian regime, Yeltsin said: "History must not be allowed to repeat itself. That is why economic and political reforms are the primary task for Russia today."

If Soviet reform fails, there will be no second try, Yeltsin said, making a plea for Congress to approve aid for Russia. He promised not to renege on those reforms, recognizing their impact reaches beyond Soviet borders to the United States and the rest of the world.

Yeltsin said Russia is determined to move forward on those reforms, pointing to an arms-reduction agreement that he and Bush signed June 16 as an example.

The Soviet leader also vowed to return any American servicemen who may have been transferred and detained in his country during the Vietnam War. His announcement June 16 that some U.S. servicemen may have been secretly sent to Russia and may still be alive shocked the Washington establishment.

Yeltsin said the archives of the KGB and the Communist Party Central Committee are being opened and that Russia is inviting the United States and other nations to help it in "investigating these dark pages."

Yeltsin said if this investigation verifies the existence of such servicemen, he will return them to their families.

Coming one day before his address to Congress, his surprise announcement drew reaction from members of Congress. Some congressional leaders said that Congress should not approve an aid package worth billions to Russia until the U.S. prisoner of war issue has been settled.

After his speech and meetings with congressional leaders, many of them seemed satisfied Yeltsin is committed to returning any Americans who may still be alive.

Yeltsin called on Congress to approve the Freedom Support Act of 1992 to help Russia stabilize its economic and political reform.

"Today free and democratic Russia is extending its hand of friendship to the people of America," Yeltsin said.

"Acting on the will of the people of Russia, I am inviting you and, through you, the people of the United States, to join us in partnership in the name of a worldwide triumph of democracy, in the name of liberty and justice in the 21st century."

He concluded by adding a phrase to lyrics by Irving Berlin, an American of Russian descent: "God bless America and Russia."

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#### High court strikes down Georgia parade ordinance

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Fees charged for events such as parades and marches cannot be based upon the whims of local government officials, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 18.

In a 5-4 ruling, the high court struck down a Forsyth County, Ga., assembly and parade ordinance because it delegated too much discretion to county administrators to determine when and how much to charge for permit fees, and because it required administrators to base any charge for additional police protection on the amount of hostility likely to be created by the event.

Forsyth officials enacted the ordinance in 1987 after the second of two civil-rights demonstrations in the mostly all-white county led to more than \$670,000 in police costs. The ordinance permits a charge of up to \$1,000 per day for events such as parades and marches.

In 1989, the Nationalist Movement challenged the ordinance after the county imposed a \$100 permit fee for its planned demonstration in opposition to the federal holiday commemorating the birth of Martin Luther King Jr.

A federal district court upheld the ordinance, but the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the lower court, holding that the First Amendment's free-speech guarantee is violated by an ordinance charging more than a nominal fee for free speech activities.

Writing for the majority, Justice Harry Blackmun did not address whether

fees of up to \$1,000 are considered nominal. Joined by Justices John Paul Stevens, Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy and David Souter, Blackmun wrote that the level of the fee is irrelevant when free speech is regulated on the basis of its content.

"Regulations which permit government to discriminate on the basis of the content of the message cannot be tolerated under the First Amendment," the majority opinion states.

"The decision how much to charge for police protection or administrative time -- or even whether to charge at all -- is left to the whim of the administrator.... Nothing in the law or its application prevents the official from encouraging some views and discouraging others through the arbitrary application of fees," the majority stated.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist -- in a dissenting opinion joined by Justices Byron White, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas -- criticized the majority for failing to decide, "if not limit itself to," reviewing the lower courts' finding that the First Amendment bars charging more than a nominal fee for a parade permit.

Rehnquist said the Constitution does not limit such fees to a nominal amount.

Instead of deciding whether parade permit fees must be nominal, Rehnquist said, the majority "concludes that the county ordinance is facially unconstitutional because it places too much discretion in the hands of the county administrator and forces parade participants to pay for the cost of controlling those who might oppose their speech."

These issues were not addressed by the district or appeals courts, Rehnquist said, adding that he would return the case to lower courts for factual findings in these areas.

The case is Forsyth County, Georgia vs. The Nationalist Movement (91-538).

In another free-speech case likely to be decided by the end of June, the Supreme Court is expected to decide whether solicitation of funds and distribution of literature may be banned from airport terminals.

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-- By Larry Chesser

Subcommittee approves  
abortion-rights measure

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A House subcommittee has approved a bill that would protect women's rights to privacy in abortion decisions -- a step some congressional leaders deemed necessary because they believe the U.S. Supreme Court will soon strike down that right.

The nation's high court is expected to rule by the end of June on a restrictive Pennsylvania abortion law. The court's decision could result in the reversal of Roe vs. Wade, the 1973 decision recognizing a woman's right to privacy in abortion decisions.

The House Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights approved the Freedom of Choice Act (H.R. 25) by a 5-3 vote June 18 after defeating six amendments designed to add restrictions to the bill. The full Judiciary Committee has not yet scheduled a time for consideration of the bill.

Subcommittee chairman Don Edwards, D-Calif., said the bill originally was introduced in 1989 in response to the Supreme Court's Webster decision that severely undercut Roe's protections.

"After that decision, the American public recognized that the Supreme Court could no longer be counted on to protect a woman's fundamental right to

choose," said Edwards, the bill's chief sponsor.

Congress adjourned before House committee action could be taken on that earlier measure, Edwards said, noting he and other bill proponents "intend to complete the process we started in 1989."

Edwards said H.R. 25 has been carefully drafted to codify the court's ruling in Roe. In Roe, Edwards said, the court held a woman has a right to choose to terminate a pregnancy up until viability -- the point at which a fetus can live outside the womb.

Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., disagreed, saying H.R. 25 would go well beyond Roe to enact "abortion on demand throughout pregnancy."

The bill says: "A state may not restrict the right of a woman to choose to terminate a pregnancy -- (1) before fetal viability; or (2) at any time, if such termination is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman."

Some bill opponents say the language including the health of the woman is too broad and could allow post-viability abortions for nearly any reason.

Bill supporters say the health of the mother is significant and deny that the provision would open up a Pandora's Box.

Hyde said he offered the six amendments -- all of which failed -- to "illustrate the extreme nature of the legislation," which he said lacks sufficient safeguards.

His amendments would have added restrictions, such as parental consent and spousal notifications. Other amendments would have restricted abortions based solely on the sex of the fetus, the use of public funds for abortions, and any abortion after the third month of pregnancy except to save the life of the mother or when the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest.

"It is also very important to recognize that it is very unlikely that the Supreme Court, when it rules on the Pennsylvania regulations, will outlaw abortion," Hyde said. "Rather, as the proponents of this legislation know, it is entirely possible for the Supreme Court to uphold the regulations challenged in the Pennsylvania litigation without overturning Roe vs. Wade."

Edwards argued: "The court is poised to further erode this basic constitutional right any day now.... Congress must act now."

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-- By Pam Parry

Congressman vows to bring  
'choice' battle to House floor

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Although proposals for government aid to religious schools have failed in the U.S. Senate and in a House committee, one congressman has vowed to continue the fight.

Rep. Dick Armey, R-Texas, said June 16 he will try to insert a "school choice" proposal -- in the form of vouchers for private and religious schools -- into a House education bill when it comes up for a vote. He called the choice proposal "perestroika for parents."

The school-choice debate was revitalized when President George Bush included it as a centerpiece of his "America 2000" education-reform plan. The choice proposal would provide parents vouchers to send their children to public, private and religious schools.

But the president's choice proposal has not fared well on Capitol Hill.

The U.S. Senate approved the Neighborhood Schools Improvement Act (S. 2) after rejecting private school choice. The House Committee on Education and Labor approved a companion bill (H.R. 4323) without any choice provisions for public or private schools.

Armey told reporters June 16 that when H.R. 4323 comes to the House

floor in early July he will offer an amendment to add school choice into the bill. Armev's amendment, defeated during committee consideration of the bill, would provide school choice for private and public schools.

"School choice is the most important education innovation to come along in decades," Armev said at a press conference.

Education Secretary Lamar Alexander and several House Republicans joined Armev in the press conference. Alexander said the administration favors school choice because it affords middle- and low-income families the same opportunities as upper-income families.

"Families with money have choice," Alexander said.

Armev added that supporters of his amendment are supporters of the American family.

Responding to questions, Armev said the church-state question raised by choice opponents amounts to a "red herring" and should not be taken very seriously.

He noted that school choice does not involve a constitutional question, because the government already has precedent with student loans and G.I. bills allowing college students to attend the schools of their choice -- even if they are religious or private.

Religious schools would be subject to some regulation if they accept choice vouchers, he said.

Under the Armev amendment, local and state panels would be established to allow community involvement in setting rules for the programs. Armev said local panels would need to be sensitive to the problems involved in regulating religious schools.

Asked if that meant public and religious schools would be subject to the same regulations, he said local panels would establish criteria for "educational quality" that both public and religious schools would have to meet if they received vouchers.

Armev expressed optimism that his amendment could win on the House floor, but it faces opposition by some members of Congress and a broad coalition of more than 40 religious and educational organizations.

The National Coalition for Public Education has argued that the choice proposal would damage public schools.

Brent Walker, associate general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee, said the religious-liberty agency opposes school choice because it is constitutionally suspect and would result in unhealthy church-state entanglement.

"The G.I. bill and student loan argument is specious," Walker said. "The Supreme Court has always treated colleges differently, and properly so."

The Supreme Court has not ruled on voucher programs, but it has condemned direct aid to parochial schools, he said.

Walker added that characterizing choice as a social welfare program is a "cruel joke" because America's poorest children still would be unable to attend private schools.

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-- By Pam Parry

Fellowship receipts  
up again in May

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship received \$599,676 in contributions and other income during May, a 53 percent increase over the same month of last year.

The May total is almost identical to the revised \$603,551 reported for

April, according to figures released by the Atlanta-based organization. It includes an offering of \$98,133 collected during the Fellowship's annual assembly April 31-May 1.

Since Jan. 1, the Fellowship has received \$2,793,636. That is an increase of 61 percent over the \$1.7 million received during the first five months of 1991.

Five months into the year, the Fellowship is on target to meet the 1992 projection of \$6.6 million established by its finance committee. Last year the Fellowship took in \$4.5 million.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was established last year by Southern Baptist moderate-conservatives displeased with the current leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention and its agencies.

The Fellowship's three giving plans allow churches and individuals to bypass traditional Southern Baptist funding channels, such as the Cooperative Program, and to withhold funds from SBC agencies of which they disapprove.

Last year about three-fourths of the money collected by the Fellowship went to support Southern Baptist causes. This year, however, churches and individuals are designating a growing portion of their contributions to Fellowship-supported efforts, such as the organization's newly launched missions effort.

In May, for instance, 42 percent of contributions were designated to Southern Baptist causes and 40 percent was targeted for the Fellowship. An additional 7 percent went for organizations and agencies supported by the Fellowship and 11 percent was designated for state-level Baptist causes.

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-- By Greg Warner

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to vacation schedules, no ABP issues are scheduled next week.

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