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CBF council debates, endorses  
job offer to Keith Parks

By Greg Warner

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The leadership of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship "wholeheartedly" endorsed the effort to hire retiring Southern Baptist missions executive Keith Parks to lead the Fellowship's own missions program.

The Fellowship's Coordinating Council, meeting Sept. 10-12 in Atlanta, also approved two new staff positions, heard that an interim missions coordinator had been hired, and heard of plans to place a mission worker in Miami to aid in hurricane relief.

The 84-member council also voted to change the site of the Fellowship's general assembly May 13-15, 1993, from Atlanta to Birmingham, Ala., and was told no merger is planned for now between the Fellowship and the Alliance of Baptists.

Parks, who will retire as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Oct. 31, has not responded to the Fellowship's job offer. The council's endorsement of that offer followed a lengthy debate about the manner in which the invitation was extended to Parks, who announced in February he will take early retirement because of "philosophical differences" with FMB trustees.

Several council members expressed displeasure that Parks was offered the job of CBF global missions coordinator by the council's global missions ministry group in February without the approval of the council itself.

"I want the missions committee to operate as a part of the whole body of the Coordinating Council, and I want us to know how they operate," said council member Jeanette Holt of Washington, D.C., who made a motion for the council to develop policies for employing staff and missionaries. "I want to know the rules by which we play."

The council unanimously approved Holt's motion but not before debating at length the process used to offer Parks the missions post. "We have mangled this process," said Nancy Ammerman of Atlanta. Now that Parks has been offered the job, she said, the question is "how can we own and affirm this decision."

Several council members said the issue is not Parks. "We are in no way addressing a person; we were addressing a procedure," said Twila Smith of Bolivar, Mo.

"I am very fearful, because of this discussion, that word might seep out somewhere that we are in opposition to what this (missions) group has done," said Ophelia Humphrey of Amarillo, Texas.

"To remove any doubt in anybody's mind," said John Cothran of Greenville, S.C., "I move that we wholeheartedly endorse the action taken regarding Keith Parks and this job."

Cothran's motion passed unanimously.

During debate, Charles Wade of Arlington, Texas, said he assumed it was so "patently obvious" that Parks is the person for the job that approval by the council wasn't needed. "But it's obvious not everyone feels that way."

Jean Bond, co-chairperson of the global missions ministry group, conceded: "This is one area where we realize we did not follow what you would have had us do.... I assure you if Keith Parks declines our invitation, we will certainly come to you in the proper way...."

Bond, from Starkville, Miss., noted Parks won't respond until after he completes his work at the FMB Oct. 31.

When Parks was offered the job last February, "there was some need for haste," explained John Hewett of Asheville, N.C., past Fellowship moderator.

A week later Parks warned trustees that the Southern Baptist controversy had infiltrated the mission enterprise and thrown the FMB into crisis. He asked trustees to affirm his leadership or replace him. "There was a strong feeling in February that his departure from the Foreign Mission Board was imminent," said Hewett.

Hewett and Cecil Sherman, coordinator of the Fellowship, participated in a meeting with other leaders of the Fellowship and its missions group Feb. 4 and decided to offer the Fellowship's newly created missions post to Parks.

"On balance," Sherman said, "that group decided rather firmly that it was in the best interest of the organization that Keith Parks be offered the job and that he be offered the job that day."

Sherman said Jimmy Allen, co-chairperson of the missions group, called Parks and offered him the job. "At the time we hadn't broken any rules," said Sherman, noting no hiring procedures had been adopted by the Fellowship.

A month later, Parks told FMB trustees he would take early retirement because of "philosophical differences" over mission strategy. The 37-year missions veteran, who turns 65 in October, set Oct. 31 as his retirement date.

Sherman said Parks "is very seriously considering" the Fellowship's offer. "I think this organization would be greatly blessed if for three or four years he could lay the foundation" for the Fellowship's mission program, he added.

Sherman conceded Parks "has questions" about the Fellowship, such as "Does his conception of missions fit comfortably enough with ours?" But he added: "What he would bring to this organization is the thing we need most with 'soft' moderates.... We need credibility and he brings credibility."

Sherman earlier told council members he does not know what Parks will decide. "I am hopeful, but I do not know how that will go."

In the meantime, the council was told, retired FMB administrator Grayson Tennison has been hired as interim global missions coordinator. The Fellowship already has hired eight "missioners" -- all former FMB missionaries -- and plans to hire 12 more in early 1993.

The council heard a report on hurricane relief work in Miami performed by Fellowship churches and funded in part by \$15,000 in Fellowship money.

Earlier the global missions ministry group agreed to employ a missions coordinator for up to a year to coordinate recovery and rebuilding efforts for Miami churches and residents hurt by Hurricane Andrew.

The council approved the position of administrator/communications coordinator, which is yet to be filled, and contracted with council member Oeita Bottorff of Austin, Texas, to work as networking coordinator and to assist in scheduling meetings primarily west of the Mississippi River.

In his report to the council, Sherman said the expanded staff is necessary to keep up with growth of the organization. "We've got to set up appropriate structures to communicate with our constituencies," he explained.

He criticized an "anti-bureaucratic" attitude among some council members that opposes expanding the CBF staff. "We will ensmall ourselves with that attitude," he said. "Our problem is not a bureaucracy because we don't have the people to do what needs to be done now."

Sherman said 680 churches have contributed funds to the Fellowship in 1992, up from 391 last year. That includes an unspecified number of churches that contribute directly from their budget and churches that send designated gifts from individual church members.

He said he hopes the number increases to 1,000 by the end of the year. "A thousand gives us a 'critical mass' to do the things we need to do," he said.

He said 2,000 contributing churches are needed to sustain the necessary ministries and structure. But he added no one should hold "the notion that we're going to be 20,000 churches. He said he expects the growth in churches to continue "for about two to three years, then not decline but level off."

As the number of contributing churches has grown, so has the Fellowship's budget, Sherman said. In the first eight months of 1992, the organization has received as much money as in all of 1991 -- about \$4.5 million -- and is on target to reach its projection of \$6.4 million to \$6.6 million.

Also, he said, more of the money received comes designated for Fellowship projects and less for Southern Baptist causes. While 77 percent of gifts went to SBC and state-convention causes last year, he said, that percentage has dropped to about 60 percent this year.

"My hope is for a \$10 million gross next year with a division of 50-50," he said.

Later the council made a slight adjustment in one of the Fellowship's three giving plans, directing that about 50 percent of the middle-of-the-road Ventures Plan be used for CBF causes. The revision, which would take effect in 1994, must be approved by the CBF's general assembly next May.

The current Ventures Plan directs about 45 percent of its funding to CBF causes. Two other giving plans provide for less and more funding of CBF causes.

Twenty-two Fellowship organizers from 16 states and regions also met during the council session to learn how to expand involvement in the Fellowship at the state level. "We discussed strategies for how we get to the 'critical mass' Cecil spoke of," explained Oeita Bottorff, networking coordinator. "If our cause is dependent in any way on the work of this network, then we're in good shape."

Atlanta proved unsuitable as the site of the 1993 general assembly because of inadequate space for small-groups workshops and excessive cost for the facility, the Georgia World Congress Center.

Because of the size of the general assembly -- usually about 6,000 people -- medium-sized cities like Birmingham will prove more affordable, the council was told. The Fellowship reportedly will save \$34,000 by making the

move to the Birmingham Civic Center.

Future sites for the annual meeting also were approved: Greensboro, N.C., May 5-7, 1994; Austin, Texas, in 1995; Richmond, Va., in 1996; Orlando, Fla., in 1997; San Antonio, Texas, in 1998; and Louisville, Ky., in 1999.

Council members heard a statement from a dialogue group of Fellowship and Alliance members exploring the possibility of a merger of the two organizations. "We agree on the continued existence of each group at this time," said the statement, which was drafted during a Sept. 9 meeting of the dialogue group.

The statement said the two organizations "look with favor on every opportunity for cooperation," including common sites and dates for annual meetings beginning in 1994 and common mission projects and offerings.

A motion to consider a joint mission offering as early as 1993 was debated at length, demonstrating lingering tensions between the Fellowship and Alliance. The vote on the motion produced a 25-25 tie. Moderator Patricia Ayres broke the tie by voting in favor of the motion.

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Fellowship to venture  
into abortion debate

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship will ease into the abortion debate later this year when it releases an ethics booklet on "reverence for life."

The Fellowship's Coordinating Council, meeting Sept. 10-12 in Atlanta, laid plans to produce a booklet on the topic for release in December.

Ken Meyers of Rockville, Md., co-chairperson of the council's curriculum development ministry group, said the undated resource "obviously will be talking about abortion" but will also address issues like capital punishment, euthanasia and gun control.

The material will establish a biblical basis for dealing with those issues but will not espouse one ethical position, Meyers said. "We will simply give people a resource for decision-making," he explained.

The material is scheduled for release one month prior to the annual observance of "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday" in the Southern Baptist Convention, which has taken a strict anti-abortion tone in recent years.

The Fellowship's reverence project is co-sponsored by the curriculum development and ethics and public policy ministry groups, which are committing \$12,000 to the project.

A similar project earlier this year addressed hunger issues.

In other business during the council's three-day meeting:

-- The ethics group agreed to underwrite the cost of an intern to work at the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a religious-liberty watchdog group in Washington, D.C.

-- The Fellowship awarded \$30,000 in scholarships to 19 Baptist theology students at eight schools. Ten are students at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, of which the Fellowship is the largest financial supporter.

The others students are at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon (Switzerland), Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis Theological Seminary, Wesley Theological Seminary and in divinity programs at Emory University, Duke University and Yale University.

Paul Duke of Kirkwood, Mo., chairperson of the theological education ministry group, said the 19 students are training to be pastors, teachers,

urban ministers, chaplains and missionaries. "We are anticipating triple the scholarship money in the coming year," he added.

-- The Fellowship will conduct a comprehensive analysis of its communications needs this fall, with a goal of hiring a staff person for communications, council members were told. Meanwhile, the Fellowship will continue publishing its current newsletter, develop a smaller newsletter for churches and individuals that contribute to the CBF, and buy a page in every issue of the newspaper Baptists Today to promote the Fellowship's work.

The Fellowship is selling two \$18.50 videotapes about its work -- one describing the organization and its funding plans and one showing highlights from this year's general assembly.

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-- By Greg Warner

'Hamburg Agreement' may resolve  
FMB, European Baptist tensions

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- A 10-point agreement approved Sept. 12 by representatives of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and European Baptists may heal strained relations between the two, say denominational leaders in the United States and Europe.

The document, being referred to as the "Hamburg Agreement," emerged from a Sept. 11-12 meeting near Hamburg, Germany, of selected FMB trustees and staff and leaders of the European Baptist Federation.

In approving it, the representatives promised to make "continuous communication, on-going dialogue and regular review" the basis of their future relations.

The EBF Council will consider the document at its meeting Sept. 28-Oct. 1 in Hoddesdon, England. FMB trustees will examine the agreement at their next meeting, Oct. 12-14. Both bodies must ratify the document before it is effective.

The agreement "will signal a new beginning in our relationship," Karl-Heinz Walter, EBF general secretary, told European Baptist Press Service. "...I expect unanimous approval of both the EBF Council and the FMB trustees."

"My own expectations for this meeting have been surpassed," said Don Kammerdiener, FMB executive vice president, of the Hamburg meeting. "I feel deeply that what we have done is right."

The Hamburg Agreement may resolve the year-old conflict between European Baptists and the FMB, a disagreement punctuated by charges of broken promises and theological liberalism.

In October 1991, FMB trustees, long uncomfortable with what they said was liberal teaching at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, eliminated a \$365,000 annual contribution to the school, European Baptists' only international seminary.

Baptists leaders in Europe, who said the FMB did not alert them in advance to the cut of nearly 40 percent from the school's operating budget, warned the action jeopardized continued relations between Baptists on the two continents.

European leaders charge the defunding violated the board's pledge to continue financial assistance through the end of the century. FMB trustees

countered that Ruschlikon had failed to come through on its promise to employ more conservative professors.

The rift threatened to undermine Southern Baptist mission work in Europe, where missionaries typically may serve only at the invitation of Baptist unions or conventions, and paved the way for new ministries by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The Fellowship, an organization of Southern Baptists dissatisfied with the conservative direction taken by their denomination, now supports eight missionaries on the continent.

These issues were discussed in a "frank and open" manner during the mid-September meeting and "carried out in an atmosphere of Christian love," according to the preamble of the Hamburg Agreement.

Although the two dozen national unions affiliated with the EBF are not bound by the document, it encourages them "to proceed with partnership relations with the Foreign Mission Board." It also urges the FMB "to accept the on-going challenge of the whole of Europe as a mission field and to strengthen partnership with European Baptists"

Continued relations with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship are specifically not prohibited by the agreement, a point apparently insisted on by the Europeans. FMB trustees had earlier assured European Baptists that those relations would not adversely affect their ties to the board.

However, "any element of competition in developing relations with both bodies" will be discouraged, European Baptists maintained.

In a clear response to lingering distrust of the theological orthodoxy of European Baptists, the Hamburg Agreement affirms that "Baptists are a people who believe in the complete trustworthiness of the Bible and are committed to Jesus Christ as Lord."

It adds, "Likewise, they are a people of confessional faith rather than of a creedal faith."

The agreement notes that "FMB representatives...stated the principal objective of their board continues to be evangelism which results indigenous Baptist churches."

Some Baptists -- including two top FMB administrators who resigned in protest last January -- have charged the Ruschlikon defunding revealed a "global fundamentalist strategy" on the part of FMB trustees which would export Southern Baptists' decade-long theological conflict overseas.

For European Baptists, with a long history of religious wars, the specter of theological conflict has been especially worrisome.

FMB trustees have vigorously refuted the global agenda charge, a denial now enshrined in the Hamburg Agreement.

However, European Baptists' continued concern for harmony is evident in the document's request that meeting participants "urge those they were representing to do everything in their power to avoid disrupting this unity; rather, 'to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.'"

Strongly endorsed by the Hamburg Agreement is Sam James, elected in June as vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. James succeeds Isam Ballenger, who resigned in January to protest the defunding of Ruschlikon seminary.

European Baptists had carefully watched the election, believing the trustees' choice could signal the direction the board would take in their region. The Europeans "recognized in (James) the kind of attitude to mission and Christian spirit which should lead to fruitful cooperation between the FMB and European Baptists," notes the agreement. "They look forward to working closely with him in the future."

Maintaining good EBF-FMB relations will require "continuous communication, on-going dialogue and regular review regarding work and

common concerns," said participants in the Hamburg meeting who agreed to make these factors "the basis for their future partnership."

Also defining future relationships will be the so-called "Dorfweil Statement," drafted by European Baptists in January and endorsed by the FMB in June.

The Dorfweil principles are:

1. Mutual respect in which the partners deal with each other with candor but with Christian courtesy.
2. Spiritual freedom in which the partners, working within a common commitment, recognize and welcome differences of outlook and diversity of practice.
3. Moral integrity in which the partners honor and maintain solemnly made agreements.
4. Genuine consultation in which the partners confer together and aim for mutual consent.
5. Reciprocal sharing in which the partners learn, work and grow together, each giving and receiving.

In an apparent attempt to diminish confusion surrounding the influx of American volunteers to the newly opened countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Hamburg Agreement urges that "wherever possible, requests for career personnel and projects involving volunteer personnel should be arranged in consultation with SBC missionaries, unions and/or the European Baptist Federation."

Participants also acknowledged the need to confront "urgent issues in Europe today, such as secularism, nominalism, religious bigotry, mass migration, the growth of non-Christian religions and ethnic conflicts."

In addition to Kammerdiener and James, other Americans at the Hamburg meeting were Hal Lee, associate to the area director for Europe; and trustees John Jackson of Fairfield, Calif., the board's chairman; Skip Smith of Houston, chairman of the board's Europe committee; and Bill Blanchard of Soddy Daisy, Tenn., vice chairman of the Europe committee.

European leaders in addition to Walter were Theo Angeloff, president of the Baptist Union of Bulgaria; Peter Barber, General secretary of the Baptist Union of Scotland; David Coffey, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain; Hans Guderian, home missions secretary for the Baptist Union of Germany; Wiard Popkes, chairman of trustees of Ruschlikon seminary; and John Merritt; a Southern Baptist missionary who serves as general secretary of the European Baptist Convention and as EBF president.

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Somalia: Just the tip  
of iceberg, experts say

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The need in Africa is overwhelming, and the world's response has been "underwhelming," said David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World, a Christian anti-hunger organization.

Beckmann and seven other hunger experts who recently returned from Africa gave grim reports of the conditions there at a Sept. 14 press conference at the National Press Club in Washington.

In the Republic of Somalia, 25 percent of children under 5 have died in the past 12 months, with 200 children dying daily from starvation in the country's capital city of Mogadishu.

According to the Red Cross, Somalia has a 95 percent malnutrition rate, with 1.5 million people at risk of starving to death by the end of the year.

But the hunger experts said Somalia's devastation is part of a greater disaster sweeping the continent, with nearly 60 million people at risk.

Africa's worst drought of the century is compounded by civil wars in Somalia and Mozambique. Nancy Aossey, executive director of International Medical Corps, told reporters Somalia is "engulfed in anarchy where gunmen and looters are in control of the country."

She advocated a strong United Nations presence in Somalia to help negotiate peace.

"This is a man-made disaster," Aossey said. "It is unethical for the world to stand by and let this happen."

Mozambique, which also is embroiled in civil war, threatens to become the next Somalia in terms of death and devastation, said Beckmann. In the past decade, 1 million people have died in Mozambique as a result of war, according to Bread for the World statistics.

John Hammock, executive director of Oxfam America, said: "Mozambique is a horror show playing to an international stage that is empty.... Unless we act now we will have another Somalia."

Philip Johnston, president of CARE, said the conditions in Mozambique were among the "most revolting" he has seen.

The people of Africa want peace, a better way of life, added Sharon Pauling, Africa policy analyst for Bread for the World. Even though the cold war is over and apartheid may be on the way out, the international community must become more involved in conflict resolution, she said.

While drought, famine and war seem to be insurmountable obstacles, humanitarian relief is making a difference, the experts said. But those in need simply are not getting enough aid. Africans are not hopeless or helpless but they do need for the world to provide relief, both short-term and long-term, they said. Sending food is not enough; Africans also need seeds for long-term relief, Hammock said.

Jeffrey Clark, an Africa analyst who is a consultant for the U.S. Committee for Refugees, said the lack of swift and satisfactory relief is a "collective failure." The United Nations virtually has been absent in many ways, he said, noting the United States has led some efforts but has failed to do as much as it could or ought to do.

But it is not too late to make a difference for some people who are waiting for the world to act, Clark added.

Tom Getman, director of government relations for World Vision, said the international community is allowing a humanitarian disaster in which children use automatic weapons to secure a cup of water. Teenagers in Southern Africa are not shooting each other for fancy tennis shoes or sports jackets but for a plate of food, he said.

Getman said three actions are needed to help eradicate the problem. First, private relief organizations need more donations. Americans are providing only 3 percent of the aid they contributed during the 1984-85 Ethiopian famine, according to InterAction, an American council for voluntary international action.

Several factors account for the comparatively small American response, he said, including a glut of national and international disasters that have created "compassion competition." The slumping American economy also contributes to a lower response, he said.

Without a massive response from the American public, the relief organizations cannot complete the work in Somalia and other parts of

Africa, Getman said.

Getman also called for increased media exposure and U.S. governmental action -- particularly congressional approval of \$80 million in disaster aid for Africa.

The devastation can be reversed, he said, adding "chaos must not be a pretext for doing little or nothing."

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Richard Jackson to retire  
from North Phoenix pulpit

By Greg Warner

PHOENIX, Ariz. (ABP) -- Richard Jackson, 54, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., for the past 25 years, announced his retirement from the pastorate Sept. 13.

Jackson, one of Southern Baptists' most popular pulpiteers, said he will continue his preaching ministry but will not accept another pastorate.

Since Jackson became pastor in 1967, the church has grown from about 200 members to 23,000, making it the largest Southern Baptist church in the West. In that time the congregation has baptized 20,000 people and has often led the Southern Baptist Convention in annual baptisms.

While his Sunday morning announcement came as a surprise to his congregation, Jackson said it was no sudden decision. He said he decided 30 years ago that he did not want to outlive his usefulness in the pastorate.

"I would like to have the grace to step out before the people say it's time," he told Associated Baptist Press. Jackson said there was no other reason for his sudden announcement. "I pulled the trigger; no one else did."

The Texas native, who has volunteered to remain as pastor for up to a year while the church looks for a successor, quipped, "If I were being shot at, I don't think I'd be hanging around for the funeral."

Although the church has felt the impact of hard economic times, rumors of financial problems are "absolutely false," Jackson said. "The church has never been in financial trouble.... The church is in the best position its ever been in. In fact we've reduced indebtedness by \$15 million to about \$10 million."

After announcing his retirement to church members Sept. 13, Jackson preached a sermon about the church's future, predicting "the best is still to come."

Jackson said he is convinced the move is God's will. "It's best for me and best for the church," he told ABP.

In a letter to church members, Jackson said that in the early 1970s -- when he led the church to begin the move to its current 40-acre facility -- "the Father assured me that I would spend my entire pastoral ministry in this place."

Jackson, who has been a pastor since he was 19, suggested his all-out approach to ministry has taken a toll. "I've pastored 50 years in 35," he said. "I'm not burned out, but I'm not going to wait until I am."

Although he has offered to stay at North Phoenix until his 55th birthday Aug. 3, 1993, Jackson said it is not likely to take that long for the church to find another pastor -- "maybe three to six months."

He said he and his wife, Wanda, would like to continue to be a part of North Phoenix Church, and he has offered to serve as pastor emeritus. "We

pledge to stay close enough to help and far enough away to not hurt," he said in his letter to church members, printed in the congregation's newsletter.

Once relieved of his pastoral duties, Jackson said he will focus on other avenues of ministry, including crusades, revivals and writing. He is president of the Richard Jackson Center for Preaching and Evangelism, a private, non-profit organization located on the campus of Grand Canyon College in Phoenix which provides seminars and for-credit Bible courses.

"I'm thrilled to believe God's got something else for me," he told ABP.

For 10 years before going to North Phoenix, Jackson was pastor of five churches in Texas.

He was nominated for Southern Baptist Convention president four times -- 1977, 1980, 1987 and 1988 -- but lost each time. In 1987 and 1988 he drew the support of Southern Baptist moderate-conservatives, making him a prominent figure in the SBC controversy. His loss to Florida pastor Jerry Vines in 1988 was by the narrowest of margins -- 672 votes from among 31,274 cast -- and was the closest the moderate-conservatives ever came to wresting the presidency from fundamental-conservatives.

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