
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

Phone: (904) 262-6626 Fax: (904) 262-7745 CServe: 70420.73

November 3, 1992

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Parks' letter 'harmful,' trustee chairman says
- * Acting president says FMB won't 'do battle' with Fellowship Correction
- * Retired Oklahoma exec endorses Fellowship
- * Ethics board elects chairperson, approves increased budget
- * Vision, 'hand of God' cited in church growth
- * Small church taught Hemphill lesson in church growth

Parks' letter 'harmful,'
trustee chairman says

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Most trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board believe a recent letter to missionaries from outgoing FMB President Keith Parks was "harmful" to the cause of missions, according to trustee chairman John Jackson.

In his own letter to missionaries, Jackson said he was "shocked" that Parks, "in the waning hours of his administration," would send "shock waves" throughout the mission field and the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I have to believe that his letter was not intended to harm missions," wrote Jackson, a California pastor. "However, most, if not all, of the trustees view it as harmful to relationships between staff, missionaries and trustees."

Parks, in his Oct. 23 letter to the FMB's 3,900 missionaries, said the agency is undergoing significant changes in philosophy and methodology -- changes which he said influenced his decision to retire earlier than planned.

Trustees have replaced mission principles with "ultra-conservative" theology in decision-making, Parks wrote, and stepped up scrutiny of new missionaries and staff members. The result is an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust and an expectation of conformity at the FMB, he said.

Parks' sudden retirement, effective Oct. 31, climaxed a year of turmoil at the FMB, during which relations with European Baptists have been strained and two FMB vice presidents and several dozen missionaries have resigned over some of the same changes cited by Parks.

Chairman Jackson was joined by Don Kammerdiener, the FMB's acting president and Parks' top associate, in writing to assure missionaries and minimize the damage from Parks' letter. Both letters were dated Nov. 3.

Jackson, who said trustees disagree with most of Parks' charges, registered specific objections to two claims -- that trustees are overly involved in administrative decisions and that they have changed the role of missionaries.

"As I have previously stated, I do not believe the vast majority of the

trustees have become involved in administrative affairs at the board, nor do they desire to," Jackson wrote.

Some trustees have violated their proper role "on a few occasions" by making requests or demands of staff, Jackson conceded, but he has intervened when made aware of it. Such mistakes have been made by "God-fearing men and women who are attempting to follow God's leadership," he said.

And, with one exception, Jackson wrote, "I cannot recall a policy change enacted by trustees which has changed the role of a missionary." The exception was a plan to focus more missionary time on evangelism and church growth, but that was introduced by Parks, Jackson said.

"We have no intention to threaten your position or hamper your work," Jackson wrote. "Rather we are elated that you have not allowed rifts and disagreements to disrupt your mission efforts."

Jackson said his "primary reason" for writing the missionaries was "to tell you that you are loved, respected, honored and admired by the staff, trustees and the Southern Baptist constituency...."

Kammerdiener, one of two top candidates to succeed Parks, took issue with three charges.

-- There has been no "substantive change" in the process by which new missionaries are appointed, Kammerdiener wrote, "nor is any review of the process currently underway or contemplated." Parks had charged missionary candidates are asked to affirm four examples of biblical inerrancy, while other candidates are not pursuing appointment because they disagree with changes at the FMB.

-- Kammerdiener affirmed his commitment to "the primary role" of career missionaries, while acknowledging the ongoing "struggle to find balance" between the use of career missionaries and short-term volunteers. Parks charged an increased emphasis by trustees on volunteers is creating "an imbalance overseas." But Kammerdiener noted Parks himself proposed a major increase in volunteers last August.

-- Kammerdiener affirmed "the need for a professionally credible and free news policy" at the FMB. Parks had charged pressure on the FMB news staff to report only "positive" news threatened the staff's credibility.

Kammerdiener went on to assure missionaries they would not be penalized for criticizing trustees. Neither will he "demean" those who choose to leave the FMB, which presumably would include the 14 FMB missionaries who have joined the mission program of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Europe.

And he assured missionaries the FMB's pattern of "openness to diversity and minority opinions" would continue.

Parks was unavailable for comment on the latest round in the dispute.

-30-

-- By Greg Warner

Acting president says FMB won't
'do battle' with Fellowship

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board will continue to work with all evangelical Christians, including those in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Don Kammerdiener said Nov. 2, his first day on the job as the agency's acting president.

"We've moved to work with all 'Great Commission Christians,'" Kammerdiener told the FMB's Richmond-based staff during a question-and-answer

session. "It would be hollow to say we would not work with other Baptists."

Although he said he is not predicting any kind of "merger" with the Fellowship, he emphasized: "This board does not have time to do battle with other Christians. We'll work with anyone who shares our goal and does it in a Christ-honoring way."

FMB trustees selected Kammerdiener in August to lead the mission agency while the search for a permanent president continues. Keith Parks retired as president Oct. 31, citing disagreements with trustees over missiological principles and changes instituted at the agency by trustees.

Kammerdiener, one of two leading candidates to succeed Parks, attempted to assuage concerns raised by the former president that the FMB staff will be expected to support the Southern Baptist Convention's shift to theological right.

"I've never been asked to identify with the conservative resurgence....," said Kammerdiener. "I'm on the side of foreign missions, and I believe that's where the vast majority of trustees and staff want to be."

However, he stressed that employees' attitudes toward the board are an important component in the convention's perception of its foreign mission enterprise. "If I project one kind of an image in this group...and then on other occasions say, 'It's tough working at the FMB,' that undercuts the board," he said.

"As long as we are part of this arena we should be loyal to it."

Kammerdiener expressed support for maintaining openness in news reporting of FMB affairs. Some trustees have criticized news accounts of board meetings by both FMB reporters and outside news sources as biased and inaccurate. The criticisms have raised concerns that restrictions could be placed on the board's news office.

"It is my contention that Baptists and anyone else work best when they have all the information," he said. "The (FMB) communications office should be free to do their work. I think we have a good press corps."

Trustee chairman John Jackson, who joined Kammerdiener at the question-and-answer session, said, "I applaud the press, even though that's not to say I don't sometimes disagree with it."

Jackson, a California pastor, also appeared to disagree with some trustees' recent criticisms of a recent Associated Baptist Press story about the agency.

At the board's October meeting, trustee Paul Pressler charged the story -- which quoted European Baptists saying that trustees had apologized for their defunding of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon -- was a "false report."

However, Jackson said the story was "fair journalism." He added, however, he disagreed with the Europeans' statements.

"We don't want to curtail the press," he said. "We just want to have a fair accounting of accurate facts with the way they were reported."

"I don't see any need for changes. I think the press is doing a pretty good job."

.....
CORRECTION: In the Oct. 27 ABP story "FMB vice president resigns...", it was incorrectly stated in the 4th paragraph that Betty Law was the first female vice president at the Foreign Mission Board. According to the FMB, she was the second. We apologize for the error.
.....

Retired Oklahoma executive
endorses Fellowship

By Greg Warner

OKLAHOMA CITY (ABP) -- The man who led Oklahoma Baptists to an unprecedented commitment to Southern Baptist missions endorsed the competing missions program of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Oct. 30.

In Oklahoma, Joe Ingram's name is virtually synonymous with the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified budget that supports missions and ministries at the state and national level.

As executive director of Oklahoma Baptists from 1971 to 1986, he led the state convention to raise its missions gifts to record levels and to send half the money it received from churches to the national convention -- one of only two state conventions to reach that goal.

"I promoted the Cooperative Program as the best way to do missions" and "no one ever questioned my Southern Baptist loyalty," said Ingram, who retired in 1986.

But "problems" in that system now make alternatives like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship necessary, he told members of the group's Oklahoma chapter.

Ingram said he has become "painfully aware" of those problems, which critics say have transformed the Southern Baptist Convention into a dogmatic denomination more concerned with theological orthodoxy than cooperation with other Baptists.

Ingram said he was not being critical of Southern Baptist leaders, who have "a legal right to do what they are doing today.... The real issue is whether or not their actions are within the spirit of the principles of cooperation that pour from the New Testament."

Leaders of the SBC have criticized the Fellowship for draining dollars away from the traditional Cooperative Program and into the Fellowship's own mission programs.

But Ingram said those leaders should be reminded that the Cooperative Program is merely "a tool" of cooperation and not the goal itself. Churches have "the New Testament prerogative to choose the tools" they use to cooperate, he said. "A true New Testament church may not relinquish its sovereignty to any group or convention."

"I am...grateful that you and thousands like you across Southern Baptist life have determined to preserve what I consider to be a New Testament approach to missions," Ingram told Fellowship members.

Although some critics insist those who support the Fellowship are not loyal Southern Baptists and should leave the denomination, Ingram disagreed.

"Your church is a thorough-going Southern Baptist church when you, under the Lordship of Christ, practice cooperative missions giving, by whatever name you choose to call it."

"I speak without rancor, anger or criticism," Ingram said. "Yet I know I stand to be criticized for my appearance here today.... However, I stand before you as one who is answerable only to my Lord."

Ingram spoke during the opening session of the first annual general assembly of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma Oct. 30-31. The statewide organization, formed last February, adopted a constitution and budget at the October meeting.

About 400 people from 51 churches registered for the two-day meeting, held at an Oklahoma City hotel.

Response to formation of the Fellowship chapter in Oklahoma -- considered one of the most conservative states -- has surprised even the

group's organizers.

"I cannot believe what has happened in the last seven months," said moderator Dan Hobbs of Norman, a retired university administrator and former member of the SBC Executive Committee. One Norman layman donated \$50,000 to start the organization, which has opened its own office.

Hobbs, a deacon in First Baptist Church of Norman, said most of the organization's 1,000 members come from either 100-year-old traditional congregations, and therefore are "not a fringe or lunatic element," or churches in university communities, and therefore are "educated people who think for themselves. That's not bad."

The membership, Hobbs said, includes "the lonely and the excluded," such as an allegedly liberal Sunday school teacher forced to quit teaching, a divorced deacon forced to resign, and a lonely pastor unable to find like-minded colleagues in his city.

Hobbs said the Oklahoma Fellowship is not populated by liberals. "A liberal is one who does not have enough truth to stand on. We are not liberals. We don't know all the truth, but we know enough to take a stand."

He said the Oklahoma group "has essentially been a lay movement," in part because of the professional risk ministers face by identifying with the moderate-conservative group.

"All moments of opportunity are filled with risk," said Mike Boyd, a layman from Tulsa, who warned the participants they may be "vilified, ostracized or at least misunderstood."

The general assembly, arranged around a theme of "Free and Faithful," featured a variety of creative worship elements, including interpretative dance and dramatized Scripture. The themes of faith and freedom surfaced frequently in testimonies and in dramatic presentations from two literary classics, A Man For All Seasons and The Brothers Karamazov.

"Freedom is the water that nourishes the roots of Baptists like us," said William Johnson, pastor of Northwest Baptist Church of Ardmore in a testimony.

John Hewett, former moderator of the national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, told the Oklahomans their movement is "a tonic to the spirit of free Baptists everywhere."

"Stand firm for what you believe," urged Hewett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C. "Answer only to God for your heart, soul, mind and strength. Resist the efforts of any who would work out your salvation for you, or tell you that you have to define your theology in their terms."

The principle of freedom also was evident in the group's constitution and bylaws, which were debated and adopted on the second day of the meeting.

"Each person is free to interpret and apply Scripture according to the dictates of his or her own conscience as led by the Holy Spirit and not according to an ecclesiastical creed or manmade document," states the preamble. Also affirmed is local church autonomy, the priesthood of believers and servant leadership -- principles which the document says are "not peripheral or tangential, but essential to being Baptist."

The constitution requires no fees or contributions for membership and does not specifically limit membership to Baptists. That caused several participants to wonder aloud if, like the SBC, the organization would be vulnerable to a takeover. No amendments were made, however, and the documents were adopted unanimously.

Also approved was a \$52,200 budget for 1993 and a slate of officers. Succeeding Hobbs as moderator is Marolyn Dowdy of Moore. Terry Hopkins of Shawnee was picked as moderator elect and Drexel Malone of Shawnee was chosen as recorder.

Ethics board elects chairperson,
approves increased budget

LAURENS, S.C. (ABP) -- The election of a new chairperson, adoption of an increased budget, and final preparations for a national conference on the family highlighted an Oct. 22 meeting of the board of directors of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

Board members elected David Hull, pastor of First Baptist Church of Laurens, S.C., as chairperson. Hull succeeds Joel Snider, pastor of Crieveewood Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn.

"I think that Baptists need a strong voice that is a positive voice in the whole field of ethics," Hull said.

The center was founded in 1991 by moderate Southern Baptists as an alternative to the increasingly conservative tone of the Christian Life Commission, the ethics agency of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Since its inception, Hull said, he has been excited "about the approach that the BCE was going to take to doing ethics -- not so much telling people what they have to believe, but focusing on providing people with information and being a positive resource."

Hull said he plans to "continue the good work" begun by outgoing chairman Snider, "which is to get the center off to a good beginning financially and with programs, conferences and staff."

One of the challenges that lies ahead of the BCE, Hull said, is raising funds to meet the center's newly adopted \$142,100 budget, which is 28 percent larger than the 1992 budget of \$111,000. Part of that challenge, he explained, relates to the way in which the BCE functions.

Since the center receives no support through established Southern Baptist channels, he explained, a primary task of board and staff members is to secure funding to support the center's work. Funding for the BCE comes from individuals, churches, conference fees, the sale of resources, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"I think that what we're trying to say is that we are not just an agency of one group," Hull added. "We stand alone as a resource ready to help other groups and will, therefore, solicit funding in many different ways."

"I think that forces us to do the best we can do with the quality in the conferences and the literature that we provide. I believe there is a need, and when there is a need and you're producing quality work, then people will support it. So we're not fearful about all of this, but we do know that there's work to do to undergird the budget."

Hull said an example of the quality programming the BCE is working to provide is a national conference on the family that is scheduled for Feb. 15-16, 1993, in Nashville. Following a presidential campaign filled with rhetoric about family values, Hull said, it is time for "Christian folks concentrating on ethics to focus on the family."

To accomplish that goal, he said, the center has recruited a variety of speakers to address the theme of "Hope, Help and Healing for the American Family."

"It is a time for hope, not for dismay," Hull said. "A lot of the rhetoric that we hear is deploring what the family is and what it's going to be. But I think for Christians it is a time for hope."

"But it's also a time when the family needs help. I think we've planned speakers and conferences that will provide very practical help for the family."

"And clearly there's a lot of hurt. As a pastor I see this in the lives

of families. So we hope to provide a setting where healing can happen and where people -- both ministers and laypersons -- can be trained to heal."

-30-

-- By Kathy Palen

Vision, 'hand of God'
cited in church growth

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Vision, Sunday school, families and God's supernatural power are keys to church growth cited by Elmer Towns and Ken Hemphill at a conference in Louisville, Ky., Oct. 22.

Towns, dean at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., and Hemphill, church growth director working jointly with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Sunday School Board, spoke at Highview Baptist Church's "Church in the 21st Century" conference. They were among 13 keynote speakers at the three-day meeting.

Both men presented individual messages, then joined in a question-and-answer session with David Dockery, dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The bottom line for church growth is not methods or marketing, Hemphill stressed. "Genuine, lasting church growth is a supernatural event. Methods and marketing cannot replace the supernatural touch of the hand of God."

Hemphill advises all who seek church growth to begin with intensive prayer, both individually and as a congregation. Pastors make a mistake when they copy someone else's plan for church growth without finding out what God's plan is for their particular church, he warned.

"Get your people praying together first," Hemphill said. "Good church growth is slow. Spend some time. Let your people catch the vision from God."

Once that is understood, there are some things common to growing churches, Towns and Hemphill said.

Here's a summary of some of their advice:

-- Families. Modern churches can be built by building strong families, Towns said. He cited a 1989 Gallup poll finding that 76 percent of all new church members in America are between the ages of 18 and 36. "Those who are really being reached for Christ are the young adults. They are coming back to God's house, and we can reach them if we do it right."

Churches that reach young families provide help for their marriages, families and finances, Towns said.

-- Vision. "The first step to build a great church of God is a dream in the heart of the man of God," Towns said. "You never build great churches on history lessons. You build great churches based on what God can do."

Hemphill agreed. "The church that God uses says, 'I will risk anything for the sake of the gospel, for the sake of the Great Commission,'" he said.

-- Sunday school. Sunday school is no longer the thing that draws people to a church, Towns said. Worship is more likely to play that role. But strong Bible study classes are essential to growth and health, he added. "The platform will attract, but small groups will bond people to the church."

-- Homogeneous groups. The small groups that bond people to a church work best when the people in the group have things in common, Hemphill said.

For example, he suggested young couples with children have different needs than young couples without children. "For a young couple without

children, going out for a night on the town means going out for a night on the town. But for a young couple with children, a night out means finding a McDonald's with a playground."

-- Committed teachers. Sunday school teachers are the extension of the pastor into the congregation, Towns said. "Everything the pastor is to his congregation, the teacher is to his or her class."

Teachers ought to be facilitators of Bible learning and discussion, he said, as well as caregivers and disciplers. Teachers also ought to be both men and women, Towns said. He cited the successful model of Second Baptist Church in Houston, where every adult class has male and female co-teachers.

-- Preschool program. The preschool division is "the most critical area in staffing and growing a church," Hemphill said. "It is essential to reaching young couples."

When assigning space and making renovations, make preschool the top priority, he advised. "Adults are just about flexible enough to meet anywhere if they know their kids are well cared for."

-- Multiple services. By the turn of the century, 50 percent of all churches will offer multiple services, Towns predicted. This trend contributes to better stewardship of a church's facilities and helps bring in people who either cannot or will not attend church at traditional times, both he and Hemphill said.

-- Church elsewhere. The old model of church growth sought to bring people into the church building, but the new model calls for taking the church outside the building, Towns said. As an example of doing this successfully, he cited First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas, which has more than 200 satellite congregations meeting in apartment complexes.

-- Baby Busters. While much attention has been focused on the Baby Boom generation, churches must begin to focus on the Boomers' children, who have been called Baby Busters, Towns said. The two generations are significantly different, he explained: Boomers had great dreams, but Busters have seen dreams shattered.

-- World vision. Growing churches look beyond themselves to see the needs of the community and the world, Hemphill said. "Real church growth has a concern not only for growth in the local church...but for reaching the world."

-30-

Small church taught Hemphill
lesson in church growth

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- A small Kentucky church taught Ken Hemphill an important lesson about church growth, he said.

Hemphill, who now serves as church growth director with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Sunday School Board, spoke at a church growth conference at Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., Oct. 23.

Prior to assuming that post, he was pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., which quadrupled in size during his tenure.

But it was a lesson about vision he learned as a student pastor at Wolf Creek Baptist Church in Battletown, Ky., that started him on this course, he said.

While a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Hemphill served the church, which averaged 28 in Sunday morning attendance and about five or six on Sunday evenings, he recalled.

Encouraged by a seminary professor to help his people "redream the dream" of their mission, he announced one Sunday that the next Sunday night they would talk about their dreams for the church's future.

That night, the parking lot was packed when he arrived, he recalled. When Hemphill opened the floor for discussion, an awkward silence prevailed for two or three minutes, he said. Finally, a man stood up and said he thought the church needed a basketball court.

The suggestion struck the young pastor as irrelevant, Hemphill explained. "I'm thinking about baptisms and Sunday school space, and this guy wants a basketball court."

But after a moment of inspiration from God, Hemphill said, he realized the idea had some merit. So he told the man that was a good idea, much to everyone's surprise.

That affirmation opened the floodgate for all kinds of ideas, Hemphill said. Even though the church had no youth, members decided they should have a youth choir with uniforms and a bus for traveling. Members also said they thought it was time to waterproof the basement and install indoor plumbing.

By the time the dream session was over, a long list of items had been accumulated.

But afterward, Hemphill said, he realized he didn't know how the church could accomplish any of the ideas because there was no money available.

However, he soon discovered surplus materials were available from nearby Fort Knox to waterproof the basement. So he called a church work day.

When no one showed up, Hemphill found a young man who recently had become a Christian and enlisted his help and the help of some of his friends who weren't church members or Christians.

As church members drove by during the day, they got excited about what was happening and stopped to help. And by the end of the day, the first project on the dream list was done.

That evening, a man who had been there helping said to Hemphill, "What are we going to do next?" The question struck the pastor as odd since the man wasn't even a church member.

When he told the man he didn't know how the church could afford to build a basketball court, the man explained that his business was finishing concrete and he would take care of the supplies.

After 18 months, the church had accomplished every item on its dream list, Hemphill said, and more than 40 people had been baptized into the congregation.

"What happened? The people had a great vision that came from an encounter with God," he explained. "It was not the preaching. It had nothing to do with organizational skill or ability."

The moral of the story, Hemphill said, is this: When God's people look to him for guidance and begin to dream, they can accomplish many things they never thought possible.

***** END *****