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

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Parks says he's interested in post
if Fellowship stays Southern Baptist

By Greg Warner

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Keith Parks told leaders of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship he would be interested in leading their missions program if the Fellowship intends to remain Southern Baptist, recruit new missionaries and target the world's populations most isolated from the gospel.

Parks and his wife, Helen Jean, met for two hours with the Fellowship's missions committee Nov. 19 but did not respond to the group's offer to make him head of the Fellowship's 10-month-old missions program. He said he and Helen Jean will give them an answer "fairly soon."

Parks, 65, left the helm of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Oct. 31 in a dispute with trustees over missions philosophy. He has complained that the 13-year controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention has infiltrated the FMB and excluded many loyal Southern Baptists from leadership in the denomination.

The Fellowship was formed two years ago by Southern Baptists unhappy with the conservative domination of the SBC and its agencies. Although some participants see the Fellowship as the forerunner of a new Baptist convention, most say they have no intention of becoming anything other than Southern Baptists.

Parks advised the Fellowship Nov. 19 to keep its missions program "under the broad umbrella of identity as Southern Baptists."

"If this group decides it has to create a new identity to do this kind of work, you're going to limit it to a very, very small group of folks, because churches are not going to quit being Southern Baptist churches," he warned.

However, Parks said, many Southern Baptists of all theological stripes are doing foreign missions outside the framework of the FMB. People don't

cease to be Southern Baptists because they work outside the denominational structure, he said.

Southern Baptists get their denominational identity from the local church they attend, he said, not the annual convention meeting or SBC agencies. "The essence of being Southern Baptist is the local church," he said.

"I don't plan -- if I can avoid it -- to allow those who have, in my estimation, turned the convention away from what I think is a genuine expression of Baptist convictions to also rob me of a Southern Baptist church identity," he said. "I'm think I'm more Southern Baptist than the folks in control of it."

Parks rejected the suggestion from Morris Chapman, the SBC's chief executive, that the Fellowship should leave the SBC as a matter of integrity. "Because we do have integrity, we have to stay in the Southern Baptist Convention and continue to express Baptist beliefs in the context of missions," he said.

Both the Parkses pointed out SBC conservatives did not pull out of the SBC when they formed their own seminaries.

"Why can't we have two mission boards?" asked Helen Jean Parks. The Fellowship should not compete with the FMB or intend it harm, she said, but should say to the FMB, "'God bless you. And those that have taken you over, let them support you now, because many of them do not.'"

Parks acknowledged he is endorsing a "societal approach" to missions and conceded, "I've argued against it all my life."

But he added: "There is tremendous advantage to just saying, 'Sure, we're a society.... This is a societal approach, because we don't plan to be another denomination. Since we couldn't be part of the denomination to which we belong, we had to have a society.'"

Afterward, committee members generally affirmed the vision outlined by the Parkses, including their determination to remain identified as Southern Baptists. "They are where we are," said Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, retired executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, an SBC auxiliary that raises most of the financial support for Southern Baptist missions.

"We can be a channel for you to carry out your vision," Crumpler told the Parkses. Concerning their vision and the Fellowship's own design, Crumpler said, "I see the visions as being one. And it makes me want to shout!"

Keith Parks later told Associated Baptist Press he felt "affirmed and surprised" by the committee's commitment to target unreached population groups. "That removed a big question for me."

Parks said he is aware some members of the Fellowship want the group to split from the SBC, but he is not interested in fighting over the issue. While he can't control the course the group takes in the future, he added, "If their commitment and mine is we are going to do this as Southern Baptists, I'll take them at their word."

If Parks takes the job as missions coordinator for the Fellowship, it will give the fledgling organization instant international credibility and, some predict, open the floodgates of financial support here at home.

Parks urged the Fellowship to establish a program that is "simple, frugal, flexible, mobile." "Set a pattern, run up a flag, and I think a lot of people will rally around it," he said.

Informed of Parks' comments, FMB trustee chairman John Jackson said, "A gauntlet has been thrown in the face of the FMB and Southern Baptists."

Jackson said Parks' remarks to the Fellowship, coupled with a letter he wrote to missionaries in late October criticizing trustees, "indicate a conscious or unconscious attempt to destroy foreign missions as it is now known."

"To think about, much less assume, this new (Fellowship) position is to

leave his (Parks') great heritage and legacy," said Jackson, a pastor in Fairfield, Calif.

When Parks retired after 13 years as FMB president and 37 years as a missionary, he said that he had no specific plans for the future but that he was not through with missions.

"Where I want to spend my time and energy and effort," he told Fellowship leaders, is in trying to reach the quarter of the world's population that has never had a chance to hear the gospel -- what some missiologists call "World A."

He cited statistics that indicate Christians employ 240,000 missionaries and spend 99.9 percent of their contributions to preach to "World C," the 34 percent of the population that already claims Christianity. Another 20,000 missionaries and 0.9 percent of contributions are invested in "World B," the 40 percent of the population that has heard the gospel but rejected it.

Only 1,000 missionaries and 0.1 percent of contributions -- one cent of every \$100 -- are invested in "World A," the 26 percent of the population that has never heard the gospel. These people are often inaccessible and sometimes hostile to the gospel, he said. "The easy places have been taken."

Parks said the FMB in recent years has turned its attention to World A, but progress has been "very, very slow." Since the FMB has targeted only 300 of the world's 3,000 unreached people groups, he said, a Fellowship program targeting World A would pose no threat to the FMB. "I don't want to tear down what I've spent my life building up," he added.

Parks told Fellowship leaders it would be "self-defeating" to try to duplicate or compete with the FMB, which has an annual budget of \$184 million. The Fellowship's few mission dollars -- \$2.5 million in 1993 -- could have the greatest impact in the sparse mission ground of World A, he said.

"You could throw them alongside the many dollars the Foreign Mission Board has and it's not going to make much difference," he said. "But you could throw them out there where nobody's working and it would be a significant difference."

Parks said Baptist young people -- the next crop of missionaries -- are enthusiastic about World A but not about traditional missions.

"The people who are disenchanted and disenfranchised are looking for something that is different, that is still Southern Baptist, but a way in which they can make a difference in reaching this world for Christ," he said.

Later Parks told ABP his three mission priorities -- a Southern Baptist identity, a focus on unreached populations, and a commitment to develop new missionaries -- are non-negotiable conditions for his employment in the Fellowship's missions post.

If Fellowship missions do not encompass those priorities, he said, "I would have to say, 'Fine. I'll find some other way of doing that.'"

But committee members assured Parks they share his commitment to target unreached populations and to inspire a new generation of missionaries.

"I think there is a 'World A' consciousness within us," said Ben Loring, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas. "Where we are short is strategies."

Loring read from the group's mission statement and goals -- which Parks apparently had not seen -- outlining a commitment "to sponsor and enable Christian witness within countries, cities or people groups where there is no present access to the gospel."

"Come over here and help us," Loring urged Parks. "We need somebody to pioneer where no one else has gone."

The Fellowship's mission program was born out of a controversy over FMB funding for a European Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland. When the Foreign Mission Board cut all funding for the international seminary in 1991 over charges of liberalism, "Ruschlikon" became a battle cry for critics who

said FMB trustees are imposing their brand of theological orthodoxy on Baptists overseas.

While previously the FMB had avoided most of the political intrigue that had affected other SBC agencies, Helen Jean Parks said she and her husband realized they had "crossed the Rubicon" with the defunding of Ruschlikon. The FMB's top administrators for Europe resigned in protest, and several missionaries in Europe followed.

The Fellowship offered to hire many of those who left, and since has picked up 14 FMB missionaries in Europe, many of them faculty and staff at Ruschlikon.

Keith Parks said the Ruschlikon controversy gave the Fellowship "a tremendous spurt you would not have had."

While the Fellowship should follow through on its commitment to preserve Ruschlikon, he said, it also must look ahead and chart its own course.

"As long as the work of this group is determined by the resignation of missionaries...you don't have an agenda of your own and it is essentially a reactionary mission venture," he said.

To be successful, he said, the Fellowship must inspire "commitment and sacrifice" among young people who are not responding to the call to traditional missions.

"You're going to have to start soon appointing new missionaries if you are serious about reaching the new generation that is about to be lost to Southern Baptist missions, because many of them are not going with the Foreign Mission Board. I've got the letters to prove it. They would respond to the right kind of challenge."

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War of words heats up
between Parks, trustees

By Mark Wingfield and Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- A small war of words has erupted between Keith Parks, recently retired president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, and the three most recent chairmen of the FMB's trustees.

Parks retired as FMB president Oct. 30 due to philosophical differences with trustees, whom he said were hurting mission efforts by demanding theological and political conformity.

He explicitly expressed his reasons for taking early retirement in an Oct. 23 letter to the FMB's 3,900 missionaries. In that letter, he charged trustees have replaced mission principles with "ultra-conservative" theology in decision making and have stepped up scrutiny of new missionaries and staff members.

Parks' comments first drew a sharp retort from John Jackson, the FMB's current trustee chairman and a California pastor, who issued his own letter to missionaries in response.

Now Jackson has been joined by the two immediate past trustee chairmen in rebuffing Parks' letter.

Bill Hancock and Mark Corts said they made a public response because Parks' statements could lead Baptists to "unjustified conclusions" that might keep them from giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions. Hancock is pastor of Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., and Corts is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C.

The two men say Parks' claims of changes at the FMB are "bewildering" and contradict their observation of FMB and trustee actions.

But in a subsequent interview with Associated Baptist Press, Parks said the rebuke he received from Hancock and Corts shows they are "out of touch"

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with what's been going on at the FMB.

In the Corts-Hancock letter, the two past chairmen said Parks' criticism of trustees came out of "deep disappointment in failing to gain (trustee) support to continue in his post."

In response, Parks pointed out trustees assured Southern Baptists that he had trustee support and didn't have to leave the FMB presidency. "I'm interested in seeing that they now say I couldn't have stayed in the post," Parks said.

The past chairmen said FMB decisions driven by theological interpretations in recent years "were largely those initiated by staff" rather than by trustees, as Parks charged.

They cited decisions to fire missionary teacher Michael Willett for "errant theological views" and not to appoint divorced people as missionaries. Both were approved by trustees upon Parks' recommendation, they noted.

However, those examples are "the most irrelevant things they could cite," Parks replied. "They are setting up theological straw men and knocking them down. The ultra-conservative theology is seen in the Ruschlikon action."

That action, which ignited a storm of controversy last year, defunded the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland -- a school FMB trustees said was too liberal in its teaching.

The two former chairmen also said prospective staff members never have been asked to express loyalty to the "conservative resurgence" in the SBC, as Parks charged, and missionary candidates are not asked to affirm the four examples of biblical inerrancy cited in the SBC Peace Committee report.

Parks replied the Baptist Faith and Message statement is still the written document used as guideline, "but the trustees themselves have been asking things."

For example, he cited the recent election of Mike Stroope as area director of Cooperative Services International. "Bill Sutton rushed to the microphone to say, 'We've affirmed him, now we need to know, does he affirm us?' And Ron Wilson went to the mike to say, 'He certainly does.'"

"I've been asked I don't know how many times to endorse the conservative resurgence. These two former chairmen are just out of touch and they haven't been in the meetings I've been in," Parks said.

Among other points, Hancock and Corts also said trust between FMB staff and trustees broke down in part because Parks did not build bridges to conservative trustees and because staff did not always keep trustees informed.

"Other institutional heads have sought to build such bridges and found that the institutional purposes were well served thereby," they wrote.

Parks read that statement as a reference to some seminary administrators who have attempted to facilitate orderly transitions after conservative trustees gained control. But the end result is still "drastic change," Parks said.

Parks questioned why some trustees who have supported theological changes at the FMB and other agencies later deny change has taken place. "For those who have been trying for 13 years to change things, when they reached the point of changing, to say we have not changed things doesn't make sense."

However, in yet another letter, current FMB chairman Jackson says it is not trustees who have changed but Parks.

Jackson issued a somber letter Nov. 23 in response to news that Parks may lead the new missions venture of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"To think about, much less assume, this new (Fellowship) position is to leave his (Parks') great heritage and legacy," said Jackson, a pastor in Fairfield, Calif.

Parks and his wife, Helen Jean, discussed the missions post Nov. 19-20 with the missions committee of the Fellowship, an organization of Southern

Baptists displeased with the SBC's new conservative leadership.

Parks told the Fellowship leaders that churches should support their new missions venture while remaining Southern Baptist, an arrangement Parks conceded would constitute a "societal approach" to missions. Although he has opposed such an approach all his life, he said, it now is necessary because ultra-conservatives have excluded many Southern Baptists from denominational life.

"Since we couldn't be part of the denomination to which we belong, we had to have a society," Parks said.

Jackson wrote that in the past he had defended Parks as "a man of integrity" but now questions that assessment.

He said Parks' remarks to the Fellowship, coupled with the letter he wrote to missionaries in late October criticizing trustees, "indicate a conscious or unconscious attempt to destroy foreign missions as it is now known."

"A gauntlet has been thrown in the face of the FMB and Southern Baptists," Jackson said.

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Fundamentalists make
few inroads in states

(ABP) -- The effort to extend fundamental-conservative control to Baptist life on the state level made few inroads during the recent round of state convention meetings.

In states that elected a new president from clearly identified choices, fundamental-conservatives could claim victory in only three conventions -- Kentucky, Georgia and South Carolina.

Moderate-conservatives won in at least five -- Virginia, Tennessee, Missouri, Alabama and the two-state convention of Maryland-Delaware -- and in Texas, where the incumbent president faced a rare challenge.

In two other states -- the conservative strongholds of Florida and Oklahoma -- candidates endorsed by fundamental-conservatives were defeated by nominees claiming no political allegiance. In both cases, the elections were interpreted as a rejection of organized politicking.

Fundamental-conservatives made their most surprising gains in Kentucky, a state usually dominated by moderate-conservatives. Charles Stewart, a pastor from Ashland, was elected president with the endorsement of fundamental-conservatives, who also succeeded in blocking a constitutional change.

That change would have given churches representation in the state convention without making financial contributions to the national Southern Baptist Convention, which has been controlled by fundamental-conservatives since 1979.

The Kentucky effort was directed by Terry Sammons and Mike Routt, two pastors who participated in a strategy session for fundamental-conservative state leaders last August in Memphis, Tenn.

The Memphis meeting brought together about 50 leaders from 15 states to share strategies for extending fundamental-conservative control to state conventions.

Ironically, the organizers of the meeting could report no such success in their states.

Memphis pastor and three-time SBC president Adrian Rogers, who was host and keynote speaker for the Aug. 20 Memphis meeting, nominated the fundamental-conservative candidate for president during the Tennessee convention and lost. Nashville pastor Jerry Sutton was defeated by Hendersonville pastor Leonard Markham.

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T. C. Pinckney, one of two organizers of the Memphis meeting, was easily defeated in his bid for the presidency in Virginia. Pinckney, a retired Air Force general from Alexandria, lost to Deltaville layman Walter Harrow, 877-2,888.

Perry Ellis of Dallas, co-organizer of the Memphis meeting and leader of Texas fundamental-conservatives, promoted a slate of officers at the Texas convention and lost. Rudy Hernandez lost to incumbent president Dick Maples of Bryan (1,572-4,326).

Hernandez, a San Antonio evangelist, was endorsed by two fundamental-conservative groups in Texas, including the Texas Baptist Conservative Fellowship, which Ellis serves as executive director. The group's two vice presidential nominees also lost.

In Florida, fundamental-conservatives who participated in the Memphis meeting promoted a slate of officers but lost to candidates not aligned in the political controversy. Stuart pastor Darrell Orman lost the presidential race to Delta pilot Tim Locher of Hollywood (485-595).

Orman's candidacy was endorsed in a preconvention card-writing campaign by Jacksonville pastors Jerry Vines and Homer Lindsay and two members of the SBC Executive Committee, Robert Parker and Guy Sanders. Parker represented Florida at the Memphis meeting.

In Georgia, however, fundamental-conservatives won the presidency and three of the four vice presidential slots. Dacula pastor Larry Wynn was elected president over Newnan pastor Eugene Tyre (3,305-2,772). The slate of candidates backed by the moderate-conservative Georgia Cooperative Baptist Fellowship lost four of five contests.

In South Carolina, the fundamental-conservative candidate won in a close presidential race with 51 percent of the vote; West Columbia pastor Stephen Cloud defeated Greer pastor Lonnie Shull 845-799.

In Alabama, Birmingham-area pastor Dewey Corder was elected president by 58 votes over Athens pastor Fred Lackey, who was endorsed by a group of fundamental-conservative pastors. Corder described himself as "theologically conservative and politically non-aligned."

Likewise in Missouri, Jackson pastor Rodney Travis was elected president over Marvin Nobles of St. Louis, despite Nobles' endorsement by a group of fundamental-conservative pastors. Travis, who served as first vice president this year, described himself as a theological conservative who is not identified with any faction but "likes to cooperate and work together."

In the Maryland-Delaware convention, pastor Otis Doherty of Newark, Del., was elected president (356-421) with the backing of moderate-conservatives over pastor Howard Edmonson of New Freedom, Penn., who was endorsed by fundamental-conservatives.

In Oklahoma, a traditionally conservative state, Elk City pastor Keith Russell defeated fundamental-conservative candidate Bill Merrell of Lawton for president (314-245). Messengers also elected their first Native American to office; Seminole pastor Bill Barnett was elected first vice president over fundamental-conservative candidate Bobby Boyles, pastor of First Baptist Church of Moore, the church where the convention was held.

In two states where the incumbent president was elected to a traditional second term, politics nonetheless surfaced during the state convention.

In North Carolina, fundamental-conservatives failed to amend the convention's budget to send more money to the SBC (743-993).

And in Mississippi, messengers narrowly defeated an attempt to cut off funding for their state newspaper, the Baptist Record (342-449). Most of the \$540,320 allocation, which provides a third of the newspaper's budget, would have been sent to the SBC. Fundamental-conservatives, however, did succeed in electing the president of the state pastors' conference and in forming a statewide organization.

Analysis: Clinton winner
among religious voters

By Albert Menendez

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- When the presidential votes were counted Nov. 3 and analyzed with religious affiliations in mind, they showed that Bill Clinton had trounced President George Bush in almost every area of the religious landscape.

Clinton won among Catholics, Jews, black Protestants and religious liberals and made sharp inroads among mainline Protestants, usually a GOP stronghold. He also won among voters with no religious affiliation.

The only part of the electorate where Clinton lost was among his co-religionists: white Southern evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants, including Southern Baptists.

The contours of the vote across the country, as reflected in figures compiled by Voter Research and Surveys, a consortium of the four national TV networks, showed a return to the Democratic Party of large numbers of Catholic voters who had become "Reagan Democrats."

Bush won decisively among the 17 percent of the electorate that called itself "white born-again Christian," taking 61 percent of those voters to Clinton's 23 percent and Ross Perot's 15 percent. Bush's two strongest states were Mississippi and Alabama, which are the two most heavily Baptist states.

In both states, white Baptists and other Protestants, for a variety of racial, cultural and religious reasons, have deserted Democratic presidential candidates over the years. Even a Baptist governor of Arkansas could not bring them back.

Bush's third strongest state was South Carolina, which shares similar characteristics. The more religiously homogeneous regions of the Protestant South -- North Carolina and parts of Florida, Georgia, Texas and Louisiana -- also favored the Bush/Quayle ticket.

In 96 heavily Southern Baptist counties in 11 Southern states, Bush won 46 percent to Clinton's 40 percent and Perot's 14 percent. In suburban areas of the South, Bush appears to have won 55 percent of Baptists.

Bush also won 45 percent in heavily Mormon Utah, which was his banner state with 67 percent in 1988. But Perot cut into the Mormon vote and ran second statewide with 29 percent.

Anger at the Republican Party's capitulation to the Religion Right fueled Jewish defections to Clinton, who swept 78 percent of the Jewish vote. Bush won 12 percent and Perot 10 percent. Bush won at least 30 percent of the Jewish vote four years ago.

Among religiously non-affiliated voters, Bush came in last with 15 percent. Clinton polled 65 percent to 20 percent for Perot.

Clinton triumphed in all 12 of the nation's most heavily Catholic states -- from New Mexico to Massachusetts -- the first Democratic sweep of those states since Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

A majority of Catholics based their vote on issues other than the church's strong opposition to abortion. Four years ago, Catholics were almost evenly divided.

Clinton's emphasis on economic issues and social justice seemed to play well among Catholic voters, who voted for him over Bush, 44 percent to 36 percent. Another 20 percent of Catholics voted for Perot, who also advocated abortion rights.

Mainline Protestants, a mainstay of the Republican Party since 1856, were far less likely to support Bush than any previous Republican president. Republican presidential candidates traditionally receive 60 percent to 70 percent of mainline Protestant votes, but this year Bush received just 38 percent nationwide. Clinton won slightly over 38 percent and Perot won 24

percent.

These voters -- economic moderates but social-issue liberals -- may have reacted against the extreme tone of the Republican convention in August and the party's almost total embrace of conservative Religious Right positions.

Clinton's victories in Vermont, Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Ohio, Michigan and Iowa -- where many of these voters reside -- were telltale signs of disapproval of recent trends in Republican politics. Vermont, a state with many mainline and Catholic voters, went Democrat for only the second time in 160 years.

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-- Albert Menendez is a specialist on religious voting patterns and author of Religion at the Polls. This article is reprinted with permission from Religious News Service.

Baptists applaud judge's ban
on Texas pep-rally prayer

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Baptist church-state specialists agree with a Texas judge's temporary ban on pep-rally prayers at a suburban Fort Worth high school but question the broad language used in his restraining order.

The judge issued a temporary injunction Nov. 19 prohibiting student-led prayers at school-sponsored pep rallies in Southlake-Carroll High School and barring school employees from joining students in prayer at extracurricular functions.

Even though these events technically are voluntary, public prayers at high school pep rallies are "majority-rule religious exercises" that violate the rights of religious minorities, according to Weston Ware, citizenship associate for Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"Real religious faith can gain nothing by coercion or by the rule of the majority. There is nothing that can be gained by public prayers at pep rallies that is more important than the loss of any individual's religious freedom," Ware said.

Ware said he strongly supports the right of students to pray privately in school and to pray in voluntary groups of students not organized by school officials, as provided by the Equal Access Act of 1984.

The Equal Access Act provides that public secondary schools which permit a "limited open forum" where non-curriculum-related student groups are allowed to meet during non-instructional time cannot discriminate against religious speech at those meetings.

Oliver Thomas, general counsel, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, essentially agreed with the injunction.

"This is a difficult issue for a lot of Americans, because this kind of activity is so much a part of the warp and woof of community life," Thomas said.

"But in the long run, religion will benefit when we draw a clear line between government speech endorsing religion, which the First Amendment's establishment clause forbids, and student speech endorsing religion, which the free-exercise clause protects."

Because the prayers were led by students, the Southlake-Carroll High School situation is "a tough case that falls pretty close to the gray area of the law," Thomas said.

"It's hard to know whether it's truly the students voluntarily demonstrating their faith, or whether it's somehow driven by the school

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district," he said.

But since the pep rally was held on school grounds during the school day under the supervision of school personnel, it appeared the judge ruled properly, Thomas said.

Judge George Crowley of the 67th State District issued the injunction that banned pep-rally prayers and prohibited the Carroll Independent School District from sponsoring student assemblies where any religious exercise is conducted.

Crowley's order also prohibits school district employees from participating with students in prayer at extracurricular activities on or off campus. He set a hearing for Jan. 11 to determine whether the temporary ban would be made permanent.

The temporary injunction came in response to a lawsuit filed by William Pritchard, a 17-year-old senior at Southlake-Carroll High School. The American Civil Liberties Union represented Pritchard in the lawsuit.

Prayers traditionally had been led by students during weekly football pep rallies for the Southlake-Carroll Dragons. Recently, the prayers were moved to the end of the rallies, following the school song, so that students not wishing to participate could leave.

Pritchard, a Lutheran who said he considers prayer a private devotion rather than a public exercise, claimed he was ostracized, threatened and even assaulted by his peers for leaving the school gymnasium when pep rally prayers were offered.

"Baptists have always stood with the minority when the religious majority called for any kind of official, public religious exercise," Ware said.

"It is harder for us to do when, indeed, the Christian -- and seemingly Baptist -- culture seems to predominate. But the fact is, we do not believe in majority-rule religious exercises, particularly when they require the attendance of the total community. That seems to be the case in a situation where no student wants to opt out of such a significant school function as a pep rally."

Both Ware and Thomas expressed reservations about the sweeping language used by Crowley in his temporary injunction enjoining the school district from "selecting, encouraging, promoting or participating with non-employees of Carroll Independent School District to lead, recite or conduct any prayers, religious invocations, Bible readings or other religious ceremonies before, during or after any school-sponsored sporting events."

"If taken literally, the 'before, during and after' prohibition could extend all the way to a coach participating in Wednesday night prayer meeting after a Wednesday afternoon ballgame, or even reach to a high school Sunday school class led by a teacher, coach or administrator," Thomas said.

"I can't believe that's what was intended. We have to assume the judge meant immediately before or after school-sponsored events. It was probably just his way of telling the district not to play games with him."

The judge "did not and cannot" prohibit prayer or the private expression of religious faith, Ware said.

"Voluntary prayer by students, faculty and employees is always allowed. What is not allowed is a religious exercise conducted by the school or carried out under its sponsorship," he said.

"The use of the Bible for study by students and faculty cannot be prohibited. What is not allowed is the use of the Bible as part of a religious exercise or for devotional purposes.

"Students under the Equal Access Act can join together for Bible study, prayer, hymn-singing and other devotions. That is permitted because it is truly voluntary and student-initiated, not school-sponsored activity."

Supreme Court cases show agreement,
disagreement between BJC, CLC

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The Baptist Joint Committee and the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission agree in a friend-of-the-court brief filed at the U.S. Supreme Court that the First Amendment bars discrimination against religious speech.

But, in another pending case, the two Baptist organizations disagreed on the breadth of the constitutional ban against government promotion of religion.

The BJC and CLC joined seven other groups in asking the high court to strike down Suffolk County, N.Y., school district's policy barring after-hours use of its facilities for religious purposes.

The religious groups argued that the district policy, which permitted non-religious after-hours use of the facilities, violated the neutrality required by three clauses of the First Amendment -- those promising the government will protect free speech and the free exercise of religion but will not establish a religion.

Lamb's Chapel and its pastor, John Steigerwald, challenged the policy after Center Moriches Union Free School District refused the church's request to use school facilities to show the James Dobson film series titled "Turn Your Hearts Toward Home."

In October, the Supreme Court agreed to review lower-court rulings which sided with the school district. The case is Lamb's Chapel vs. Center Moriches Union Free Union School District.

In separate briefs in a second case, both the Baptist Joint Committee and the Christian Life Commissions argued that the First Amendment's ban on a governmental establishment of religion should not prevent the government from providing an interpreter for a blind student attending a Catholic high school.

The two Baptist agencies disagreed, however, on how government should judge such cases.

In *Zobrest vs. Catalina Foothills School District*, both agencies asked the Supreme Court to reverse lower court rulings that upheld an Arizona school district's refusal to provide the interpreter for James Zobrest. The Education of the Handicapped Act authorizes federal funds for special services such as sign-language interpreters for deaf students.

Zobrest's parents challenged the district's decision to provide interpreters for students in public and non-religious private schools but not religious schools.

The BJC, along with the American Jewish Committee and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, asked the Supreme Court to reverse the lower rulings by holding that the benefit sought by the student in this case does not violate the three-part test used by the court to determine whether a government action amounts to an establishment of religion.

That test, known as the Lemon test, requires governmental actions to have a secular purpose, to neither advance nor inhibit religion and to avoid excessive entanglement with religion.

The BJC brief argues that, like the provision of police and fire protection for religious institutions, the aid to the student in this case "does not create the structured relationship between religion and government which the framers (of the Constitution) believed threatened religious liberty."

"This particular student aid is permitted because it does not apply to tuition and will not create an incentive for attending parochial schools,"

said BJC General Counsel Oliver Thomas. "It's no different than providing this child with a hearing aid or a pair of eyeglasses."

The brief argues that the Zobrests should prevail under the Lemon test and that the high court should re-examine Lemon only in a case in which a new test would require a different outcome.

The CLC, however, asked the high court to revise the Lemon test. It was joined in its request by the Christian Legal Society, the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Council of Churches, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the Association of Christian Schools International, the Family Research Council, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Joni and Friends and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

In a brief written by University of Chicago law professor Michael McConnell, the CLC and other parties asked the court to recast the test to prohibit "government action that accords religious institutions or activities preferential treatment over non-religious alternatives in a way that would induce or promote religious activities."

The change proposed by McConnell represents much less a departure from Lemon than would occur under the so-called "coercion" test proposed last year by the CLC and other parties in a Rhode Island commencement prayer case. The coercion test would have permitted broad governmental involvement in religion as long as coercion is not involved.

The CLC brief said a revised Lemon test would help resolve the conflict that has resulted from inconsistent application of the First Amendment's religion clauses. According to CLC attorney Michael Whitehead, the court needs to "give clearer 'signals' to direct the traffic at the intersection of establishment clause and free exercise."

The BJC's Thomas said the CLC proposal would require a significant degree of neutrality, but he said the level of governmental neutrality embodied in Lemon would produce better results.

"The test proposed by Professor McConnell focuses on facial, or formal, neutrality -- that is it appears on its face to treat religious and non-religious groups even-handedly," Thomas said. "But in many cases, a facially neutral program may carry a disproportionate benefit for parochial schools."

Thomas cited a 1983 decision by the Supreme Court upholding a plan for tuition tax deductions in Minnesota.

"The law was considered facially neutral because it provided a deduction for such expenses as tuition, transportation and textbooks for public as well as private students," he said. "But because tuition was the biggest expense item and because there is no public school tuition, 95 percent of the benefit went to parents of parochial school students."

While he considers the McConnell proposal a major improvement over the coercion standard, Thomas said that "its weakness is that it prefers facial neutrality over substantive neutrality."

Thomas said facially neutral laws can disproportionately burden as well as benefit religion.

"By focusing on facial neutrality, we open the door for application of zoning, discrimination and tax laws to churches as well as tuition vouchers for parochial schools," he said.

A court spokesman said the Zobrest and Lamb's Chapel cases will be scheduled for argument sometime after January.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third and last article in a series on pornography.

Enforcing obscenity laws requires
citizen, police cooperation

By Mark Wingfield and Greg Warner

(ABP) -- It takes citizens and law enforcement officials working together to win against obscenity, according to two veterans of the fight.

"The bottom line is we can't be effective in our criminal-justice system without strong support from our community," said Maj. Grady Judd of the Polk County (Fla.) Sheriff's Office, who has a record of successfully combatting obscenity.

One person who did get involved in her community was Aprile Hunt, a housewife in Danville, Ky., who led a successful crusade to rid her county of hard-core pornography. Hunt's concern began when she discovered the kinds of movies offered in catalogues and back rooms of area video stores.

"We went in the community, did some education-awareness programs and found that many other people were concerned about the problem as well," said Hunt, now pornography-awareness consultant with the Family Foundation in Kentucky.

With 1,000 signatures on a petition and the support of 36 civic and religious organizations, she asked police to enforce the provisions of the state law which bans the sale or distribution of obscene material.

That resulted in an investigation and charges against four businesses, she said. Two other distributors of hard-core pornography pulled the offensive material voluntarily.

The key to such campaigns, according to Hunt and Judd, is establishing a definition of community standards. Most state obscenity laws are based on a 1973 Supreme Court ruling which defines obscenity in part based on "contemporary community standards."

"The U.S. Supreme Court said they couldn't set a ruling for the entire country," explained Judd, a Southern Baptist. "So it's up to the local community to set the standard."

When concerned citizens unite to help define that standard, it strengthens the hand of law enforcement officials, the pair agreed.

How is a community standard set? It's an unscientific process driven largely by who is most vocal and most persistent.

"There needs to be a public display of support," said Judd, a longtime member of Lakeside Baptist Church in Lakeland.

The best way to show support is to write letters to legislators, law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges, Judd said. Porn opponents also can participate in meetings of the local government and draft petitions to make their feelings known, he added.

While mass demonstrations and rallies get a lot of attention, he said, in the long run they are not as effective as simply writing letters.

"The pen on the paper is one of the strongest things that can occur because all of the community leaders, all of the elected officials, read those letters of support," he said.

Hunt says citizens also should make the police and public aware of materials being sold that they consider obscene.

"Normally, if you have someone selling cocaine, the police officer can go right down and find them," Hunt said. "But with this law, it takes the public initiating investigation because the police officer is assuming this material is acceptable to the community unless a question is raised in regard to it."

By voicing their opinions, Judd said, citizens can set the tone for the obscenity debate.

"What is the priority of the community becomes the priority of the community leader," he added. "It's our job to mirror what the community believes."

"If there is not a public display of support, then the (news) media that wants to portray that obscenity as alright is going to set the standard in that community."

"The one who ultimately determines community standards is the jury," said Judd, whose office has been successful in getting convictions on more than 90 percent of the obscenity charges filed. "The jury speaks for the community. I have total faith in our jury system because a jury is really a cross-section of the people in the community."

Judd's efforts to enforce obscenity laws was thwarted in 1986, when a judge ruled the laws unconstitutional. "Obscenity proliferated in Polk County as a result of that ruling," he recalled. But that lower-court ruling was overturned by the Florida Supreme Court in 1989, putting porn opponents back in business.

Even then, however, Judd's campaign to clamp down on obscenity drew a lot of criticism, he said. "I was getting beat to death," he recalled. "So I went to pastors and said, 'If you want us to do this job, then you have got to get us some support.' It made a difference."

Judd said church support, particularly from Baptist churches, also was the key to getting two new county ordinances passed this fall -- one outlawing public nudity and the other enacting strict health and zoning regulations on businesses that cater to adults, such as bookstores, video stores and strip-tease bars.

Area churches put aside their denominational differences and united behind the ordinances, Judd said. "The Christians banded together and packed our County Commission building to speak up in public hearings," he said.

Despite that success, overcoming citizen apathy is still one of his biggest obstacles, Judd said.

"One thing that's frustrating are the thousands and thousands of church members who think some other church is going to take the lead with this," he said. "The public officials respond based on the input they receive. So if the churches sit back quietly while another group is vocal, that's who the public officials will listen to."

Beyond fighting for enforcement of obscenity laws, Christians concerned about pornography should look at their own house, added Fred Hampton, a Baptist in a counseling practice with Family Care Center in Louisville, Ky.

"While the fight against pornography has its place, the bigger fight is a willingness to unloosen some of the myths about talking about sex," he said.

It's a short walk from repressing talk about sex to getting trapped in dependency on pornography, Hampton explained. "Often what I find is that individuals who have been inhibited and chained sexually and have very, very rigid positions about sex have never addressed their sexuality. To what extent we haven't addressed our sexuality, it is that much easier for us to fall to the other extreme."

"The failure of our families and our church communities to address sexuality I think contributes to the confusion and the difficulty that people are having with their sexual lives today," he said.

While crusading against pornography, Christians should speak positively about God's creation of sex, the counselor advised. "We need to recognize that we in fact are sexual creatures and that sex was given as a gift to be enjoyed."

"Unless we're willing to talk about it and educate one another about it, we only will serve to promote the confusion and the abuse that exists," he said.

Americans call homosexuality 'immoral'
but believe sex is private matter

By Mark Wingfield

GLENDALE, Calif. (ABP) -- A majority of Americans believe homosexual behavior is "immoral," but an even larger majority believe a person's sexual relations are nobody else's business, according to a nationwide poll.

The study, conducted among a random sample of American adults earlier this year, was funded and executed by the Barna Research Group of Glendale, Calif. The organization's president, George Barna, is a well-known Christian pollster and church-growth author.

The poll found 61 percent of Americans in agreement with the statement, "It is immoral for a person to have a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex."

Another 35 percent of those surveyed disagreed with the statement, while 3 percent didn't know.

However, 72 percent agreed with the statement, "Nobody has the right to tell someone else what kind of sexual relationships they can have." The other 25 percent of respondents disagreed, and 3 percent didn't know.

On related questions, a majority of respondents said they don't think people who are gay are born that way and that parents of gay children have not failed as parents.

A survey question on what causes homosexuality drew the largest undecided vote of the six questions asked. When asked to respond to the statement, "People who are gay are born that way; it is not a choice they make," 13 percent of respondents said they "don't know." The other five questions drew "don't know" responses from 3 percent or 4 percent.

Among those who had an opinion, 52 percent said they don't think gay people are "born that way" while 35 percent said sexual orientation is determined from birth.

But even though a majority said homosexuality is in some way learned or acquired, a majority also said parents do not fail if their children are gay. That view was held by 59 percent of those surveyed, compared to 38 percent who said gay children reflect failed parenting.

Despite the measure of privacy Americans believe they should have in sexual practice, a strong majority would prohibit homosexuals from marrying or adopting children. Homosexual marriages are opposed by 61 percent of Americans, while the adoption of children by gay couples is opposed by 67 percent.

Attitudes on some survey questions varied by geographical regions and religious backgrounds, the Barna Group reported.

People in the Northeast and Pacific states were most accepting of homosexuality, while residents of the South, Southwest and Midwest were less accepting. For example, on the question of whether homosexuality is immoral, only 39 percent of Pacific residents and 36 percent of Northeast residents agreed, compared to 51 percent in the South, 57 percent in the Midwest and 62 percent in the Southwest/Mountain region.

Other findings include:

-- People who attend church or say they read the Bible were about half as likely to support gay marriage as were those not attending church or reading the Bible.

-- Evangelical Christians were among the most conservative on gay issues, with slightly less than half saying a person's sexual orientation is their own business and 84 percent saying gay sex is immoral.

-- No significant difference in opinions was found between generations.

Hollywood would make more money
by making better films, critic says

By Mark Wingfield

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- American moviemakers have "a profound hostility to traditional religion" and don't understand the values of most families, according to Michael Medved.

Medved, co-host of public television's "Sneak Previews," was interviewed Nov. 12 on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition." The interview focused on Medved's controversial new book, "Hollywood vs. America."

In a dialogue with "Morning Edition" host Bob Edwards, Medved said Hollywood films consistently portray Americans as having no serious religious faith.

"A Martian viewing American society and drawing conclusions based only on the movies and television series he might get by some interplanetary video rent-by-mail service would conclude that this is a country in which religion was totally irrelevant except for a tiny percentage of the population who are all nuts or crooked," he explained.

While most movies ignore traditional religion, those that specifically attack religion usually do poorly at the box office, Medved noted. "The anti-religious message pictures, one after another they're put out before the public and they flop. Whereas something like 'Sister Act,' which I thought was somewhat innocuous and had a more affectionate, more positive view of the Catholic Church than any film in recent years, ends up going through the roof and doing \$170 million at the box office."

Medved believes much of the Hollywood content that Christians find offensive is not put in just to make money, as some have charged. The real problem, he said, is that the movie industry is "radically dysfunctional."

"They don't understand America at large," he said. "I don't think they have any knowledge or conception of just how traditional the attitudes of many American families are. This is not an industry that is giving the public what it wants."

For example, Medved said he can't understand who moviemakers think they are pleasing by excessive use of profanity.

"You might say there are a group of people out there who love violence," he noted. "There may be another group that likes graphic sexuality.... But who is it that goes out to a movie and says: 'Oh, come on, let's go. I want to see these stars saying dirty words'?"

"I have never once heard of a person who leaves a motion picture theater saying, 'I liked the movie, Mable, but I feel really cheated because I didn't get to hear Jessica Lange say the f-word enough.'"

The inclusion of unnecessary profanity actually robs the movie industry of profit, Medved argued.

He cited the current movie "Hero," which he said he liked but was disappointed because it included 12 "totally gratuitous" profanities. "It's because of that I couldn't take my little daughter to see it, who otherwise might have enjoyed it.

"I believe Columbia Studios sacrificed some \$10 million or more by getting the harsher rating, which they only got because of the inclusion of this language."

Rather than profits, he said, the reason for the language is "this tradition in Hollywood, which I believe is totally adolescent, that dirty words equal serious artistic intent."

Hollywood insiders consider Medved's opinions on this subject prudish, but his real intent is not as sinister as some would believe, he said. He explained he does not favor censorship and thinks there is a place for rated movies.

But he said his attitudes about the movie industry began to change after the birth of his daughter, who turns 6 this month.

"Right now, only 2 percent of Hollywood's total production is rated G," Medved said. "Of those G-rated films, virtually all of them end up either breaking even or making a good deal of money. Last year...two of the top-20 box office hits of the year were rated G."

Those G-rated successes were "Beauty and the Beast" and the rerelease of "101 Dalmatians."

It should not require censorship to get the movie industry to see there's more money to be made in giving the public what it wants, Medved claimed. "What you need is not censorship, not any kind of imposed codes, which I also oppose, but a sense of corporate responsibility."

For a studio to decline to make offensive films is not censorship, he said.

"If someone came up today and said to Paramount, 'Hey, we've got this great idea. We want to do a big-budget remake of 'Birth of a Nation' glorifying the Ku Klux Klan and portraying African-Americans as subhuman,' you can bet Paramount would say 'Pass.' It's not going to happen."

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Columnist calls on Christians
to abandon public schools

By Mark Wingfield

MAYFIELD, Ky. (ABP) -- Christians should take their children out of public schools because they are controlled by unbelievers, but they shouldn't quit their secular jobs when surrounded by unbelievers, columnist Cal Thomas told a Kentucky women's conference Nov. 12.

Thomas, a well-known conservative writer and television personality, addressed the Christian Women's Conference sponsored by Mid-Continent Baptist Bible College in Mayfield, Ky. The three-day event included a variety of speakers, ranging from Thomas to Christian author Marge Caldwell.

In a speech filled with stinging criticism of President-elect Bill Clinton, Thomas said evangelicals have taken the wrong approach in recent years by seeking political solutions to spiritual problems.

Rather than expecting politicians to advance their social agenda, he said, Christians should seek spiritual renewal through personal devotion and through becoming morally and spiritually separate from modern culture.

"Some people in this election emphasized trickle-down economics," he noted. "But I don't think we can have trickle-down morality."

"If we are looking for leadership to make us moral, it will not happen. Morality, righteousness, truth bubbles up, it does not trickle down. And so, what we need more than new leaders is to be new leaders ourselves."

Thomas, former vice president of the Moral Majority, suggested three things conservative evangelicals should do to make a difference in response to what he called the "moral mudslide" of Clinton's election.

The first is simply to be quiet, he said. "We need an extended period in America of solitude and reflection and meditation and seeking the face, the will and the way (of God) while contemplating the Word of God. We've had enough of activism for a while.... Any reformation will come not by might, not by power, but by God's Spirit."

Second, Thomas said: "We need to do a more effective job of lifting up Jesus Christ -- not religion, not denominationalism, not behavior, but Jesus Christ."

Third, he said, "We must spiritually and morally separate ourselves from

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the culture in a radical way. Not disengage, there's a difference."

The first step to this separateness should be to "get our children and grandchildren out of the public schools of America," Thomas said to strong applause.

He said some Christians would counter that taking the children of Christians out of public schools would force the public schools to close. But he indicated that wouldn't be such a bad thing in his opinion.

Another argument against his recommendation might be that Christian children should be "ambassadors" to their secular peers, he noted. "That's true, but how many nations do you know who appoint 8-year-old ambassadors?"

Thomas universally lambasted America's public schools as "little hothouses in which the young seedlings which are our children and grandchildren are planted and watered and fertilized with the attitude and the worldview and the theology of the pagan mind until they grow into large, liberal oak trees and senators and congressmen from Massachusetts."

"How can we expect to put our children and grandchildren in a system that denies the existence of God and in fact is evangelical in its zeal for the philosophy of the other world view, and expect them to turn out with a biblical world view? And why would we want to put them into a system that teaches their nearest relative can be found at the zoo, and that's why they like bananas on their cereal? It doesn't make sense."

This should not been seen as a protest, Thomas said, but as an act of obedience "to create an intellectually and spiritually superior education system."

However, the same principle would not apply to Christians who work in places where they are surrounded by secular influences, Thomas said later in his speech. Rather than abandoning co-workers who need to hear a Christian witness, Thomas advised Christians to "start loving your colleagues. Take your boss out to lunch. If somebody gets sick, just tell them you'll pray for them. It works."

On other topics, Thomas said:

-- God's biggest spiritual action in the 1990s will be in Russia rather than the United States. "Wouldn't it be just like him to begin a revival in the capital of our former mortal enemy while he is giving us over?" Thomas asked.

-- Christians should get more involved in ministries such as crisis-pregnancy centers. "The first baby you hold in your arms that you helped save from the abortionist's bucket, it's going to be an experience second only to your salvation," he said. "I know, it's happened to me over and over again."

-- "It is a travesty that public schools can distribute condoms more freely than Bibles." Thomas said he likes the suggestion of ultra-conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh for getting condoms out of schools: "Let's write, 'In God We Trust' on them."

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October gifts to Fellowship
approach all-time high

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Contributions through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship reached \$653,764 in October, the second highest monthly total ever.

The October total, second only to January's \$732,650, was a jump of 32 percent from the previous month and 55 percent higher than October of 1991. Contributions had been hovering around \$500,000 since June.

With the October receipts, the Fellowship's year-to-date total rose to \$5,460,446, compared to \$3.4 million during the same period last year.

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Fellowship officials expect to receive \$6.4 million to \$6.6 million for the year.

Despite the growth, Fellowship Coordinator Cecil Sherman warned that operational expenses for the organization are "out of control." In a memo to the Fellowship's Coordinating Council, Sherman said enough money was not budgeted for meetings and other expenses incurred in expansion.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was established in 1990 by Southern Baptist moderate-conservatives displeased with the current leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention and its agencies.

The Fellowship's three funding 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.

The trend of contributors to designate more and more money to the Fellowship's own ministries and projects continued in October.

Last year about three fourths of the money contributed through the Fellowship was designated for traditional Southern Baptist causes, such as state conventions and the agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention. That portion has dropped to about 60 percent this year.

In October 44 percent of Fellowship contributions were passed on to SBC causes. An additional 16 percent was designated for state-level Baptist causes.

Meanwhile, 33 percent of contributions were targeted for the Fellowship's own efforts, such as the organization's newly launched missions program. An additional 7 percent of October receipts went to independent organizations and agencies supported by the Fellowship.

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-- By Greg Warner

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CORRECTION, ADDITIONS: In the Nov. 17 issue of ABP, please make the following changes:

In the 19th paragraph of "Mississippi Baptists defeat....," please make Fred Wolfe vice chairman instead of chairman of the Executive Committee.

In "Homosexual issue hot topic....," please add to the end of the 9th paragraph: The amendment must be approved in a second reading next June.

Also, since release of the story, more information has become available. You may want to replace the 5th paragraph with:

Baptists in Florida, Georgia, Arkansas, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, California and the two-state convention of Utah-Idaho denounced homosexuality in general, while those in West Virginia and Maryland-Delaware endorsed the decision by the Southern Baptist Convention to exclude churches that condone gays.

Replace the 24th paragraph with:

Baptists in at least seven conventions -- Arkansas, Florida, Utah-Idaho, California, New Mexico, Wyoming and Arizona -- linked their condemnation of homosexuality to President-elect Bill Clinton's support of homosexual rights. Clinton is a Southern Baptist.

And in the Nov. 13 story, "Arkansas Baptists call Clinton's views immoral," insert the following after the 6th paragraph:

Baptists in California, Arizona and New Mexico asked Clinton to reconsider his views on homosexuality and abortion.

***** END *****