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**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- \* Names surface in search for Southern president
- \* Europe, press coverage are focus of FMB trustees
- \* WMU-FMB disagreements not resolved by dialogue
- \* Abortion legislation confronts Congress
- \* Legislation introduced to encourage giving
- \* Resolutions in Congress seek comprehensive nuclear test ban
- \* Equal Rights Amendment makes rounds in Congress
- \* Sherman says Fellowship growth results from "outbreak of autonomy"
- \* Crumpler lauds flexibility of Fellowship missions program

Names surface in search  
for Southern president

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- The next president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary should be elected April 19 and likely will be either Richard Land, Timothy George, Al Mohler or Bob Agee, according to seminary sources.

Although the search committee charged with finding a successor to retiring President Roy Honeycutt has not publicly divulged the names of their four finalists, the names have been circulated widely on the Louisville, Ky., campus and beyond in recent weeks.

The finalists will be interviewed during the week of Feb. 15.

The list includes two former Southern employees -- George and Mohler -- and two with Southern degrees -- Mohler and Agee.

George, dean of Samford University's divinity school, previously taught at the seminary. Mohler, a Baptist editor in Georgia, formerly was a special assistant to Honeycutt.

Land is executive director of the Christian Life Commission, the ethics and public-policy agency of the Southern Baptist Convention. Agee is president of Oklahoma Baptist University.

One well-connected seminary source not affiliated with Southern called the short list "the worst-kept secret in the SBC." Another source, referring to the Baptist network in general, admitted, "You couldn't keep a secret in this body with a secret-keeping machine."

Trustee search committee chairman Wayne Allen declined to comment on the widely circulated list of names in an interview Feb. 9. "Any names that are mentioned are simply rumors," Allen cautioned. "There's been no confirmation from any official sources of any names."

Allen said the search committee would have released the names of the

final four candidates if those candidates had agreed to it. Since the candidates did not wish their names to be made known, the committee agreed to treat them confidentially, he said.

Allen, a Tennessee pastor who also serves as trustee chairman, announced the timetable for presenting a candidate to the full trustee board, which meets April 19-21.

The search committee is to conduct interviews with the four finalists the week of Feb. 15. Those interviews will be followed by two weeks of "intensive prayer," he said, after which the committee will reconvene and make a selection.

After a further meeting with the final candidate to work out details, the committee will notify trustees of their decision by April 1, Allen said. A public announcement of who the nominee will be should be made in early April, he added.

Allen said the committee will present the nominee to the full board during the first plenary session of its spring meeting April 19. A vote should be taken that day, he said.

The new president likely would be presented to the faculty at a breakfast the next morning and to the rest of the seminary community at a chapel service later that morning.

Allen also said Honeycutt will remain president until Dec. 31, the date of his announced retirement, although the new president should be on campus as president-elect by early summer.

Both Agee and Mohler hold dual degrees from Southern Seminary.

Agee, 55, has been president of Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee since 1982. Before that, he was special assistant to the president and vice president for religious affairs at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., where he also was a professor of religion.

He earned the bachelor's degree from Union University, both the master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southern Seminary and the doctor of philosophy degree in higher education from Vanderbilt University.

At OBU, Agee has gained broad respect both for strengthening the institution and for relating well to pastors in the highly conservative Oklahoma state convention. During his tenure, OBU has increased enrollment 58 percent and increased endowment from \$11 million to more than \$30 million.

Mohler, 33, has been editor of the Christian Index, the newsjournal of Georgia Baptists, since 1989. Prior to that, he was director of capital funding and special assistant to Honeycutt while finishing the doctor of philosophy degree at Southern. He also was pastor of Union Grove Baptist Church in Bedford, Ky., while a seminary student.

He holds two degrees from Southern -- the master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees -- and the bachelor of arts degree in religion from Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

If elected, Mohler would be considerably younger than most of the faculty members he would supervise. He also would be the youngest president in the seminary's history, except for the school's founder, James Boyce, who at 32 became chairman of the faculty at the seminary's founding in 1859.

The two other candidates are not Southern alumni, although one of them is a former faculty member.

George, currently dean of the Beeson Divinity School at Samford, was associate professor of church history and historical theology at Southern from 1978 to 1988.

He earned the bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee at

Chattanooga, and both the master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Harvard University.

The 43-year-old George previously was pastor at Fellowship Baptist Church in Chickamauga, Ga., and First Baptist Church of Chelsea, Mass., and associate pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Cambridge, Mass.

He currently serves as co-chairman of the theological study group appointed last year by Southern Baptist Convention president Ed Young. Honeycutt is the other co-chairman.

Land, 46, became executive director of the Christian Life Commission in Nashville in 1988. He earned the bachelor's degree from Princeton University, the master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the doctor of philosophy degree from Oxford University.

Prior to moving to the CLC, Land was vice president of academic affairs at Criswell College in Dallas. During his tenure with Criswell College, he took a 16-month leave of absence to serve as a special assistant to Republican Texas Gov. Bill Clements.

Land is highly acclaimed by SBC conservatives for his outspoken stands against homosexuality and abortion. However, he is equally disliked by SBC moderates who charge he has turned the CLC into a dogmatic voice for ultra-conservative views.

Regardless of which candidate emerges as the final nominee, chairman Allen said he does not expect that person to be acceptable to all of the seminary's constituencies -- not even to all trustees.

"I don't think Jesus would get a unanimous vote," Allen quipped to illustrate the point. "That day is gone."

The two groups who will be most directly affected by the decision -- faculty and students -- appear to be taking a wait-and-see attitude for now.

"We're sort of waiting to hear the response from the interviews," one faculty member explained.

Most faculty members know who the four candidates are and are "very concerned" about who the ultimate nominee will be, the professor explained.

Another professor said faculty members are being careful not to endorse any of the finalists for fear a faculty endorsement would be that candidate's kiss of death.

However, there is on campus a broad fear of Land being selected because he is the candidate most in line ideologically with the SBC's new conservative politics, several sources explained. These seminary sources said they fear Land would be too controversial a choice, resulting in loss of faculty and decreased stability at the 134-year-old school.

"I think it is possible we could survive three of the four," one professor said. "There's one on the list we couldn't survive. And I'm not talking about individual faculty (members); I'm talking about the institution."

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Europe, press coverage  
are focus of FMB trustees

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Although dialogue with leaders of Southern Baptists' women's auxiliary took center stage during the Foreign Mission Board's Feb. 8-10 meeting, election of a new area director for Europe and

an administrative realignment of that region also highlighted the agenda of trustees.

In addition, alleged negative press coverage by the religion editor of the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch drew the attention of trustees, who asked board staff to send videotapes of their dialogue with the SBC Woman's Missionary Union to missionaries "to let them draw their own conclusions" about trustee attitudes.

Also approved were 28 new missionaries, bringing the FMB's total mission force to 3,916. The mission workers minister in 128 countries and assist in an additional 27.

John Floyd, a vice president and missions professor at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., was unanimously elected area director for Europe, effective March 1. In that position he will oversee the work of 282 missionaries in more than 50 countries stretching from Ireland to Russia's Pacific coast.

But Floyd's purview will soon be diminished following another trustee decision to divide the territory into western and eastern areas. Sam James, vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, said the FMB staff expects to propose in June into which area each country will be placed.

Realignment means trustees must elect another area director for the region. Discussions over the next few months will determine which area Floyd will administer, trustees said.

The new administrative arrangement and Floyd's election has evoked negative reaction from some European Baptists and missionaries who work with them.

Electing a professor from Mid-America Seminary -- an institution closely associated with the Southern Baptist Convention's fundamental-conservative movement and one of its most prominent leaders, Adrian Rogers -- has renewed allegations that FMB trustees are trying to impose their conservative theology on Europeans.

Those concerns stem from the trustees' decision in 1991 to eliminate funding for the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, because of alleged liberalism. Floyd's predecessor, Keith Parker, resigned over the Ruschlikon action, citing it as a trustee attempt to impose fundamentalism in Europe -- a charge trustees deny.

Complaints also have been registered about Floyd's missionary experience. Although he served in the Philippines for more than a decade and directed the FMB's Richmond-based missionary-enlistment department for about two years, none of his missionary experience has been in Europe.

And splitting Europe administratively between east and west has struck some on the continent as insensitive, given the collapse of the Iron Curtain and Europe's tentative moves toward unification.

But trustees and staff deflected the criticism. Floyd is "truly God's man for this time," said trustee John Hays of Reynoldsburg, Ohio, who chaired the area director search committee. Other trustees described him as committed to "inerrancy," "the Word of God," "lost souls" and "the welfare of missionaries."

Vice president James -- who last June replaced another staff member who had resigned over the Ruschlikon affair -- disagreed with contentions the continent was being divided. He said it remains unified under his office, which oversees work there and in North Africa and the Middle East.

Although he acknowledged trustees had agreed last October not to divide the area, he said recent visits had persuaded him it is too large and diverse to be effectively administered by one person.

In addition, he said, opportunities for ministry in the nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union will be enhanced if an administrator's focus is targeted there.

That coincides with long-held trustee views that the board must move more rapidly to take advantage of new openness to Christianity in the east and of enthusiasm among Southern Baptists toward volunteer for service there.

Dissatisfaction with press coverage of trustee meetings -- a recurring topic of discussion among board members -- surfaced again in response to two articles written by Ed Briggs, religion editor of the local Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Trustees disagreed with Briggs' characterization of their questions during the WMU dialogue as "angry," with his statement that WMU leaders had been "summoned" rather than invited to the trustee meeting, and with the prominence given to a board relocation proposal, which received brief attention in a committee and was subsequently dismissed.

Also cited were several alleged factual errors and misquotes.

"This board was wrongly reported yesterday and wrongly reported today," said trustee Paul Pressler of Houston.

Trustees subsequently passed a motion asking the Times-Dispatch to send "a responsible reporter to accurately report" trustee meetings.

But Briggs defended his WMU story as a fair representation of "what I saw."

"In general, it was a meeting in which there was a lot of anger," he told Associated Baptist Press. "The fact is, fundamentalists are angry, moderates are angry and the best way to tell the readers is just to say 'They're angry.'"

But the most debate -- lasting nearly an hour -- centered on a proposal from the board's communications committee to distribute a videotape of the WMU dialogue to the FMB's approximately 125 missions around the world and transcripts of the session to all missionaries.

"We recognize that the scurrilous article in the local paper (describing the dialogue session) is already in the possession of our mission stations around the world," said trustee John Simms of Roanoke, Va. He said the videotape would permit missionaries to "see what happened and form their own opinion."

Trustee chairman John Jackson, citing interim president Don Kammerdiener's reservations about the plan, asked trustees to let the two of them decide whether or not to distribute the tape.

Kammerdiener said he was uncertain how WMU leaders might react to disseminating the tape and added, "I don't know if it would make a positive contribution to the morale of missionaries."

But Paul Brooks of Raytown, Mo., said withholding the tape might appear to be a "cover up" by trustees and administration.

A motion to refer the decision to Jackson and Kammerdiener failed by one vote and, after additional discussion, a request to reconsider the action also failed.

Trustees also approved the suggestion from Pressler that the tape be sent to editors of the Richmond Times-Dispatch to "let them evaluate" whether their account of the dialogue session was accurate.

Trustees also instructed the board's communications office not to send any background news stories to accompany the tape, which communications staffers said would have "contextualized" the events leading up to the dialogue.

Trustees objected to interpretations the staff might include in the

background articles. "Contextualize means, 'We'll give you the history we think you should have,'" objected Simms. Added Brooks: "The communications office has no authority to mail out context. We didn't vote to send context."

Following the vote, Skip Smith of Houston asked if WMU executive director Dellanna O'Brien, who was observing the meeting, wanted to respond.

"There's nothing on the tape we object to any missionary seeing," said O'Brien, although she noted the dialogue had been intended to convey information to trustees and may not answer specific questions that missionaries may have.

"I don't think it will make them (missionaries) feel any better, but it's your call," she said.

In other action:

-- Trustees quickly dispensed with a proposed study to consider moving the board from Richmond. The proposal, made in a strategy committee meeting, was referred to the administrative committee's policy subcommittee. Subcommittee members reaffirmed the board's 1991 action detailing criteria -- much of it related to finances -- which must be in place before any relocation proposal can be considered.

-- Trustees learned that the board's Asia committee will nominate an area director for East Asia during the board's April 19-21 meeting in Columbus, Ohio. Although the person's name was not announced, trustees said privately the nominee is Faye Pearson, a missionary in Taipei, Taiwan.

If elected, she would be one the board's few women administrators, overseeing the work of about 430 missionaries in five countries. One trustee said she has encountered some opposition because of Pearson's gender but expects her to be elected in April.

-- Trustees expressed "full confidence" in the committee seeking a new board president, refuting accounts in Baptist Press that the committee might resign.

Earlier trustees heard a brief report from the presidential search committee during an executive session called to discuss staff salaries. Although trustees declined to detail the report, one said it was in part an attempt to "clarify" recent press accounts that the committee had been pressured by fundamental-conservatives to redirect its search for a nominee.

-30-

WMU-FMB disagreements  
not resolved by dialogue

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- A Feb. 8 dialogue between leaders of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and trustees of the denomination's Foreign Mission Board failed to resolve disagreements provoked by recent changes in WMU's activities, representatives of both sides said following the two-hour session.

Four WMU officers and staff members responded to questions from trustees at the beginning of the FMB's three-day board meeting.

At issue was WMU's Jan. 10 decision to modify its 104-year-old exclusive support of the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign and Home Mission boards by forging relationships with other evangelical groups, including the moderate-conservative Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Both SBC mission boards receive about half of their funding from mission offerings promoted by WMU. In exchange, WMU receives about 6 percent of its funding from the FMB and HMB to promote the offerings.

Although WMU leaders maintained the changes will not affect the organization's support of the FMB, trustees said they doubted the group could "serve two masters."

"I think trustees expressed their concern. It did not accomplish as much as I had hoped," said board chairman John Jackson.

"I was not fully satisfied with the dialogue," agreed Dellanna O'Brien, WMU executive director. "I wish we could have spoken to some other issues."

Joining O'Brien at the dialogue were Carolyn Miller, WMU president; June Whitlow, associate executive director; and Ellen Teague, president of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention's WMU.

Also attending the session were Morris Chapman, SBC president, and James Williams, president of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

O'Brien told trustees the changes were adopted only after a year-long study by an ad hoc committee had "discovered great diversity in Baptist life" in carrying out mission projects.

By adapting to meet the needs of that diverse constituency, O'Brien said, WMU hopes to remain effective into the 21st century.

WMU's new approach "is different only because our denomination is different," she said. The difference began to surface, she said, when local churches started sending and supporting their own missionaries. That trend has increased, she said, as other groups have begun to send missionaries, diminishing support for the Foreign Mission Board.

"This (the change) is not our No. 1 choice," she added. "We didn't cause the departure -- we just recognize it's there. Those people who choose to do (missions) in a different way still have our support."

However, some trustees said they suspect the changes represent underlying support for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and its opposition to fundamental-conservatives now leading the convention.

Don Purvis of Hartsville, S.C., cited what he said was a five-year plan by the CBF to form a new denomination and worried that WMU's changes might enhance that effort.

"Give me some assurance that WMU won't be supporting something which is pulling Southern Baptist churches away from the SBC," he said.

O'Brien responded that during the study committee's discussion the CBF was never mentioned. She maintained it was only one of many groups that might seek WMU's assistance in promoting mission programs.

O'Brien declined to express her personal opinion of the CBF, saying her position as executive director compelled her to speak only for WMU on sensitive matters.

Lawson Swearingen of Shreveport, La., said he was humiliated by derisive comments O'Brien made toward FMB trustees at last year's WMU annual meeting. O'Brien said she could not recall making such comments and Swearingen did not offer specific examples. But he said that incident may be the reason "you sense some insecurity among trustees."

Mike Goodwin of Festus, Mo., said members of the CBF have a "sense of disdain" toward the Southern Baptist Convention's conservative leadership and added he "has a problem" with WMU "being in harmony with them and in harmony with us."

"How can two people walk together if they disagree?" he asked.

Phyllis Randall of Blacksburg, Va., referred to a book by retired WMU executive director Alma Hunt, who wrote that WMU has no organization of its

own. "Our program is that of the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board."

"I think that used to be valid but not any more," Randall said. WMU cannot "serve two masters," she said.

That quote and Goodwin's comments prompted a response from Hunt, who was observing the session.

"When I wrote that I believed it with all my heart," she said. "Today is a different day. I do not believe that God intends for us not to be able to walk together. ... I pray the day will never come when Southern Baptists will say we cannot walk with another Baptist or another person who believes in Jesus Christ."

Pat Bullock, a Texas pastor, asked O'Brien what changes she would like to see implemented at the Foreign Mission Board.

"One thing I'd like to see is more WMU organizations in your (trustees') churches," she said.

There are no WMU groups in several churches represented by trustees, including the congregation in Fairfield, Calif., that chairman Jackson serves as pastor.

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#### Abortion legislation confronts Congress

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- In their first month on the job, members of the 103rd Congress introduced more than a dozen bills favoring both sides of the divisive abortion issue.

The legislation ranged from the Freedom of Choice Act, which would codify the landmark Supreme Court decision recognizing the right to privacy in abortion decisions, to measures that would designate fetuses as human beings who could not be deprived of life at any stage during the pregnancy.

The Freedom of Choice Act (H.R. 25, S. 25) was introduced in the 102nd Congress, and proponents say the bill would write into law the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision. Opponents counter that the bill goes beyond Roe and would allow abortion on demand throughout pregnancy.

When the high court reaffirmed the essential holding of Roe last summer, the Freedom of Choice Act lost steam and did not receive congressional approval.

The bill would bar states from restricting the right of a woman to choose to terminate a pregnancy before fetal viability (the point at which the fetus can live outside the womb) or at any time to protect the life or health of the woman.

Both versions of the bill provide for parental involvement and exemptions for medical personnel who are conscientiously opposed to performing abortions. The Senate version also would stipulate that the state does not have to pay for abortions.

President Bill Clinton said during the campaign that he supports the Freedom of Choice Act.

Other measures to protect abortion rights were introduced. The Reproductive Health Equity Act (H.R. 26) would ensure that services related to abortion are made available to women who are dependent upon federally funded programs, such as Medicaid. Another bill (H.R. 796) is designed to assure access to health clinics by providing penalties for persons attempting to block entrances to facilities.

Several bills were introduced to prevent abortions. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and Rep. Bill Emerson, R-Mo., introduced several anti-abortion measures.

Helms introduced the Civil Rights of Infants Act (S. 60) that would make performing an abortion with knowledge that it is based solely on gender a violation of a civil rights statute. The woman would not be liable under this act.

Helms also introduced the Unborn Children's Civil Rights Act (S. 64). The measure says that "abortion takes the life of an unborn child who is a living human being."

The bill would prohibit the use of federal funds for promoting, encouraging, counseling, referring or paying for abortions unless the mother's life is endangered. The bill also would prevent any federal agency from entering into contract with any insurance company that makes payments for abortion procedures.

Emerson introduced a bill (H.R. 178) that said the Supreme Court erred in not recognizing the humanity of the unborn child and that no funds appropriated by Congress would be used to perform abortions except to save the life of the mother.

The Missouri congressman also proposed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution (H.J. Res. 26) stipulating that the word "person" used in the Fifth and 14th amendments to the Constitution applies to "all human beings irrespective of age, health, function, or condition of dependency, including their unborn offspring at every stage of their biological development."

The bill also would stipulate that "no unborn person shall be deprived of life" by anyone except to prevent the death of the mother.

All bills have been referred to congressional committees.

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-- By Pam Parry

Legislation introduced  
to encourage giving

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A bill designed to encourage charitable giving was introduced Feb. 4 in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The legislation would make all gifts of "appreciated property" fully tax deductible. Appreciated property includes real estate, stocks and tangible items such as collectibles which increase in value after purchase.

The Tax Reform Act of 1986, which subjected the appreciated portion of charitable gifts to taxation, caused a decline in large gifts to universities, hospitals, museums and other charitable institutions.

The bill (H.R. 813) would exempt gifts of appreciated property from the special tax, allowing a donor to receive a tax deduction equal to the gift's fair market value. If approved, the tax code amendment would apply to taxable years after Dec. 31, 1991.

Rep. Michael Andrews, D-Texas, said he introduced the bill because non-profit organizations depend on private donors. Since enactment of the Tax Reform Act, contributions of appreciated property have tremendously declined, he said, adding the bill would result in quality education, preservation of the humanities and economic aid to non-profit organizations.

Brent Walker, associate general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, said: "This bipartisan measure is important to all non-profit groups, including our Baptist institutions who rely on these gifts. We applaud Mr. Andrews' initiative and look forward to working for the bill's passage."

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-- By Pam Parry

Resolutions in Congress seek  
comprehensive nuclear test ban

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Resolutions introduced Feb. 4 in both houses of Congress urge President Bill Clinton to initiate negotiations as soon as possible for a comprehensive nuclear-weapons test ban.

Last year, Congress approved landmark legislation that suspended the United States nuclear testing program for nine months and provided for a complete ban by 1996 if no other country tests nuclear weapons.

Lawmakers said the new measure is the next important step.

Sen. George Mitchell, D-Maine, introduced the measure "to urge the president to give this issue the attention and commitment it deserves."

Mitchell acknowledged Clinton has voiced his commitment to a comprehensive ban, but he said the new president will have several pressing issues that will require attention. The resolution expresses hope that an end to nuclear testing will be among those issues, Mitchell said.

"The transition from fear to hope is difficult but finally possible," the Senate majority leader said.

Sen. James Exon, D-Neb., a co-sponsor, said now that a test-ban date has been signed into law, "it is time for our country to work with the international community to negotiate a true and verifiable ban, an essential step in closing the Pandora's box of nuclear weapons proliferation."

The House measure was introduced by Rep. Mike Kopetski, D-Ore.

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-- By Pam Parry

Equal Rights Amendment  
makes rounds in Congress

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A proposed constitutional amendment to ensure equal rights for men and women has been introduced in both houses of Congress.

The Equal Rights Amendment has been introduced for years without receiving congressional approval. The four-paragraph resolution states: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

The measure (H.J. Res. 1, S.J. Res. 40) stipulates Congress would be empowered to enforce the amendment and that it would take effect two years after the date of ratification.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Rep. Don Edwards, D-Calif., introduced the resolution in their respective chambers.

"Enactment and ratification of the ERA is essential to ensure equality for women in both the law and life of this land," Kennedy said. "Existing statutory prohibitions against sex discrimination have failed to give women basic educational and employment opportunities equal to those available to men in our society."

Sex discrimination still permeates the economy, with women earning less than 75 cents for every \$1 earned by men, Kennedy said.

"Enactment of the Equal Rights Amendment alone cannot undo generations of economic injustice. But it will encourage all women in their efforts to win redress under the nation's laws and in the courts," he added.

A constitutional amendment originating in Congress requires a two-thirds majority in each house and must then be ratified by three-fourths of the states.

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-- By Pam Parry

Sherman says Fellowship growth  
results from "outbreak of autonomy"

By Bob Allen

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- An "outbreak of local autonomy" is behind growing acceptance of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the group's coordinator, Cecil Sherman, told a Baptist audience in Washington, D.C., Feb. 4.

Sherman, who spoke at three meetings in the Washington-Baltimore area Feb. 4-5, reported that 74 new churches turned to the Fellowship in December for distribution of their gifts to global missions.

The two-year-old Fellowship offers Southern Baptist churches alternative giving plans to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program, the official channel of denominational support since 1925.

"The information level is rising in our churches," Sherman said. "More and more the people who create the wealth are interested in seeing how it is divided."

The 74 new churches in December is more than double the recent monthly average of congregations channeling gifts through the Fellowship for the first time.

Early in December, Keith Parks, retired president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, announced he would become missions coordinator for the Fellowship. But Sherman said he doubts the growth in December is attributable to Parks' announcement. "I don't think churches act that fast," he said.

Through the end of 1992, a total of 835 churches in 34 states had sent money to the Fellowship. Sherman expects the organization to break the 1,000-church barrier in 1993. "When we get to be about 2,000 churches, we will be a force for good," he said.

Sherman acknowledged that opening the door to designated giving by local churches has complicated accounting procedures. "That is why God gave us computers," he said, tongue in cheek. "Their reason for being was not clear before."

Sherman admitted the Fellowship is battling an image problem,

particularly among what he termed "soft moderate" churches, which share disdain for current SBC leadership but remain suspicious of the Fellowship's counteractive response.

People who view the Fellowship as a "little rump organization" for people with "a bad attitude" because they were unable to retain power in the SBC miss the point, Sherman said.

"The reason there is a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is we disagree with the people who lead the Southern Baptist Convention ... over things that matter -- things that can't be forever dismissed or relegated to second place."

Those differences include:

-- Education. SBC seminaries, he claimed, are replacing theological education with "indoctrination," in which "all results will satisfy the ends or be dismissed."

Sherman termed SBC leaders "latter-day scholastics", alluding to a theological movement in the late Middle Ages which claimed its teachings encapsulated immutable truth. "The idea there might be truth not yet discovered has not occurred to these people," he said.

-- Scripture. In the Fellowship, Sherman said, "We come toward the Scripture in reverence," but reject the SBC's shibboleth of inerrancy. "Our word is inspiration," he said.

"Candidly," Sherman continued, "inerrantists don't live by their own word." He said the Bible can be read to defend both the institution of slavery and the subjugation of women. Modern inerrantists, he said, "want to be literal on the role of women, but they're silent on slavery."

-- Polity. "Baptists are lower-case democrats," Sherman said, adding there is less fairness for dissent in the SBC than in the halls of secular government.

-- Missions. Comparing the SBC with the Fellowship, Sherman said, "One group says, 'We've got the money; we'll decide what to do over there.' Another group says, 'Maybe we should talk to them before we impose our ideas upon them.'"

The Fellowship supports 20 of its own "missioners," Sherman said, all currently in Europe. "There will be others," he predicted.

Still, Sherman said, the answer to the question, "Why did you leave the SBC?" is, "We haven't."

Of the \$7.3 million received by the Fellowship in 1992, roughly \$3.3 million went to support SBC ministries. "We put a good bit more money in than some state conventions do," he said. Another \$769,000 went to Baptist state conventions.

He also dealt with the oft-repeated question of whether or not the Fellowship plans a formal split from the SBC. "We will form another convention when the majority of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship people want to," Sherman said. "Right now, the majority does not want to break with the Southern Baptist Convention."

Sherman said he is asking "churches to give us at least some of the monies they gave to the denomination." He reported receiving about \$650,000 from individuals in 1992, some of whom wrote that their churches refuse to forward their designated funds to the Fellowship.

He also is "asking state conventions to begin functioning like Baptist bodies." "Some state conventions have become a collection agency for the Executive Committee," Sherman said.

Most Baptist state conventions will not honor requests by churches to pass funds on to the CBF, he said, even though some accommodate designation to non-SBC entities like Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in

Memphis, Tenn.

About 35 people attended the noon session at First Baptist Church in Washington Feb. 4. A second session that evening at Redland Baptist Church, Derwood, Md., attracted 92. About 50 attended the last of the area meetings, Feb. 5, at Woodbrook Baptist Church in Towson.

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#### Crumpler lauds flexibility of Fellowship missions program

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- The flexibility of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's new missions program allows the organization to respond to the changing world and its needs, said Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler.

"Our flexibility gives us the freedom to reorder our priorities," Crumpler, a former Southern Baptist missions executive, told the 648 Florida Baptists who attended the recent meeting of the Fellowship's Florida chapter.

Crumpler spent most of her life promoting the missions programs of the Southern Baptist Convention. Now she serves on the Fellowship's global missions ministry group, which has hired the organization's first 20 "missioners" for work overseas.

Because of its flexibility, the Fellowship has been able to focus its mission efforts on three priorities, Crumpler said: "World A," the one third of the world's population that has had no opportunity to hear the Christian gospel; internationals living in the United States; and the major U.S. cities.

Crumpler, retired executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, the Southern Baptist Convention's mission-support auxiliary, preached the sermon for the Florida Fellowship's winter meeting Feb. 5-6 in Jacksonville. Both the meeting and Crumpler's sermon expounded the theme "Behold ... A New Thing."

In addition to flexibility, Crumpler said the Fellowship offers several "new things" that enhance missions. Among them: a "new structure" that doesn't suffer the limitations of the SBC's "bigness"; freedom to do missions unencumbered by bureaucracy; and "cooperation in diversity."

Crumpler, a native of Florida, was director of WMU for Florida Baptists before assuming leadership of national WMU. After retirement she married Ohio pastor Joe Crumpler. Now, for the first time in her life, she serves as WMU director in a local church -- Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Cincinnati where her husband was pastor until he retired recently.

Crumpler said she has supported the SBC and its mission efforts faithfully all her life. But, she said, she responded with shock, astonishment, anger and finally "deep grief" as more than a decade of controversy changed the SBC and its missions programs.

"Somewhere along the way, Carolyn Weatherford lost her song," she lamented.

She said she is grateful for the Fellowship, which she said has opened new opportunities for missions. "I found my song again," she said.

Despite changes and confusion in the Southern Baptist Convention, Crumpler said, she remains committed to missions.

"I have not changed in my mission vision," she said. "My denomination has not changed -- Baptist. But my convention has changed."

Newness and change also were the focus of the meeting's concluding message by Jack Snell, pastor of the host congregation, Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church in Jacksonville. Snell cautioned the congregation against being resistant to change, particularly the "creative energy" of God.

Preaching on Jesus' analogy of putting new wine in old wineskins, which can cause the wineskins to burst, Snell said, "If we aren't careful, the faith which was meant to expand and enrich us can make us narrow."

That is what happened to the religious people of Jesus' day, Snell suggested. "Instead of their religion giving them wings, it was like a millstone around their necks. The law had become a hindrance instead of a help."

Snell, who also serves on the Fellowship's global missions group, said individuals, churches and even denominations can become like old wineskins, unable and unwilling to respond to the moving of the spirit of Christ.

In addition to two worship services, the two-day meeting included a business session for the Florida chapter and seven workshops about the Fellowship and its missions efforts on the national and state level.

Pat Anderson, coordinator of the Florida chapter, said he was "ecstatic" about the meeting and the number of participants. "We had a significant attendance, particularly when you consider the group was probably 90 percent laypeople," he said.

Participants in the annual Florida Baptist Convention, numbering 1,618 people last November, are predominantly clergy and their families, Anderson said.

During the Fellowship meeting, the group installed a new moderator, elected officers and heard a report from its missions committee concerning starting new churches and enlisting volunteers for a project at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

Mark Wilbanks, pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Jacksonville was installed as the new moderator. Marsha Sherouse of Gainesville was elected second vice moderator.

Other officers previously elected include Jim Van Hoose of Sarasota as first vice moderator, Evelyn Hewett of St. Augustine as recording secretary, and Phoebe Delamarter of Lakeland as treasurer.

Charles Horton, pastor of College Park Baptist Church in Orlando and chairman of the state Fellowship's missions board, reported that more than \$100,000 had been received for disaster relief in Miami, which had been used to repair or rebuild 100 houses damaged by Hurricane Andrew.

Tony Ponceti, coordinator of the relief effort, reported that 30 other houses are being considered for repair work. The relief project also is offering unlimited opportunities to share the gospel, he said.

Horton reported that 25 volunteers are being sought for an eight-day mission project to do repairs and renovations at the Ruschlikon Seminary in Switzerland next August. Volunteers with skills in plumbing, electricity, carpeting and general repair are needed.

Horton reported that a new church in St. Petersburg, Heritage Community Church, and Longwood Hills Church near Orlando, have requested pastoral aid from the Florida CBF, which is seeking to start three new churches this year.

-- By Jack Brymer and Greg Warner

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