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Phone: (904) 262-6626 Fax: (904) 262-7745 CServe: 70420,73

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Three faculty members denied
endowed chairs at Southern

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Three faculty members of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have been denied appointments to endowed chairs by a trustee committee without explanation.

Gerald Keown, Raymond Bailey and William Hendricks were among five professors recommended for the chair appointments by seminary administrators.

However, the trustee academic personnel committee, in sessions during the April 19-21 trustee meeting, approved only two of the five recommendations for action by the full board.

Also during the spring meeting, trustees elected three men to new faculty positions, named retiring President Roy Honeycutt seminary chancellor and elected new trustee officers.

Keown was to have been named to the Martha and Talmadge Rogers Chair of Old Testament Interpretation. Bailey was to have been named to the Victor and Louise Lester Chair of Christian Preaching. Hendricks was to have been named to the Roy L. Honeycutt Chair of Christian Theology. All three remain on the faculty.

The five appointments had been recommended by David Dockery, dean of the school of theology, Provost Larry McSwain and President Roy Honeycutt. In previous circumstances, approving such recommendations to chairs has been routine for trustees.

After the academic personnel committee made its report to the full board April 21, trustee Julian Pentecost of Virginia asked what had happened to the other three recommended appointments.

Trustee John Allen of Mississippi, who next year will serve as first vice chairman of the board, immediately objected to the question being

discussed.

However, academic personnel committee chairman Rick White -- who will be trustee chairman next year -- answered with a brief statement: "There is no recommendation out of committee at this time It is inappropriate for me to go beyond that."

When asked for clarification in an interview after the session, White declined further comment. White also declined to either confirm or deny a rumor circulating on campus that the conservative-dominated board derailed the appointments because the professors belong to churches which support the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Keown is a member of Saint Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville. Hendricks is a member of Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville. Bailey serves as pastor of Lyndon Baptist Church in Louisville. All three allow members to channel financial support the Fellowship, an organization of moderate Southern Baptists.

Most other committee members were not immediately available to be interviewed. However, a committee member who was absent from the one committee session where the chairs were discussed said even he did not get an explanation of the action when he asked the chairman.

News of the action against the three professors was not well-received on campus, where some faculty suggested privately that trustees had breached the Covenant Agreement. The covenant, approved by trustees, faculty and administration in 1990, says trustees will accept less-conservative faculty appointed in earlier years in exchange for the faculty allowing trustees to bring in more-conservative teachers to achieve a balance of perspectives.

George Steincross, a trustee from Missouri who resigned from the board in protest at the end of the spring meeting, said he thinks trustees violated the covenant.

"What it is, of course, is punitive. These are measures to punish professors who get out of line," he said. "It is a raw breaking of the covenant."

Bailey, professor of preaching, also said he believes trustees broke the covenant. "This action, or non-action, is a clear abrogation of the covenant which supposedly exists between the trustees and faculty."

Bailey said he has received indications that trustees believed he "generally did not support the direction of the seminary" and were unhappy with his support of women in ministry and with views he had expressed on a joint faculty-trustee committee.

"It makes very clear that a purge is going on, that faculty will be punished if they have any independent thought," Bailey said.

"I weep for the continuing assault on the Baptist tradition of dissent and academic freedom. I will not sacrifice my integrity on the altar of political accommodation."

Keown, who at the same meeting was granted a promotion by trustees from associate professor to professor of Old Testament, is president of the Faculty Association. In that role, he often has represented sensitive faculty concerns to trustees.

Keown said he had been given no specific explanation for why his appointment to the endowed chair was denied. "The official word apparently is going to be that filling the chairs has been delayed until the fall meeting," he said.

Hendricks, professor of Christian theology, issued this statement:

"The voices of integrity and responsibility, who are competent to make academic decisions, were unanimous in recommending me for this honor, and that is a privilege that I will long cherish. It is apparent that independent

voices and independent opinions are not valued by the trustees. I have a lot of both of these and plan to exercise them freely. I am astonished in this time of fiscal difficulty the trustees are content to suffer additional financial loss through the income of these chairs."

Endowed chairs are established by donors, with income from the endowment's principal used to pay part of all of the named professor's salary. In most cases, existing faculty members are named to chairs as they are created, thus reducing the salary drain on the general budget.

When asked in the full board meeting about the financial drain this decision would make, Honeycutt indicated only one of the three new chairs would have been receiving funding from endowment interest at this point.

On a related note, the trustee resolutions report also was challenged when it failed to propose resolutions of appreciation for three deans who are stepping down from their positions. At least two of the deans, Bill Rogers and Milburn Price, have publicly stated distaste for trustee-initiated changes underway at the seminary.

The full board approved adding Rogers, Price and Anne Davis to the list of other faculty members recognized through resolutions of appreciation. However, several trustees raised questions about why the committee had omitted the three in its report.

New faculty members elected by trustees are Marvin Anderson, professor of church history; Carey Newman, assistant professor of New Testament; and Vaughn Walker, associate professor of black church studies.

Anderson comes to Southern from Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., where he has taught since 1964. He holds the bachelor's degree from the University of Washington, the bachelor of divinity degree from Bethel and the doctor of philosophy degree from King's College of the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

Newman moves from Palm Beach Atlantic College, where he has been assistant professor of religion since 1989. He holds the bachelor's degree from the University of South Florida, the master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the master of theology degree from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and the doctor of philosophy degree from Baylor University.

Walker already had been teaching in Southern's school of church social work. He also is pastor of First Gethsemane Baptist Church in Louisville. He holds the bachelor's degree from Hampton University, the master of science degree from Eastern Illinois State University, the master of divinity in Christian education degree from Southern Seminary, and the doctor of philosophy degree from Oregon State University.

Under terms of Honeycutt's election as chancellor, his role will be "to enhance and extend the mission of the seminary and the role of the president" as assigned by the president. He will receive about \$30,000 annually over the three-year appointment but may be terminated with or without cause by the board of trustees or by the president with approval of the trustee executive committee.

New trustee officers elected are Rick White, pastor of First Baptist Church of Franklin, Tenn., chairman; John Allen, pastor of Richton Baptist Church of Richton, Miss., first vice chairman; David Miller, an associational director of missions in Arkansas, second vice chairman; and John Hicks, a Louisville attorney, secretary.

Three moderate trustees
resign Southern's board

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Three trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary announced their resignations at the end of the board's spring meeting in Louisville April 21.

George Steincross of Missouri, Jerry Mahan of Georgia and Horace Benjamin of South Carolina one-by-one took the microphone in the closing moments of the three-day meeting to say they would resign as trustees effective July 31, the last day Roy Honeycutt will serve the institution as president.

Two other trustees on the conservative-dominated board questioned the tone and content of statements made by the resigning trustees -- all identified as moderates -- and attempted to stop one of them from speaking.

"The hostile takeover of Southern Seminary is complete," Steincross said, citing Honeycutt's "premature" retirement and the election of Al Mohler to succeed him as evidence.

Steincross said he "can no longer with integrity serve as trustee of an intentionally 'corrected' Southern Seminary."

Steincross said by resigning he wanted to identify with faculty and students who feel discouraged and hurt by the trustees and the change of administration. He asked that his comments be entered into the minutes of the meeting.

Trustee John Michael of Louisville questioned allowing Steincross to voice his opinion and asked the chairman if it was proper to allow Steincross "to impugn the motives of other members of this body."

Trustee chairman Wayne Allen responded, "He has the right to feel however he feels."

Steincross then interjected that his statements were deeply felt but also based on facts.

At that point, trustee Skip Stam of North Carolina, seated next to Steincross, raised a point of order in an attempt to silence further discussion.

Immediately after Steincross resigned, Mahan delivered a similar speech to announce his resignation.

Mahan said he thought trustees previously had committed to maintaining Southern Seminary as an institution to serve all the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The current direction of the board and of the president-elect indicate that will not be the case, he said. "I think this seminary will be an excellent academic institution for part of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Mahan voiced concern about trustee spending on their meetings and about trustees not hearing the concerns of students and faculty.

The Georgia pastor said he found it ironic that he could sit as a trustee of the seminary but he "could not be theologically pure enough" to be hired as a professor.

Additionally, Mahan said he was resigning to avoid a potential conflict of interest, since he also sits on the board of Mercer University, which he said is considering forming a seminary.

Benjamin made only a brief statement in announcing his resignation.

All three resignations are effective July 31 -- six weeks after the SBC meeting in which new trustees would be elected in their place.

Normally, trustee positions vacated after the convention are left vacant

until the next year. However, in this rare case when a vacancy has been announced in advance but will not be effective until after the SBC, what will happen is unclear.

One denominational official said it appears the SBC committee on nominations will have to make a ruling on the situation while doing their work.

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Gap widens between trustees
and some students at Southern

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- The gap between conservative trustees and moderate students at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary widened significantly during the April 19-21 trustee meeting on campus.

Trustees continued to chafe under criticism by students that they have spent seminary money too freely on themselves.

Students who support allowing women in pastoral ministry roles, meanwhile, continued to chafe under tightening definitions of women's roles as the seminary moves toward more conservative leadership.

The spending issue surfaced in several meetings as it was revealed trustees have overspent their own meeting budget by at least \$35,000 this fiscal year, not including estimated expenses of \$30,000 for this month's meeting. In addition to the two scheduled meetings, two called meetings have been held in Atlanta.

Meanwhile, the Western Recorder has learned trustees budgeted an additional \$95,000 this year for the work of their presidential search committee. Although an exact accounting of that money was not available, trustee chairman Wayne Allen said he believes those expenses are within budget.

Student government leaders have said the two special meetings and the large amount of money spent by the presidential search committee are lavish, especially in light of the sacrifices students make to stay in school. For example, search committee members and their wives spent several days in February at a resort in West Palm Beach, Fla., interviewing three presidential finalists.

During the last called meeting, when trustees elected Al Mohler the seminary's ninth president March 26, student leaders encouraged students to write postcards to trustees expressing their concerns.

More than 400 postcards were mailed to trustees during the week.

Although many trustees said they were irritated by the postcards, the students' messages made an impression on some trustees who attempted to stop a set of student fee increases for the coming year.

Students had argued it was unfair to increase their fees significantly when trustees are spending so much money on themselves.

One postcard several trustees reported getting was on gold card stock with art added to make it look like an American Express gold card. Individual trustee names were inscribed on the cards along with the permission to "go anywhere, do anything" and spend as much as desired on the seminary's account.

When the trustee executive committee presented a recommendation to raise student matriculation fees for next year by \$100 -- or 18 percent -- per

semester and increase rent for student housing by 5 percent, some trustees at the spring meeting rebelled.

"I'm going to have a hard time with my friends in Tennessee that see us losing \$127,000 in investment income, spending \$125,000 on ourselves" and then raising student fees, said Steve Anderson, a real estate agent from Memphis, Tenn.

Later, Anderson addressed the issue again. "I don't think trustees ought to vote it for themselves and then put it on the backs of students."

Other trustees defended the board's expenditures and the necessity of raising fees to compensate for declining income from the Southern Baptist Convention and from investments.

Additionally, presidents of the six SBC seminaries agree annually on a minimum fee increase to keep parity between the schools, they explained. That agreement calls for at least a \$75 per semester increase for next year.

Further, Allen said what trustees have spent on their meetings is "not an astronomical amount" in comparison to the whole budget and is money "well spent."

Ultimately, trustees approved a \$16.3 million budget for the coming year, which begins Aug. 1, along with the recommended fee increases.

The issue of student fees, trustee spending and student protests was discussed at length in the student services committee meeting. In that meeting, Student Government Association president Ruth Davison reiterated student concerns on that and other issues.

She also reported on a meeting Allen had with her and five other student government leaders April 6. In that meeting, Davison said, Allen told Davison her leadership was "inappropriate" and that students should not have sent the postcards to trustees.

Davison said she explained to Allen that she and other students had tried other means of communication with trustees before and felt like they weren't being heard. They chose the mailing of postcards to try another way of getting through, she said.

Davison said she felt Allen was attempting to squelch future expression of student opinion to trustees.

Allen was not present in the committee meeting where other trustees heard Davison's lengthy report, although he knew of her concerns.

However, when asked by the Western Recorder to explain what he found inappropriate about student activity, Allen flatly denied Davison's report.

"No, I didn't say they were inappropriate," he explained. "I did say it would have been more appropriate if they had contacted me first and learned the reasons we did what we did."

Allen also discounted what Davison reported to be a "threatening" tone from the chairman during the meeting. "Why would I initiate a meeting with them if I didn't want their voice to be heard?" he asked.

Others present with Davison in the meeting with Allen confirmed Davison's account and said they were puzzled by Allen's denials.

Although Davison's report took up about two hours of the committee's two-and-a-half-hour meeting, committee chairman James Bullock barely mentioned it in his brief report to the full board. "Students shared with us some of their concerns during this time of transition," was all he said.

In a chapel service held on campus during the trustee meeting, students supporting women in ministry staged a silent protest. They have been at odds with President-elect Mohler's stated position against women serving as pastors and in certain church offices.

A flier handed to everyone entering Alumni Chapel before the service explained, "We are a wounded and grieving community. ... By worshipfully

standing in silence in the balcony throughout the entire chapel service ... we celebrate and witness the hope that is within us. We affirm God's call upon the life of every believer in all aspects of ministry and pledge ourselves to support one another."

Others desiring to join in the silent statement were invited to move to the balcony during the first hymn.

Several students explained the symbolism was intended to recall the segregation of women and slaves from the white males in Baptist churches in the past.

Despite an unusual appeal by President Roy Honeycutt for the students not to go through with the protest during worship, about 225 people stood in the balcony throughout the 50-minute service. Those standing included both male and female students, some faculty, five trustees and some alumni.

Guest preacher Jim Henry, a conservative pastor from Orlando, Fla., made no direct reference to the protest in his sermon. However, at one point he said, "Don't be surprised when people criticize you for standing for truth."

Although obviously not intended as a statement of support for the protest, that line drew applause and a loud "amen" from the balcony.

A few sentences later, Henry expounded on the truth theme by saying Christians should affirm that unborn babies are of more value than turtles and that God is to be called "Father" and not "Mother."

Those statements drew applause and a loud "amen" from a portion of the estimated 400 people seated on the main floor.

Worshippers exiting the chapel after the service were confronted with a large banner which read, "Women in Ministry: You Can't Stop What God is Doing."

Trustee chairman Allen said he was concerned by the chapel incident, but not because of the viewpoint expressed.

"My concern is not that they did anything but that they did it in worship ... and after the president requested them not to do it," he said.

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Midwestern trustees block
faculty recommendations

By Tim Palmer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary blocked the election of one professor and denied tenure to another during their meeting April 19-20.

Seminary President Milton Ferguson said the actions signal that the conservative-dominated trustee board wants to be more involved in decisions about who teaches at the school. But he warned trustees the confrontation over faculty tenure could foreshadow "the devastation of this institution."

During the meeting, Ferguson withdrew a recommendation for trustees to elect visiting professor David May to the permanent faculty, saying May's nomination did not have the necessary trustee support.

Later trustees rejected Ferguson's recommendation to grant tenure to theology professor Wilburn Stancil and voted to delay action on tenure for another professor. Ferguson will be allowed to resubmit both tenure recommendations at the October board meeting.

Trustees did not say why they objected to hiring May, who teaches New Testament. But a seminary source said trustees were concerned about May's view of the inspiration of the Bible.

May, who is in his third year as a visiting professor, was recommended by Ferguson to fill a vacancy in New Testament studies. Last fall the recommendation was affirmed by the instruction committee of the board of trustees. The committee again took up the matter in closed session the morning of April 19.

When the full board convened that afternoon, Ferguson announced he was withdrawing May's name from consideration prior to a vote because he did not have enough support on either the instruction committee or the full board to ensure the required two-thirds majority for election of faculty.

Academic dean Vernon Davis expressed disappointment in the board's failure to support May, "a dedicated young scholar whom I regret to lose from the faculty."

"This development will be difficult for our seminary faculty and student body to understand," Davis said.

Several students present at the meeting expressed dismayed that May was not elected. "He is not a liberal," student David Martin said. "He believes the Bible, he follows the Bible, he uses the Bible as a guideline for his class and the way he leads his life."

"I've always understood myself as a conservative biblical scholar," May, a native of Maryville, Mo., said April 21. "I am disappointed and heartbroken that I am not going to be able to fulfill that calling of God here at Midwestern."

May later said some trustees had found fault with a sermon he preached in seminary chapel on Jesus' parable of the talents. Trustees reportedly questioned May's view of the inspiration of the Bible as expressed in that sermon.

Instruction committee chairman James Jones of Waterford, Mich., who later was elected incoming chairman of the full board, declined to discuss committee members' objections to electing May. "As a matter of record, the committee was never unanimous," Jones said.

A packet of printed materials critical of May was delivered anonymously to trustees at their hotel. But trustee chairman Sid Peterson said the materials were not a factor in the board's decision. "If anything it would have made us more sympathetic," said Peterson of Bakersfield, Calif. Trustees unanimously passed a resolution deploring the materials.

The published writings of theology professor Stancil were cited by trustees who opposed granting him tenure, an advanced faculty status that makes it difficult to fire a professor.

Trustee Ronnie Rogers of Hot Springs, Ark., read numerous excerpts from an article Stancil wrote on structuralism, a New Testament interpretation tool built on the premise that a hidden structure in each biblical text is responsible for producing the text's visible structure or pattern.

Rogers said Stancil failed in the article to warn Bible students that structuralism is "theologically bankrupt." He contended that the article affirmed structuralism. "It was very obvious that it had a positive flavor," Rogers stated.

Instruction chairman Jones responded with excerpts from the article that were critical of structuralism, which Stancil described as "a house half-built." Ferguson said Stancil distanced himself from structuralism throughout the article, which at one point noted "dangers inherent in structuralism."

Trustees Timothy Harvey of Byron, Ga., and Carl Weiser of Deville, La., also pointed to articles Stancil wrote for Baptists Today, in which Stancil referred to the controversy over biblical inerrancy as a "word game" and in which Stancil described certain aspects of the Southern Baptist Convention as "delightful lunacy."

Prior to the vote on Stancil, trustee chairman Peterson told the board he believed a two-thirds majority was needed to grant tenure -- the same margin as needed to elect faculty. Parliamentarian Donald Deel of Vincennes, Ind., said the seminary bylaws were not clear.

President Ferguson, however, said trustees in the past had required only a simple majority to grant tenure, and under parliamentary procedure that practice should prevail.

Peterson then ruled that a two-thirds majority would be required. He suggested that someone who disagreed could challenge his ruling. The ruling was challenged, but Peterson's opinion was sustained on a vote of 17-13.

A motion to postpone consideration of tenure for Stancil was voted down. The subsequent vote on granting tenure to Stancil was 16-9 in favor, two votes shy of the required two-thirds majority.

Next up for consideration of tenure was church music professor Randall Bradley.

Instruction committee member Richard Proctor of Wynne, Ark., stated that tenure was a more important matter than a faculty member's hiring, and that the instruction committee should have the opportunity to interview a professor before recommending him for tenure.

"You're dealing with the heart of this institution," Ferguson responded. He said he was "deeply grieved" to think qualified faculty might be rejected because trustees had problems with procedure rather than the merits of individuals.

"I believe we are walking into what could be the devastation of this institution," Ferguson said.

The board then voted to allow Ferguson to resubmit Stancil and Bradley for tenure in October. It also voted that the president be requested to submit names of candidates for tenure at least 45 days before a board meeting.

Ferguson said after the meeting that "a precipitous, last-minute denial of tenure" to qualified faculty members poses a threat to the institution because it violates precedent. Previously tenure was awarded without extensive involvement by trustees and by merely a majority vote.

"We've always done it that way," he told Associated Baptist Press. "There has never been any extensive kind of review."

Ferguson said he is pleased trustees deferred action on tenure for the two professors.

"It is clear that there is an increased expectation on the part of some trustees on increased involvement in the faculty selection and affirmation process," Ferguson said. He added that he was happy to respond to trustees' requests for fuller information and more time to consider recommendations concerning faculty.

Besides Jones, board officers elected April 20 were Proctor as first vice chairman; Lewis Adkison of Colorado Springs, Colo., as second vice chairman; and Lowell Socolofsky of Omaha, Neb., as secretary.

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Trustees look for solutions
to Midwestern's money crunch

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary took action to improve the seminary's financial position by raising student fees and giving the go-ahead to investigate the sale of seminary land.

The actions were approved by the seminary's trustees during their semi-annual in Kansas City, Mo. Midwestern is one of six seminaries owned by the Southern Baptist Convention.

At the recommendation of their building and grounds committee, trustees approved a motion to seek a consultant to determine the fair market value of a 52-acre parcel that includes the southeast corner of the seminary's 200-acre grounds.

Among the financial factors making sale of the land necessary is nearly \$3 million in deferred maintenance on the 35-year-old campus. "By necessity, total campus renewal must proceed through converting land assets to new campus facilities," the committee reported.

The parcel adjoins the busy intersection of Vivion and North Oak streets and is considered an attractive commercial property. Presently it is zoned for residential use. Value of the land will be determined contingent on appropriate rezoning.

Sam Switzer, seminary vice president for business affairs, informed trustees that Midwestern can expect a \$100,000 shortfall in the current year budget, due to declining revenues.

Seminary President Milton Ferguson said Cooperative Program funds provide 75-to-80 percent of the \$3.7 million seminary budget. Trustees adopted a \$3.5 million budget for 1993-94, a 6.5 percent reduction.

Switzer noted that pay and benefits for employees make up 80 percent of the budget. In recent months, two positions vacated by resignations were left unfilled to save expenses. A third was filled at a lower wage level.

Looking ahead, trustees voted to raise matriculation fees for master's degree and diploma students to \$600 per semester from the current \$500, effective Aug. 1. The increase is expected to generate approximately \$50,000 a year in additional revenue.

As another means of generating revenue, the development committee recommended that its members meet with Midwestern alumni, faculty and staff during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June to pursue the goal of hiring a full-time development consultant for the seminary. Ferguson placed the cost of creating such a position at the vice president level and staffing it at \$100,000 a year.

Trustees took time between business sessions to attend a dinner at the seminary honoring Ferguson for his 20 years as president. He was presented with a number of gifts, including a laptop computer from the board.

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Foreign Mission Board asks WMU
to limit work to SBC agencies

By Greg Warner

COLUMBUS, Ohio (ABP) -- Trustees of the Foreign Mission Board joined other Southern Baptist Convention leaders in calling for Woman's Missionary Union to restrict its work to helping the denomination's two official mission agencies.

In their meeting April 21 in Columbus, Ohio, trustees approved a resolution passed in February by the SBC's Executive Committee. The resolution was endorsed in March by the Home Mission Board, which like the FMB receives about half its financial support from WMU-sponsored offerings.

Endorsement by the mission boards came at the request of Morris Chapman,

Executive Committee president.

Approval of the resolution -- which includes both praise and warnings for WMU -- came after Don Kammerdiener, interim FMB president, issued an affirmation of WMU and a plea for renewed trust among feuding Baptist factions.

"Sooner or later in our denomination, someone or some group will step forward to declare a unilateral truce in our spiritual civil war," Kammerdiener told trustees. "I encourage us to be the ones to do it."

Passing the resolution, Kammerdiener said, serves as an affirmation of "all that our relationships have meant in the past and as an expectation that those relationships will be even stronger in the future."

Dellanna O'Brien, executive director of WMU, said Kammerdiener's words will be warmly received by the 1.2 million members of the mission-support auxiliary. But coupled with the FMB-endorsed resolution, she said, it could send mixed signals.

The politely worded resolution begins with seven paragraphs of affirmation for WMU's historic role in supporting SBC missions. However, it also notes that WMU "was established originally for the express purpose of supporting the two mission boards of the Southern Baptist Convention."

WMU needs to affirm its "singular cooperation," "undivided commitment" and "exclusive relationship" with the SBC and its mission boards, the resolution said. The Executive Committee pledged to continue supporting the WMU's auxiliary relationship to the SBC "so long as the Woman's Missionary Union pledges its faithful and solitary support" of SBC mission efforts.

"I do think there needs to be some interpretation" of the resolution, O'Brien told Associated Baptist Press. "Are they saying we cannot participate (in missions) with any other group?"

In January WMU's executive board voted to offer educational materials and prayer support -- but not money -- to missionary-sending groups other than the Foreign and Home Mission boards. Critics, including the Executive Committee, complained the changes would allow WMU to lend support to the rival Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderate Southern Baptists which also sends missionaries.

O'Brien said a strict application of the Executive Committee's resolution would stymie WMU plans to offer mission-support materials to other evangelical groups, including the Fellowship. "That would prevent our doing what we have committed to do," she said.

WMU's executive board has not met yet to evaluate the Executive Committee resolution, O'Brien said. But she predicted WMU will proceed with its new plans as scheduled. She said SBC leaders "will have to make a determination if we are following the mandate or not."

O'Brien was present at the FMB meeting and showed trustees a 150-foot banner made of pages of WMU literature promoting the 1992 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for SBC foreign missions.

Afterward she said she sensed a "much more wholesome interaction" with FMB trustees than in previous meetings with SBC leaders.

"My understanding is that Mr. Kammerdiener feels our intent is to maintain the same kind of relationship that we have had in the past, which is true."

"His comments on trust were especially well stated," she continued. "That is our plea: for all Southern Baptists to trust us to be what we have been in the past.

"I hope, as Don suggested, there will be a new spirit of trust along with affirmation. Just give us time to prove what we are going to do."

O'Brien said she was "thrilled" to hear trustee committees report that

the FMB is cooperating with other evangelical groups to do missions, "which is exactly what WMU is going to do."

"If that is the trend in the future, WMU wants to be a part of it," she said. "It's exciting to see that Christian groups are working together."

O'Brien said she could not predict if the Southern Baptist Convention, which meets in June, also will be asked to adopt the Executive Committee resolution. "Surely Dr. Chapman would have some idea," she said, noting the request for FMB action came from Chapman, the SBC's chief executive.

Chapman was unavailable for comment. However, his office confirmed that letters had been written to both the Home and Foreign Mission boards requesting endorsement of the Executive Committee resolution.

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Mt. Carmel children were bound
for Texas Baptist child care

By Ken Camp

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- If the 24 children who apparently died in the Branch Davidian fire April 19 had been allowed by cult leader David Koresh to leave unhindered, they would have been released into the arms of Texas Baptists.

Instead, the children -- including 17 under age 10 -- all are believed to have died in the fire that destroyed the Mt. Carmel stronghold near Waco, Texas.

"We had been notified that all of the children remaining in the compound would be released in our care," said Kevin Dinnin, president of Baptist Children's Home at San Antonio.

The involvement of children's home with the children from Mt. Carmel dated back to the days immediately after the Feb. 28 shootout between the Branch Davidians and agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Within the first five days after the ATF raid, 21 children from the compound were released.

On March 8, administrators of Baptist Children's Home at San Antonio were asked by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services to establish an emergency child-care facility for the released children at an undisclosed location in Waco.

Twelve of the children who were released from the Branch Davidian compound received care at the Baptist Children's Home Waco Emergency Shelter, a licensed temporary emergency child-care facility, Dinnin said. Others were sheltered by a Methodist child-care institution in Waco.

Other assistance came from Columbus Avenue Baptist Church in Waco, Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center, Baylor University and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Several members of the children's home staff worked with a treatment team that sought to provide counseling for the children to help prepare them for transition into the homes of relatives and for life outside the control of cult leader Koresh -- a challenging task, to say the least, according to Dinnin.

"The children were extremely stand-offish. One girl was wearing a T-shirt with a picture of David Koresh on it. She kept clutching it, saying, 'He will protect me.' These children literally believed that Judgment Day was happening," Dinnin said.

One child whose father was shot to death at the compound told a police officer guarding the child-care shelter, "My mommy said you killed my daddy."
"How do you deal with that?" Dinnin asked. "It's a difficult thing."

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Edelman calls for "new spiritual struggle" on behalf of children

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Guns, television, bad public policy, material greed and lack of moral values all are contributing to make America a tragic home for children, Marian Wright Edelman told about 500 people attending a conference on "Children and the Church" April 21.

Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, D.C., was keynote speaker for the three-day conference in Louisville, Ky. The event was directed by the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Seven other Baptist entities co-sponsored the event.

"The church must be the moral locomotive instead of the moral caboose," Edelman declared. She called the church the "key torchbearer of change."

"We must be a part of a new spiritual struggle which must arise across our land to stop the killing and neglect of children and put our action and our leadership and our pocketbooks behind our purported family values," she said.

"We must struggle to reclaim our nation's soul and give our children back their hope . . .," Edelman continued. "We need a new movement in the 1990s that is about the future and not about the past."

Churches can be a part of this renewal through several means, Edelman suggested. She called on churches and religious leaders to "be a voice for the children of our nation, who are powerless and voiceless."

The church could be part of the Children's Defense Fund's vision to eliminate child poverty in America by the turn of the century, she said.

Also Edelman called on churches to support efforts to immunize every American child and to see that every child has opportunity for a good preschool education.

Educating church members and community leaders about the needs of children is essential, she said.

To make her point, Edelman painted a bleak statistical picture of what American children now face:

-- "Every Sunday as we wake up, 100,000 children wake up homeless."

-- "Every 13 seconds, about the time it takes us to say the Lord's Prayer, another American baby is born into poverty."

-- "Every 14 minutes, while we listen to the sermon, a baby dies in America."

-- "Every 54 seconds, while we pass the peace, a baby is born to a teenage mother."

-- "Every 13 hours, before we go back to sleep each night and say our prayers, a preschooler is murdered."

While Americans rightly have been obsessed with helping starving children in Somalia, Edelman said, they have been blind to worse conditions in their own country.

"Why are there more poor children in rich America than there are

residents in famine-stricken Somalia?" she asked.

Edelman said America has 14.3 million poor children, a higher number than at any time in history. Further, an estimated 5 million American children are going hungry, she added.

"Thousands of children -- one every 53 minutes -- die of poverty in rich America and millions more suffer preventable sickness and chronic diseases."

America's children are 2-to-14 times more likely to be poor than the children of Australia, Canada, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom, she continued.

But "no fact tells us more clearly that something is badly awry in American society than the reports of abuse or neglect in 1990 of an American child every 13 seconds," Edelman said.

Throughout the speech, Edelman repeatedly called for a better response to gun-related violence affecting American children.

"The deadly quick violence of guns takes an American child's life every three hours and the lives of 25 children -- the equivalent of a classroom full -- every two days," she explained.

The 55 American men, women and children killed with handguns every day in America compares to 13 such murders per year in Sweden, 91 per year in Switzerland, 87 in Japan, 58 in Canada and 52 in Great Britain, Edelman reported.

Further, she said, "some children in inner cities are growing up being able to distinguish between semi-automatic gunfire before they can distinguish between their colors."

"The evil fruit of the unchecked trafficking in guns abounds all around us. ... Guns exceed television sets as American playthings."

But the dangers of television haven't escaped Edelman's watchful eye, either.

"It is time for us to tell parents to shut off the television set and to tell Hollywood ... the levels of violence we are now seeing and show are absolutely unacceptable," she said.

America's children need better role models in the media and at home, Edelman charged. "They see too few adults who exemplify and communicate clear, consistent standards of acceptable moral and civic conduct."

Christians must "struggle to live our family values in our public and private lives," she said.

"Talk is cheap and won't cure the pervasive breakdown of moral and family and community values in America. Nor will judgmental finger-pointing at any group or family type."

Edelman said Americans must "resist the simplistic, either-or choices and fragmented, single or quick-fix solutions to the needs of our families."

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Most Americans pray
but want to do better

GLENDALE, Calif. (ABP) -- Nearly nine of 10 American adults pray to God, yet only one in four adults is completely satisfied with his or her prayer life.

That's the finding of a nationwide poll by the Barna Research Group of Glendale, Calif.

Factors such as age, marriage, parenthood and income have little bearing on the intensity of Americans' prayers, the poll found. However, there are

marked differences between the prayer practices of Christians and non-Christians.

Regular church attendance and a strong commitment to Christian beliefs are markers of the nation's most fervent prayers, according to the data. However, such distinctions make little difference in how satisfied people are with their prayer lives.

"Many Christians feel that no matter how fulfilling their prayer lives are, there is still plenty of room to grow," said George Barna, president of Barna Research Group. "While some parts of the population display the disaffection of a skeptic, this group displays the dissatisfaction of an enthusiast, constantly wanting to improve."

Here's a summary of other findings:

- Six in 10 Americans pray one or more times per day.
- Prayer is a regular part of the lives of 82 percent of Americans, including the lives of 63 percent of unchurched Americans.
- Women are more likely to pray than men (95 percent to 83 percent).
- Women are more likely than men to be certain prayer makes a difference in their lives (64 percent to 56 percent).
- Men are more likely than women to be hopeful that prayer makes a difference but unsure that it does (23 percent to 15 percent).
- Catholics are less likely than Protestants to be "absolutely certain" that prayer makes a difference in their lives (45 percent to 60 percent).
- Baby boomers, adults ages 28 to 46, are less likely than the average American to consider prayer a regular part of their lives.
- One in four unchurched Americans prays only as a "last resort," while overall only one in 10 adults do so.
- Almost all people who call themselves "born-again" Christians pray (99 percent).
- While 73 percent of born-again Christians are absolutely certain prayer makes a difference, the same is true of only 43 percent of others in the population.
- People who pray the most are most certain prayer makes a difference in their lives.
- 95 percent of people who pray thank God in their prayers for what he has done for them, while 76 percent ask forgiveness for specific sins and 61 percent ask God to grant specific requests.
- While only 46 percent of Americans listen silently for God's response to them in prayer, this practice is more prevalent among older adults. Those less likely to spend time listening to God include the "baby buster" group of 18- to 27-year-olds and suburbanites.

Data for this poll was collected in February by telephone interviews with a random national sample of American adults. There is a 95 percent probability that responses are accurate to within plus-or-minus 5 percentage points.

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Founder Walker Knight retires
on Baptists Today's anniversary

By Don McGregor

ATLANTA, Ga. (ABP) -- Walker Knight, founder and publisher of Baptists Today, retired from that position on the occasion of the moderate newspaper's 10th anniversary.

Baptists Today observed its anniversary April 15 with a dinner for about 200 supporters at First Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga. Knight's retirement had been announced at a meeting of the publication's board of directors held immediately preceding the dinner.

Knight, 69, became founding editor of the newspaper in 1983 after he retired as editor of MissionsUSA, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's general circulation magazine.

Five years later he retired as editor of Baptists Today and became its publisher. Jack Harwell, former editor of the Christian Index of Georgia, became editor.

Before going to the Home Mission Board, Knight, a journalism graduate of Baylor University, was associate editor of the Baptist Standard, the newsjournal of Texas Baptists.

Baptists Today directors gave Knight a plaque that was a reproduction of the front page of the first issue of the bimonthly newspaper, which at that time was called SBC Today.

Walter Shurden, chairman of the department of Christianity at Mercer University, was the anniversary speaker for the occasion. He praised Baptists Today for being a "clear and caring voice for all other entities that have followed."

"People in power always need to have a voice breathing down their necks," he said. Although Shurden noted "the war is over" in the SBC, he called on the newspaper to continue to criticize fundamentalist efforts.

In the present climate, Shurden added, "you really need to be criticizing the moderates also. We need spiritual direction. You can provide it by giving your opinion."

"You are a voice to champion freedom," he noted. "We won't have a voice to champion freedom if you're owned by someone else. We will want to own our own paper for a very good reason, just as the fundamentalists do; we will want you to paint our side silver."

"Don't do it," Shurden exhorted. "And don't be intimidated. Don't become a house organ as Baptist Press and several state papers have done."

"Keep yourself autonomous," he concluded.

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