

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

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

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

April 29, 1993

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * FMB trustee denies charges of sexual misconduct
- * Baptists must impart identity, retiring BJC staffer says
- * BJC's Thomas honored for RFRA leadership
- * Former lounge singer makes music for young ears
- * What is contemporary Christian music?

FMB trustee denies charges
of sexual misconduct

By Ed Briggs

NORTH POLE, Alaska (ABP) -- A trustee on the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has been fired from his high school teaching job in Alaska amid charges he made sexual advances toward male students.

Rodney Duncan is denying the charges and appealing his firing by the North Pole school system in suburban Fairbanks. Meanwhile, students supporting the 39-year-old unmarried teacher have staged protests on his behalf.

A spokesman for the investigative unit of the Alaska State Troopers confirmed April 28 that Duncan is the focus of an investigation, which was described as "ongoing."

Duncan, a language arts teacher, said in a telephone interview that his appeal hearing will be held the first week in June. He added that he has asked that it be public. "I could have asked for a private hearing. But I've done nothing to be ashamed of," he said.

Duncan was suspended March 15 and fired April 7, but the school district refuses to say anything about the case until the appeal is resolved. A district spokeswoman even refused to tell a reporter what grade levels Duncan taught.

John Jackson, chairman of the trustees at the Foreign Mission Board and pastor of First Baptist Church in Fairfield, Calif., voiced his support for the embattled Duncan. He said in a telephone interview, "It appears to me that he did not get due process by the school board up there. I think they're in trouble over it."

Duncan is the son of Bill Duncan, executive director-treasurer of the Alaska Baptist Convention. The teacher also works as minister of music at his local Baptist church, where he also helps out with the youth group.

Duncan told supporters that among charges brought against him is one that he taught religion in his job at North Pole High School. He said the only religion he teaches is in Sunday school. Also he teaches the church's teenagers the importance of sexual abstinence until they are married.

But Deirdre Shipman, the foster parent of one of Duncan's public school

students who brought allegations against him, claims in a letter printed in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner that the teacher made "lewd sexual advances or suggestions" toward current and past male students. She added that the claim that Duncan was fired over a religious teaching issue is a smokescreen.

She wrote: "Rodney Duncan has decided to keep his supporters in the dark regarding the true facts as to why he was fired. He has continued to keep quiet the truth so that his many uninformed supporters do not turn on him."

She charged that Duncan "has taught for 17 years and he has left a few young men confused and hurt."

Shipman has not returned two calls to her home from The Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch.

Duncan said his lawyer, Bob Groseclose, advised him not to divulge the 12 allegations until the appeal. But Duncan, in responding to Shipman's allegation, said, "None of the allegations involved any sexual contact with students."

He added that while three allegations are related to teaching religion in his classes, he uses a Bible as a work of literature in his teaching, something that is permitted in the curriculum.

Duncan said that during a student sit-in on his behalf April 9, Shipman's foster son was among the students there wearing a badge saying he supports the teacher.

Duncan said the student, whom he declined to identify, "is anything but honorable. He's known among the students as a chronic liar."

According to the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, students wearing yellow tags that read "We support Mr. Duncan" skipped morning classes April 9 and milled about the high school commons area in a sit-in. The paper said the students talked among themselves about how Duncan helped them with homework after school, listened to their problems, opened his home to them for study sessions, chaperoned them on trips, befriended them and played the piano for school events.

"It's a sad thing when someone in society can make an allegation -- just get angry and decide to spread some sort of false rumor -- and ruin me," Duncan said.

Duncan said he thinks one of his problems is that he is 39 and single. "I think if I were someone who is married or sleeping around, there would have been no questions raised."

Calling the allegations false, he said, "only two come anywhere close" to the claims brought by Shipman and her foster son. He did not spell them out.

Duncan said despite the April 9 demonstration on his behalf, "it seems the people at central office and this one lady and her son seem to be the only people believing it."

Duncan added that the school administration has been calling his former students and asking them leading questions about their recollections about the man. He said his lawyer also received several letters of complaint about the investigation from former students. Duncan added, "I've received calls from 20 different states from people expressing support and outrage at the investigation."

Questions dealt with such things as whether he ever lent money to students, Duncan said. "Of course I did. No teacher alive has never lent money to students."

Baptists must impart identity,
retiring BJC staffer says

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Baptists are failing to impart their identity and basic tenets to the next generation, warned a laywoman who has spent more than 25 years trying to do just that.

Rosemary Brevard, a longtime employee of the Baptist Joint Committee, said that overall Baptists "are not doing a good job with our young people."

"I think there are a lot of people who carry the name 'Baptist' and truly don't have a gut understanding of what it means to be a free Baptist on church-state issues," said Brevard, who is retiring after 25 years with the BJC. "They truly don't understand what it is to be a minority."

Brevard, who also teaches youth Sunday school, sees her BJC role as a ministry "in the sense of needing to educate the next generation of Baptists in who they are and the fact they need to try to impact policy."

The decline of discipleship training within the Southern Baptist Convention is a major reason for this failure, she said. As a youth she learned those values in what was then called Training Union in her home church, First Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas.

When Brevard ends her tenure with the religious-liberty agency at the end of April, she will return to San Antonio with her husband, John.

She joined the BJC staff in November 1967 working in the communications department -- a job for which she was not really qualified, she said. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Texas with a major in government, Brevard did not know how to type in those days, so she took a course and acquired the skill.

After a year, she was given the opportunity to use her education by transferring to the research/legal department, where she stayed for the rest of her tenure.

Spanning nearly half the life of the agency, her ministry has been as diverse as it has been rich. Brevard, assistant to the general counsel/director of research services, has performed tasks from the very mundane to the extraordinary. In addition to typing correspondence and maintaining the agency's library, she's testified before a congressional committee and has been responsible for filing a Supreme Court brief.

She's worked with three of the agency's four executive directors. As a constant through the years, she has seen the agency and church-state law go through major changes:

-- The BJC has always had a scholarly approach to its program assignment, but in recent years it has greatly increased its activist dimension. Former executives Emanuel Carlson and James Wood and the late general counsel John Baker were academicians, while the BJC's current executive James Dunn and its general counsel Oliver Thomas are also activists, she said.

-- In recent years, the federal courts have become the primary arena for church-state disputes. Brevard remembered in her earlier years that BJC staff members primarily testified before Congress about church-state issues. Now the agency spends more time filing Supreme Court briefs, she said, noting that is reflective of what has happened within the country as a whole.

-- The agency always has maintained a strong emphasis on the no-establishment clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution, but in recent years it has focused increasingly on the free-exercise clause as well.

-- The BJC has become the neutral meeting ground for people on both ends of the political and theological spectrums to come together and work in

coalition, she said. Beginning with its coalition work on the Equal Access Act of 1984, the agency has built a reputation for helping adversaries find common ground.

Working for the BJC has touched her life in many ways, Brevard said. "I have worked in the middle of the national news. I am down there where it is made. It's exciting."

Brevard did not come to the agency because of a calling, but she said her job experience has become one. For Brevard, job and church intertwine, and together they become a ministry, she said.

An active member of First Baptist Church in Silver Spring, Md., Brevard has taught youth Sunday school for 25 years and has been deacon chairwoman and chairwoman of the congregation's most recent pulpit search committee.

BJC executive Dunn lauded Brevard's dedication and service.

"Rosemary Brevard is irreplaceable. Her personality has made her the BJC social director. Her Christianity has made her the minister of pastoral care. Her continuity has made her the institutional memory. I shall miss my fellow Texan immensely."

Attorney Thomas echoed Dunn: "No one knows more about, understands better or believes in religious liberty more than Rosemary Brevard. She is the embodiment of the Baptist citizen. Words are a shabby vehicle for communicating our appreciation and respect for this great woman."

Brent Walker, BJC associate general counsel, added: "It has been a singular pleasure to work with Rosemary. Not only did she help me learn a new area of the law, she constantly ministers to me -- to all of us at the BJC. She's always thinking about and doing for others."

-30-

BJC's Thomas honored
for RFRA leadership

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Oliver Thomas, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, was honored April 27 as a "champion of religious freedom" for his leadership in the effort to pass the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Of the five people honored by the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, Thomas is the only person who is not a member of Congress. A lawyer who is also an ordained minister, Thomas is a member of the Supreme Court bar.

On behalf of the BJC, Thomas chairs the diverse coalition of 58 civil-liberties and religious organizations backing the bill to restore a high level of protection for the free exercise of religion. Thomas has led the coalition's fight to pass the legislation for three years and helped write RFRA.

The bill would restore the compelling-interest test the Supreme Court formerly required government to meet before restricting religious practice. RFRA was unanimously approved by the House Judiciary Committee for consideration by the full chamber; the Senate Judiciary Committee has not yet voted on the measure.

Other honorees are the bill co-sponsors: Reps. Don Edwards, D-Calif., and Charles Schumer, D-N.Y.; and Sens. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass.

-30-

-- By Pam Parry

Former lounge singer makes
music for young ears

By Ferrell Foster

MARION, Ill. (ABP) -- In the shadows of a darkened church auditorium, young eyes remained transfixed, gazing toward the stage. The teenagers' attention never faltered, nor did that of the adult chaperons.

The attention focused on one man and his music.

A single spotlight illuminated the stage. The music had a beat one could have danced to, the lyrics pointed to Christ and to the futility of seeking to live life without him. The singer added his personal passion for the message.

Danny Ward is 38 years old, but he had no trouble communicating with a younger audience on a recent night at First Baptist Church in Marion, Ill.

His music fits in a category generally called "contemporary Christian music." But his songs in Marion included a variety of styles -- pop, rock, '50s, rhythm and blues, rap and black gospel.

It is a music that reflects the patterns of music that teenagers, as well as middle-aged and young adults, have grown up hearing through the popular media.

Although Ward's concert featured modern music forms, he is not alien to the more traditional. He is music and youth director at Sesser First Baptist Church, and in that role Ward ministers through what might be called traditional church music, as well as through more contemporary forms.

"I have a really wide music appreciation," he said during an interview in his West Frankfort home. Classical music played quietly on the stereo.

But it is the contemporary music that has shaped Ward's public ministry, which included a stint as lead singer for the Imperials, one of the most well known Christian singing groups of the 1970s and '80s.

In 1977, Ward was a "night club musician just getting to where I was making money," he said.

Then on Easter, April 10, he went to church with his mother as a "one-time visitor." Before leaving the worship service at First Baptist Church in West Frankfort, Ward had accepted Christ as his savior.

"It took me about nine months to get out of the night club situation," he recalled. "I became so miserable in the night clubs ... that I started switching the words of the club songs to Christian lyrics."

One year after accepting Christ, Ward sang his first church solo. He believes it was "Give Them All to Jesus," the same song sung on the Easter of his salvation experience.

"It was totally terrifying," Ward said of singing that first song. Unlike barroom audiences, "this crowd was paying attention. The lights were on and they were looking at me."

Ward's first exposure to contemporary Christian music came that same year, 1978. A friend bought Ward and his wife, Pam, tickets to a concert by the Imperials in Evansville, Ind.

"I was totally impressed," Ward said. "The music headed in the direction of quality and flavor that was interesting to me."

As a teenager he had liked the rock group Three Dog Night. The Imperials had some of that same quality, with "soulful, my-heart's-bleeding" vocals.

So Ward and six others, including some recently saved friends from his night club group, formed a band of their own, Hosanna. From 1978 to 1985, the all-Southern Baptist group performed mostly in southern Illinois and recorded two albums for limited distribution.

It was during the early '80s that the Imperials first contacted Ward about becoming their lead singer. It resulted in a Nashville, Tenn., audition. But three days later the group informed him they had gone with another man, Paul Smith.

"That hurt me deeply, but that was a growing thing," Ward said.

It would be four years before the Imperials called again. During that time, Hosanna chose to disband and Ward spent long hours praying and studying the Bible. Still today, in the room in his home where he composes his music, sophisticated sound equipment shares space with shelves of Bible commentaries.

Ward spent only one year touring with the Imperials, beginning in the spring of 1985. Despite great success, he says very honestly, "They fired me." His departure came shortly after the departure of the group's other Southern Baptist member.

Ward doesn't want to dwell on difficulties of the relationship. "I'm grateful for the experience, because I can see the vanity in it." That's about all he chose to say.

"Right now the thing with me is I am a different creature than the Nashville music industry," Ward stated. "If they never released another album, that would not affect me."

He added that "there are some totally sincere, legitimate Christian singers and writers. Pray for them because they are surrounded by temptation," including fame, money and alcohol.

When Ward sang with the Imperials, he performed before as many as 30,000 people at one time. Now, the crowds are smaller, but he said, "I feel so good about what I'm doing."

He would like the opportunity to minister to larger numbers again, but he said he's leaving that in God's hands.

Despite some misgivings regarding the Christian music industry, Ward has a heart-felt attachment to contemporary music and the power it has to touch lives.

"I don't think the Lord has a favorite style of music. I don't believe there's any style ... that he can't use."

The important thing, from Ward's perspective, is what's in the heart of the songwriter and singer, and what is being said in the lyrics.

Ward expressed some concern about music by Christian artists that is so vague it could be sung to a girlfriend. "It's kind of depressing. ... If you water down the message, what is the point? So you reach millions of people, but what's the point."

Is God using contemporary Christian music? he was asked. "Absolutely, big time," responded Ward.

But such music is not without critics. Some complain it is too loud, that the message gets lost in the noise. Others say it is just entertaining.

Ward does crank up the volume in his music. But he said there is such a thing as "ungodly volume."

"Musicians sometimes feel like louder is better," he continued. "For some of it, volume is necessary to feel the music. But there comes a place where it's detrimental to someone's eardrums. ... That's not right."

As for the entertaining aspect of the music, Ward doesn't mind at all. "I want to entertain, then I want to go deep into spiritual stuff. To entertain, by definition, means "to keep someone's attention," and every speaker or singer wants to do that. "Everybody wants to entertain, they just won't admit it."

Churches need to encourage contemporary music by being "open to let musicians be creative," he said.

Some of the "traditional" songs now sung in churches were bar tunes in

centuries past, noted Ward, whose own career has followed a similar path -- from bar to church.

Ward has written 40-50 songs himself, a process he likened to the birth of baby. "You look back at it (and say), 'Where did this come from?'"

Why does he write? "Got to," Ward responded. "I have the need to express myself." And he added a caution regarding comments to songwriters. "Be careful how you talk about our songs. It's us turned inside out."

-30-

What is contemporary
Christian music?

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- People talk a lot about "contemporary Christian music," but what is it?

"It's a rhythm-based music that has to do somewhat with the style of the material," said Mark Blankenship, director of Genevox Music Group at the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn. But he added that it encompasses a variety of styles, including rock and roll, Southern gospel, ballad and inspirational.

Blankenship clarified that all music is rhythm-based, but contemporary Christian music "has some kind of rock orientation pattern to it ... a strong beat pattern."

Warren Pettit, assistant professor of music at Greenville College, added his perspective. "The lyric extrinsically expresses a Christian philosophy," and the music "embraces contemporary musical idiom," such as rap, dance, pop and rock.

Reduced to its simplest, contemporary Christian music is just what its name says: It's today's (not yesterday's) music about Christ and the Christian life. It generally is thought of as being in the style of current popular music, and therefore having some connection to rock, but is not limited to that.

Like "gospel," contemporary Christian music is a "very generic term," Pettit said. In a secular music store all Christian music may be grouped under the "gospel" heading. In a Christian store, "contemporary" probably refers to a portion of the collection, and "gospel" may mark another portion traditionally associated with quartet music.

Part of the distinction in contemporary music is how it sounds, Pettit continued. Much of it is electronically generated, and that makes it different from music in the past.

The last 10 years have seen a "sonic revolution," the professor said. There now are drum machines, sequencing devices, digital audio and an array of other electronic gadgetry.

Contemporary Christian music now can be heard on radio stations and in concerts around the country, and it is having an effect on what Christians want to hear when they go to church.

The changes in contemporary music have "influenced what is happening in worship services," Blankenship stated. People "want to hear a lot of the same material when they come into church."

The majority of materials now produced by Genevox are in the contemporary category "because that is what churches are buying more than anything else," Blankenship said.

That has created challenges for music ministers, who have "had to learn to adapt," he continued. Those with college and seminary backgrounds may not

have been trained in use of contemporary forms, but "the constituency, the fellowship of the church, desires to have it there."

As for the staying power of contemporary music, Blankenship believes "parts of it will come and go." But, he said, "The soft rhythm orientation that is found in contemporary Christian music will remain and even affect hymnody."

-30-

-- By Ferrell Foster

***** END *****