
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

June 29, 1993

IN THIS ISSUE:

- * SBC's women ministers grow despite opposition
- * Acceptance of ordained women slow in coming to heartland
- * Elder-spawned workgroup plans national convocation
- * Supreme Court issues decisions on lottery ads, hate crimes
- * Panel recommends Flynn as Vatican ambassador
- * Offering plate still best fund-raising tool

SBC's women ministers
grow despite opposition

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Two-thirds of the female ministers in the Southern Baptist Convention have considered joining another denomination because of the SBC's opposition to their work, according to a recent survey.

Sixty-six percent of women ministers surveyed said they have considered leaving the SBC. Most have not left, however. In fact their ranks continue to grow -- faster than in any other major denomination, according to one researcher.

The issue may be headed for a showdown in the next year, as Southern Baptist leaders will consider a proposal to expel all churches that ordain women.

The proposal -- introduced at the recent SBC annual meeting in Houston and referred to the denomination's Executive Committee -- would amend a bylaw that already excludes churches that condone homosexuality to likewise exclude churches that ordain women.

The Southern Baptist Convention's conservative leadership, which controls the Executive Committee, already is on record opposing women's ordination. A controversial resolution passed in 1984 denounces the ordination of women and says women pastors are outside "God's delegated order of authority," which makes "man the head of woman."

The resolution says the Bible "excludes women from pastoral leadership to preserve a submission God requires because the man was first in creation and woman was first in the Edenic fall," blaming women for initiating original sin.

Yet the survey suggests the 1984 resolution did little to discourage the ordination of women. Most of the women who responded to the voluntary survey have been ordained since the resolution was passed (55 percent).

The survey was sponsored by Southern Baptist Women in Ministry as part of the organization's 10th anniversary observance.

A total of 356 women ministers -- both ordained and non-ordained -- responded to the 70-question survey, which was distributed at various meetings and printed in the organization's newsletter and in the newspaper

Baptists Today. The results were tabulated by a researcher at the University of Louisville.

Respondents spoke frankly about the denominational climate in which they work. Sixty-three percent said a woman who wants to be a pastor should pursue that goal outside the SBC.

Although most of the survey respondents are ordained (55 percent), only 18 percent of the ordained are pastors or associate pastors. The largest group of ordained women are chaplains (36 percent). Most chaplaincy positions require ordination.

Another 23 percent of ordained respondents are in other church-staff positions. And 21 percent are scattered among a variety of ministry-related positions.

None of the non-ordained respondents are pastors or associate pastors. Most hold other church-staff positions -- education, 27 percent; youth/children, 20 percent; music, 11 percent. And 32 percent are listed under a variety of positions.

Although non-ordained ministers account for less than half of the survey respondents, they make up a much larger portion of all female ministers in the SBC, according to Sarah Frances Anders, professor of sociology at Louisiana College in Pineville, who tracks the growth of the SBC's female clergy.

Non-ordained women fill about 20 percent of all professional staff positions in the SBC's 37,000 churches, Anders said.

Anders has counted at least 988 Southern Baptist women ordained to the gospel ministry. That number has increased 10-fold since passage of the 1984 resolution, she said.

The number of ordained women is growing faster in the SBC than in any other major Protestant group, Anders said. Southern Baptists now rank sixth.

Although ordination is essential for some ministry positions, it may be a hindrance to finding a job, the survey suggests.

Ordained women report more difficulty finding ministry positions than their non-ordained colleagues. While 52 percent of ordained women say finding a job was difficult or very difficult, only 26 percent of the non-ordained agree.

The most significant barrier to ministry in the Southern Baptist Convention is Baptist pastors, according to survey respondents. About one in five cited pastors as their major barrier. One in 10 cited the SBC itself.

According to the survey, the typical female minister is 43 years old, holds a graduate degree (83 percent) and works full-time (77 percent) either in a church (44 percent) or agency (48 percent). She probably is married (53 percent) and likely has at least one child (47 percent).

Women ministers are better educated than their male counterparts, the survey showed. Virtually all women ministers have bachelor's degrees (98 percent), and at least 80 percent have seminary degrees as well. According to a 1986 SBC study, fewer than half of male ministers have seminary training.

The survey identified 131 Southern Baptist churches in 25 states that have ordained women to the ministry. There certainly are more, since only 196 of the SBC's estimated 1,000 ordained women responded to the survey.

The SBC Executive Committee will begin discussing what to do about those churches in September. But Fred Wolfe, newly elected chairman of the committee, said he does not expect the group to vote to exclude those churches.

"I don't think there is any inclination on the committee to do that," said Wolfe, a conservative leader and pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala. "I don't think they will want to remove a church for that reason."

Unlike homosexuality, which prompted the bylaw exclusion last year, women's ordination "is not a moral issue," Wolfe said. "It's a matter of interpretation and conviction."

-30-

-- By Greg Warner

Acceptance of ordained women
slow in coming to heartland

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- The ordination of women, on the rise among Southern Baptists nationwide, is slow in coming to America's heartland.

Susan Houston of Kansas City, Mo., has served as minister of music in three Baptist churches. But, like many of her female colleagues, she has not sought ordination. "I feel like God has ordained me, and it is up to the church if they want to," she explained.

Houston, who works part-time as minister of music at Winwood Baptist Church in Kansas City, said it is difficult for women to find full-time ministry work in Missouri. "Many churches are hesitant to take a risk with a woman in leadership and be labeled as a 'liberal' church," she said.

Houston said she has felt accepted in the churches she has served. But she recalled a troubling interview for an interim position years ago.

"I said leading music was what God called me to do, and they said, 'Maybe God didn't call you,' as if God didn't call women for that," she said. "It was my first slam in the face, and I began to look around and found it all over."

Despite such opposition, including discouragement from the SBC's conservative leaders, a growing number of Southern Baptist women nationwide are being ordained. According to sociologist Sarah Frances Anders of Pineville, La. --

who has counted them -- ordained Baptist women now number about 1,000, a 10-fold increase in the last decade.

But women's ordination in the SBC is still predominantly an East Coast phenomenon. Of the churches that have ordained women, 71 percent are in the East, according to a recent survey by Southern Baptist Women in Ministry. Thirty-five percent are in North Carolina and Virginia.

Of the seminary-trained ordained women who participated in the survey, 61 percent graduated from the SBC's two easternmost schools -- Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Only 3 percent of the survey's 356 respondents are Midwestern graduates, and they account for almost all survey participants in the Midwest.

Some women ministers, like Denise Lincoln of Cape Girardeau, Mo., say ordained women are losing ground in the region.

"I think it was more common years ago to ordain women," said Lincoln, an associate campus minister at Southeast Missouri State University. "With the resurgence of fundamentalism and the question of who has authority ... women in Missouri (are) in a declining environment."

Lincoln, immediate past president of Missouri Baptist Women in Ministry, estimated only five women in the state have been ordained.

Opposition in the Southern Baptist Convention has closed the door on many women seeking ordination, Lincoln said. It is assumed that those who pursue ordination have an "agenda," she said, not just a desire to serve.

Many women ministers have chosen to avoid the fight over ordination. For

every one of the 1,000 ordained women in the SBC, there are an estimated 10 who serve in ministry positions without ordination.

Betty Murphy, minister of education for 12 years at First Baptist Church in Independence, Mo., said she has never felt the need to be ordained in order to do her work.

"I don't think ordination is necessarily biblical," she said. "... I can serve the Lord whether I am ordained or not."

At Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Southern Baptist seminary serving the heartland, female ministers say they encounter a mixed bag of reactions to their presence on campus.

"There really are many male students who are very supportive of the women who are here to prepare for ministry," said Marcia Fleischman, a theology student and co-chair of the campus's Women in Ministry chapter. "Personally, I have had only a few experiences of verbal harassment on campus."

Once, in preaching class, however, a male student advised her to wear a jacket when speaking in front of her classmates, "to cover her feminine form," Fleischman recalled.

She said the comment "was painful and sexist" but she did not let it deter her. "I am a very cheerful person by nature, and I just don't allow myself to be bothered by the few negative things that are said."

Fleischman was ordained to the ministry in 1985 and has been a member of the preaching team at Broadway Baptist Church in Kansas City ever since. She enrolled at Midwestern three years ago after "I heard the Lord say, 'I've anointed you to preach the gospel.'"

But in the past 10 years, the enrollment of women students at Midwestern Seminary has actually declined slightly, according to registrar's records. Last year women made up 12 percent of Midwestern's enrollment of 472, down from 15 percent in 1986.

Vernon Davis, Midwestern's vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty, said, "There is generally a spirit of openness among the student body to the presence of women studying for the ministry that God called them to do."

However, Davis acknowledged, "There is resistance to the idea (of women in ministry) among some students, and this presents some real challenges to the women who are here."

One of those, Susan Miller, said she has found Midwestern's faculty and most students to be supportive. "However, I believe the minority of male students who do not support us have the ear of the trustees. I think this is very unfortunate, because it is obvious to me that our story is not being told to the people who need to hear it."

Midwestern students Ron Howe and Michael Greenup both say the Bible excludes women from serving as pastors, but that should not prevent them from serving in other ministries of the church.

"I believe that women are called by God for service; it's between the individual and God as to what that call is," said Howe, minister of music at Rockwood Baptist Church in Independence, Mo.

"I believe that the biblical standpoint is that women (should) not be in the pastorate," he continued, "but I admit to an incomplete knowledge of the biblical situation. I wish God would give us a definitive answer on this issue."

Greenup, a master of divinity student and pastor of Union Baptist Church in Norborne, Mo., said, "I think there is a biblical base for women in the ministry in the broad sense of the word 'ministry.' However, It is important for us to realize that there is a difference between the sexes, and this difference cannot always be done away with."

"Until we find some way to bridge the biblical gaps, there will always be restrictions on women in the ministry," he said.

Davis, Midwestern's dean, said many students coming to seminary "encounter the idea of women in ministry for the first time as a real issue," and sometimes that produces a change in attitude.

"It is the first time that they have to deal not just with an abstract idea but with real persons who come with a sense of call and commitment," he explained. "In my opinion, it is through this living relationship to women who are seeking to live out their call that most of the changing of ideas occurs."

One student who admits to a change of heart is Todd Cox of Warrensburg, Mo., who said he went to Midwestern with "a real traditional opinion" of women in ministry. "I hadn't really been confronted with this issue on a personal level," he said.

"The women students here have a lot of abilities, gifts and talents," he said, "and if they feel called of God, they should do the ministry he's called them to do."

Laura Farmer, a theology student at Midwestern, said she sensed God's call to ministry at age 9, and has been encouraged throughout her life by her family, church members and teachers to pursue a seminary education.

"Someday, I hope to be able to teach the Bible at a Southern Baptist college or seminary, fulfilling my calling to the ministry within the Southern Baptist Convention," said Farmer, who was elected president of the seminary's Student Body Association.

"I have a problem with anyone who would deny me the opportunity to live out my calling in the SBC simply because I am a woman. The fact is, God knew I was a woman when he called me, and he did not change me into man."

In local churches, Farmer said, "We teach little girls to seek the Lord's will and to follow when he calls. We nurture their gifts and encourage them to pursue training for ministry. We send them to seminary expecting them to be welcomed, encouraged and affirmed -- not degraded and harassed.

"If we don't believe women should be in ministry, we should not encourage little girls to listen, because God might call."

-30-

-- By Brenda Sanders and Laurie Lattimore

Elder-spawned workgroup
plans national convocation

CHICAGO (ABP) -- Leaders of a movement to bring feuding Southern Baptists together under a changed denominational structure have laid tentative plans for a meeting of state representatives to propose those changes.

The meeting, called a "Convocation of Hope," could produce proposals that would require the SBC's ruling conservatives to share power with disenfranchised moderates, whose financial support of the SBC is essential to the denomination's survival, according to convocation organizers.

The idea for the convocation is an outgrowth of a research project headed by Lloyd Elder, retired president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

In May Elder called for grass-roots Baptists -- "not a new political party" -- to bring an end to the 14-year denominational controversy by

mandating sweeping constitutional changes that "would involve the whole family in missionary governance, and call on our people to renew their zeal in missions support."

Elder's proposals would involve state conventions in the nomination of half the persons to serve on SBC boards, commissions and committees. The SBC president now directs the process through the appointment of a nominating committee.

But the "Convocation of Hope" would be free to suggest whatever changes are deemed appropriate, said Rodney Osborn, spokesman for an ad hoc workgroup which met in Chicago June 24-25 to get the movement off the ground.

The first step in the process, Osborn said, is to call together the executive directors and presidents of each of the 36 state Baptist conventions.

Those leaders, who may meet in September prior to the SBC Executive Committee meeting in Nashville, would designate five representatives from each state to participate in the "Convocation of Hope," which is yet to be scheduled. Also participating would be the heads of the 21 SBC agencies.

"It should be stressed that any decision as to how to proceed will come from the broad-based representation that this convocation must represent," Osborn said in a prepared statement released after the Chicago meeting.

Whatever proposals emerge from the convocation likely would be presented to the annual Southern Baptist Convention, which meets next June in Orlando, Fla., Osborn said.

Elder's proposals, in addition to requiring SBC leaders to share power with state conventions, also would have the SBC president and the first vice president be elected for two years and alternate between laypersons and ordained ministers; change how messengers qualify for the SBC annual meeting; increase the maximum number of messengers from a church from 10 to 20; and have the convention be held every two years and include simultaneous regional conventions through television hookups.

The changes are needed, Elder said, because "if we are not inclusive in governance, we cannot expect Southern Baptists to continue to give." His research outlined downward trends in SBC membership and contributions, which he said will force the SBC to layoff missionaries and close down institutions within seven years.

In June Elder was joined in his campaign by Herschel Hobbs, a former SBC president and Southern Baptist elder statesman. The pair held a three-hour dialogue with state convention leaders June 14 prior to the SBC meeting in Houston. That meeting resulted in formation of the workgroup headed by Osborn, a Peoria, Ill., physician who is immediate past president of the organization of state convention presidents.

Participating with Osborn in the workgroup's Chicago session were Elder and three state presidents -- Richard Maples of Texas, Joe Baker of Ohio, and Rodney Travis of Missouri -- as well as Quinn Pugh, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New York. Cecil Sims, executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention, was unable to attend.

In addition to planning the convocation, the workgroup drafted a vision, mission statement and objectives for the movement, which they have dubbed "Coalition of Hope." The statements and objectives focus on the need for Southern Baptists to unite around the cause of world missions and evangelization.

The objectives are:

-- To inform Baptist people of the mission/purpose of our vision and the opportunity new levels of commitment will mean to world evangelism.

-- To mobilize Southern Baptist church members in support of the historic Baptist organizational missions center.

-- To stimulate state conventions and Southern Baptist boards and agencies with the imperative of world evangelism and to new levels of missions support.

-- To call Southern Baptists to prayer and repentance for slowness and intransigence, however unintentional, in our response to God's fresh call to world evangelism.

-- To encourage the building of trust and fellowship among the Southern Baptist family as a missions people.

-- To foster such changes in Southern Baptist structures as may be necessary to better serve the Great Commission and to provide accountability.

-30-

-- By Greg Warner

Supreme Court issues decisions
on lottery ads, hate crimes

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Wrapping up its 1992-93 term, the U.S. Supreme Court underscored government's power to restrict lottery advertisements, approved enhanced penalties for hate crimes, and split sharply over the legal standard to be applied in job-discrimination lawsuits.

In an opinion written by retiring Associate Justice Byron White, seven justices said the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech is not violated by a federal statute that bars the broadcast of lottery advertisements by television and radio stations in non-lottery states.

The law was challenged by a North Carolina radio station seeking to air Virginia lottery advertisements. The Elizabeth City, N.C., station argued that more than 90 percent of its listening audience resides in Virginia.

Lower courts sided with the station, saying that North Carolina's purpose of shielding residents from gambling was not advanced because residents of the listening area are exposed to lottery advertisements from Virginia media.

The Supreme Court reversed, saying the federal government has a substantial interest in supporting the policy of non-lottery states such as North Carolina without interfering with the policy of lottery states such as Virginia.

In a dissenting opinion joined by Harry Blackmun, John Paul Stevens said the government's ban in this case "is in no way proportionate" with its asserted interest in protecting the policies of non-lottery states.

Noting that 34 states plus the District of Columbia now sponsor lotteries, Stevens said hostility toward state-run lotteries "is the exception rather than the norm."

State and federal governments, Stevens wrote, "simply do not have an overriding or 'substantial' interest in seeking to discourage what virtually the entire country is embracing, and certainly not an interest that can justify a restriction on constitutionally protected speech as sweeping as the one the court today sustains."

In another free-speech case, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld a Wisconsin law that allows stiffer punishment for certain crimes if the victim was selected because of race, religion, sexual orientation or other protected status.

The statute had been challenged by a defendant who received twice the normal two-year sentence for aggravated battery after a jury found the victim

was selected because of race. The Wisconsin Supreme Court had struck down the statute, saying it violated defendants' free-speech rights.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, writing for the court, said the Wisconsin statute is aimed at conduct not protected by the First Amendment.

Courts traditionally have considered a variety of factors, including a defendant's motivation, in setting sentences, Rehnquist wrote.

In a third free-speech dispute, the Supreme Court declined to review a federal appeals-court ruling that upheld a Postal Service regulation prohibiting political campaigning on postal property.

The appeals court said that while the ban is not content-neutral, it is a reasonable restriction and does not violate the First Amendment.

The high court's ruling in a job-bias dispute provoked a strongly worded dissent from four justices. The majority insisted that to win their legal challenge, workers must prove that an employer illegally discriminated on the basis of race.

The majority opinion, written by Antonin Scalia, rejected a federal appeals court's conclusion that a fired halfway-house employee won his case because he proved the reasons offered by the employer for the employee's treatment proved to be false.

Scalia said the worker must show that the reason provided by the employer is false and that discrimination is the real reason.

In a dissent joined by three colleagues, David Souter criticized the majority for abandoning two decades of court precedent. The requirements imposed by the majority, Souter predicted, promise to be unfair and unworkable.

Interpretation of anti-discrimination laws, Souter wrote, should not "be driven by concern for employers who are too ashamed to be honest in court, at the expense of victims of discrimination who do not happen to have direct evidence of discriminatory intent."

In another discrimination case, the high court declined to review lower court decisions upholding the firing of a St. Louis auto worker for excessive absences. The worker, a Seventh-day Adventist whose religious beliefs required him not to work from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, filed suit contending he was terminated because of his religion.

A federal appeals court said that while U.S. civil-rights laws require an employer to reasonably accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of workers, accommodating Jesse Cook's requests to have Friday nights off would have infringed on other employees and resulted in an undue hardship on the employer.

-30-

-- By Larry Chesser

Panel recommends confirmation
of Flynn as Vatican ambassador

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted without opposition June 29 to recommend confirmation of Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn as the next U.S. ambassador to the Vatican.

The committee, which heard Flynn's testimony less than a week earlier, approved the nomination on a voice vote. A committee spokeswoman said the nomination may be considered by the Senate as early as June 29 or 30.

If confirmed, Flynn will be the third person to fill the post since President Ronald Reagan appointed William Wilson in 1984 after Congress

repealed a legislative ban on U.S.-Vatican ties in 1983.

Thomas Malady was appointed by President George Bush, and Flynn was named by President Bill Clinton, despite opposition from Baptists and others who oppose formal ties between the United States and the Holy See.

At its recent annual meeting in Houston, the Southern Baptist Convention approved a resolution opposing diplomatic ties with the Vatican. James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, a religious-liberty agency affiliated with 10 national Baptist bodies, lamented the lack of widespread opposition to the appointment.

"Both public officials and the people at large are so insensitive to the American ideal of church-state separation that they see no problem in this blatant violation of the principle," Dunn said. "In fact, this move maintains a position in which the United States officially recognizes only one church."

-30-

-- By Larry Chesser

Offering plate still
best fund-raising tool

By Mark Wingfield

GLENDALE, Calif. (ABP) -- The church collection plate remains far and away the most popular fund-raising tool in America, according to a new survey by the Barna Research Group.

Among all Americans surveyed who had given to charity in the previous 30 days, 66 percent had done so through church collections, the survey found.

By comparison, other forms of charitable solicitation had drawn considerably less participation in the 30-day period: 27 percent of those surveyed had given in response to face-to-face appeals, 26 percent had given in response to direct-mail appeals, 19 percent had given through payroll deductions, 13 percent had given in response to telephone appeals, and 8 percent had given in response to television, radio and newspaper ads.

Americans who are active in churches were much more likely (75 percent) to have given to charity than were people who are not active in churches (43 percent). Also, those who could be classified as "born-again" Christians were more likely to have donated to charity than Americans who would not be classified "born again."

Americans who are involved in churches were much more likely to have given their contributions through the church collection plate, but less likely to have given in response to other appeals. However, Americans who are not involved in churches were more likely to have given to charity in other ways.

"There may be either good news or bad news for churches in these findings," said George Barna, president of the research firm. "Americans who are involved in churches are more likely to feel those churches are worthy of their money as well as their time. They are voting not only with their feet, but with their pocketbooks.

"But this survey did not differentiate between those who give a substantial portion of their income and those who drop a quarter into the basket every time they visit. It is possible that churched Americans' edge in giving is a lot smaller than these numbers suggest."

Among other findings:

-- Women (71 percent) were more likely to have donated to charity than men (62 percent).

-- Adults earning \$40,000 or more annually (78 percent) were more likely to have given than those earning less than \$20,000 annually (52 percent).

-- Married adults (76 percent) were more likely to have contributed than single adults (55 percent).

-- Americans are increasingly irritated by telephone appeals, and are half as likely to contribute to a telephone solicitation as to a direct-mail solicitation.

-- The most active givers of all age groups are those people between the ages of 47 and 65.

Data for this survey were drawn from telephone surveys conducted in February 1993 using a random national sample of adults. There is a 95 percent chance the figures are accurate to within plus or minus four percentage points.

-30-

***** END *****