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Growth of missionary force
encourages FMB trustees

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Prospects for a record increase in missionary appointments highlighted a quiet meeting of Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees Dec. 6-7.

"Preliminary statistics being compiled for 1993 give hope for a banner year," FMB President Jerry Rankin told trustees. "A phenomenal number of missionary candidates moving through the appointment process affirm that God is faithful to call out the laborers."

By year's end, 495 mission workers are expected to have been appointed during 1993, said Thurmon Bryant, vice president for mission personnel. That total would be a record, surpassing the 429 appointed in 1985.

This year's appointments -- which include 223 career and associate missionaries and 272 persons on two-year assignments -- represents a 22 percent increase over the 408 appointed last year.

Most of the increase (80 percent) came in two-year assignments. In recent years, that category of missionary service has accounted for an ever-larger portion of FMB appointments.

This year's appointments are expected to leave the FMB with a slight increase in the total missions force. Accounting for retirements, resignations and other departures, agency officials are projecting about 3,945 missionaries in service by year's end, up slightly from 1992's 3,893.

Among the 32 assigned for overseas service at this month's meeting was Southern Baptists' first deaf career missionary. Yvette Aarons, 34, a Jamaican from Brooklyn, N.Y., will minister with deaf persons in Trinidad.

The increased appointments come despite plateaued contributions to the Cooperative Program, an important channel of financial support for the Foreign Mission Board and other Southern Baptist Convention ministries.

In addition, contributions to the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions, which funds about 45 percent of the FMB's work, have not met financial goals in any year since 1981.

But FMB trustees -- whose meeting followed the week in which the Lottie Moon offering was promoted in most churches -- were optimistic about reaching this year's \$85 million offering goal.

In fact, 55 of the agency's 89 trustees have committed about \$88,500 to the offering, reported board chairman John Jackson.

"I cannot avoid being optimistic with regard to the financial support Southern Baptists are providing to reach a lost world," Rankin said in his report to the board.

The president also announced Henry Blackaby, a well-known advocate of spiritual renewal, will take on an assignment with the FMB Jan. 1.

Blackaby, who has been director of the office of prayer and spiritual awakening at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, will be jointly sponsored by that agency, the FMB and the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. The three agencies will share his salary and expenses.

A popular speaker among Southern Baptists, Blackaby is co-author of widely used guides on spiritual enrichment.

"We have recognized that God is using Henry Blackaby in a unique way as a force for prayer and spiritual awakening in America," said Rankin. "In discussion with Dr. Blackaby, there was a mutual sensing that God was leading him into a wider role."

Under the new arrangement, Blackaby's "time and ministry will belong to Southern Baptists and the kingdom (of God) rather than to any one agency," Rankin added.

In other business, trustees elected four senior staff members to vice presidential posts created in a recent reorganization.

The four -- Billy Bullington, Sam James, William Wakefield and Lewis Myers -- had administered the board's work, respectively, in Africa, in Europe and the Middle East, in Asia and in countries inaccessible to missionaries.

All four positions, as well as the one supervising work in the Americas, were eliminated in the reorganization. Responsibility for all five regions, representing all FMB work worldwide, now lies with the new senior vice president for overseas operations, Avery Willis.

The trustee action makes Bullington vice president for overseas services, including research, evangelism and church growth, overseas media services, missionary health and family services and information analysis.

As vice president for creative leadership development, James will train and guide missionaries in conducting church growth and other strategy studies overseas.

Wakefield, vice president for international outreach, will coordinate ministries to international students in the United States.

Myers, vice president for "World A" strategies, will focus attention on those portions of the world that are considered the least exposed to the Christian gospel.

Trustees also:

-- Accepted an invitation to hold a missionary appointment ceremony in conjunction with a meeting of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference June 12, 1994, in Orlando, Fla. The conference convenes just prior to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando June 14-16.

-- Approved guidelines for selecting a new president of the board. In the process of electing Rankin as president last June, trustees said some procedures were not specified.

The new guidelines require a nominee to win approval from 80 percent of search committee members and 75 percent of trustees present and voting. Nominations from the floor are prohibited.

-- Adopted a 4 percent salary structure increase for FMB staff, most of whom work in the board's Richmond headquarters. The change does not affect missionaries, whose financial support is considered separately from staff.

FMB reserve funds
spark war of words

By Mark Wingfield & Greg Warner

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Laypeople's visions of Baptist missionaries stranded on foreign fields have contributed to an ongoing war of words between leaders of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and leaders of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The central question in the debate is this: At what point will the FMB's loss of contributions from Fellowship sympathizers require scaling back the FMB's overseas force?

The Fellowship is a group of moderate Southern Baptists who have formed their own global missions program. The moderates claim they have been cut out of meaningful input to the Southern Baptist Convention and FMB by conservatives who now control the denomination.

To complicate matters, the leader of the Fellowship's missions program is Keith Parks, who resigned as FMB president last year in protest of the actions of the FMB's conservative trustees.

FMB supporters claim Parks started the war of words early this year with statements he made on a Fellowship-produced video called "Reaching the Unreached."

On that video, Parks explained that Baptists within the Fellowship movement "cannot in good conscience continue to support missions through the traditional channels."

Yet all "genuine Southern Baptists," he said, are concerned about the future of missionaries already on the field.

"Most Southern Baptists ... will continue to support missions in the traditional ways, and therefore our missionaries will not suffer," he said. "Even if the income does decline, both the Home and Foreign Mission boards have adequate resources that they can support the missionaries for an indefinite period of time."

Then in November of this year, similar comments by another Fellowship leader at a Mississippi gathering sparked further reaction from FMB supporters.

Harlan Spurgeon, another former FMB administrator who now works with the Fellowship, spoke at a breakfast meeting of the Fellowship's Mississippi chapter during the annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

A question was raised there about the possible impact giving to the Fellowship might have on FMB-supported missionaries.

"My response was 'Look at the SBC Annual, which shows the cash position and total reserves of the FMB,'" Spurgeon recalled. "I just said that if the income of the Foreign Mission Board was cut by 10 or 20 percent it would not affect the operation of the Foreign Mission Board. They could go on indefinitely."

During the convention later that day, an FMB trustee from Mississippi made a motion that the state convention increase the percentage of its unified budget that goes to the SBC and, ultimately, the FMB. The trustee said the action was necessary because the FMB was in a time of great need.

In response, another messenger quoted what Spurgeon had said at the breakfast meeting.

The motion failed, but the larger issue of how much money the FMB needs remains.

The FMB issued a news release through Baptist Press Dec. 3 stating, "Southern Baptists need to increase their missions giving despite inaccurate reports being circulated that the Foreign Mission Board has all the money it

needs in reserve."

"If such reports were true, we wouldn't have had to cut our home office staff by 37 positions in 1993 because of decreased receipts," new FMB President Jerry Rankin said in the release.

"Yes, the board does have reserve funds, but they're not nearly enough for an agency like the board with nearly 4,000 missionaries operating on tight budgets all over the world," added FMB Executive Vice President Don Kammerdiener.

In his October report to FMB trustees, the FMB's chief financial officer also addressed the question of money held in reserves.

Carl Johnson told trustees the FMB maintains \$80 million in endowment funds, another \$25 million in contingency reserves and another \$12 million in operating reserves. This total balance of \$117 million is in addition to \$106 million in other funds held aside, such as money allocated but not yet spent, hunger relief funds and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering funds.

"Sometimes folks say: 'I don't understand what the problem is. You folks are sitting on all those investment funds. Why don't you spend some of that capital?'" Johnson said.

"If we were to do that, one effect would be to diminish missionary support. The ultimate would be that we would potentially have to call some missionaries home."

Johnson said 7.3 percent of the FMB's \$177 million annual operating budget is funded by investment income. The amount of budget funds gained from investment income equals the amount necessary to support 292 missionaries, he said.

Further, Johnson said, the SBC requires its agencies to maintain a certain level of funds in reserve. And the \$25 million the FMB has in contingency reserves falls far short of the maximum amount allowed by SBC policy, he added.

In subsequent interviews, both Parks and Spurgeon stood by their earlier statements.

"If the budget goes down, the board has plenty of reserves," Parks said. "They can take care of the missionaries."

"I realize they couldn't tap all the \$200 million that Carl (Johnson) describes. But suppose the (annual) income dropped \$1 million or \$2 million. They would have money to cover that deficit for many years. ... If push came to shove, the missionaries would be protected."

Although FMB leaders say the agencies reserves would last a mere 13 months, Parks noted, such a calculation assumes all other FMB income would cease -- an unrealistic assumption.

And Johnson's statement that loss of income from investments would eliminate support for 292 missionaries is misleading, Parks said. "They've got many, many other pockets to go to," such as capital-needs funds that could be redirected to personnel."

Parks said he is not criticizing the FMB's policy on reserves, which grew to historic levels while he was president of the agency. "It's not criticism. It's just telling the facts."

"I'm trying to reassure people that the missionaries are not going to be without a salary or be isolated on the mission field and not be able to get home," Parks said.

"The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering could diminish significantly and the Cooperative Program could diminish significantly, and they wouldn't have to touch the missionaries."

The Fellowship's drain on the FMB and other SBC agencies is noticeable but not gigantic.

The Fellowship received \$7.3 million in 1992 and is expected to surpass

\$10 million in 1993. That is far less than the \$138 million given during the 1991-92 fiscal year through the Cooperative Program, the SBC's primary funding channel, or the \$136.5 million given to the CP in 1992-93.

But, for the first time ever, Cooperative Program giving is dropping. In fact, the CP has shrunk by an average of 1 percent a year for the past three years. That affects the FMB, which receives about half of all CP funds.

Yet not everyone agrees the money going to the Fellowship has hurt the Southern Baptist Convention or the Foreign Mission Board.

Some say the Fellowship's money would not have gone to the SBC anyway. Others note that, while Fellowship money bypasses the Cooperative Program, more than a fourth of all Fellowship funds are designated for SBC agencies.

The Foreign Mission Board receives the largest portion of those designations -- about \$2 million in 1992. That \$2 million is more than the FMB lost as a result of the drop in Cooperative Program funding that year.

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Supreme Court debates curbs
on anti-abortion violence

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Can a law originally designed to curb mob activity also be used to restrain violence at abortion clinics?

That question was before the U.S. Supreme Court Dec. 8 as the court once again debated whether an existing federal statute can be used to diffuse violence at abortion clinics. In the last term, the court ruled that a 19th century civil-rights law could not be used in these instances.

This term, the court is examining another statute, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO, which makes it illegal for an "enterprise" to use a "pattern of racketeering" activity. A pattern of racketeering requires two or more crimes.

At issue in the case is whether or not economic gain has to be the motivation behind the enterprise or pattern of activity.

Fay Clayton, representing the National Organization for Women and the clinics, contended that the statute does not require an economic motivation.

She said that some anti-abortion groups have crossed the line from protests that are protected by the First Amendment to a campaign of violence that depends on "terrorist tactics." Some anti-abortion groups, she said, have engaged in a national campaign to shut down clinics through multiple illegal activities, such as extortion, vandalism and arson.

Robert Blakey, a Notre Dame law professor, countered, "This appeal is about a misguided effort to evoke a powerful statute in the face of a social protest movement." Evoking this statute would ultimately affect all protests -- even non-violent ones, he said.

He summarized the statute in two words: "elicit gain." His clients are not seeking personal gain, he said, adding that the statute requires an economic motivation before it can be used to prohibit an activity.

Clayton disagreed.

The First Amendment claim also is false, she continued, saying "mob violence" crosses the line of protected speech. The Pro-Life Action Network (PLAN) "ridicules peace-loving protesters, calling them wimps," she added.

"We do not want to infringe on First Amendment rights," she said, "but when they give up that speech and turn to force and violence ... their advocacy can cross the line."

Justice Antonin Scalia, who was the most aggressive questioner during the one-hour arguments, said the term "enterprise" did have an economic connotation. He also expressed concern that interpreting the statute too broadly could adversely affect legitimate anti-abortion protests.

The court is expected to rule on the case -- National Organization for Women vs. Joseph Scheidler -- by next summer.

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Cartoon blamed for rise
in teenage smoking

OAKLAND, Calif. (ABP) -- A controversial cartoon character used in cigarette ads is being blamed for a sudden rise in teenage smoking.

Joe Camel, a character used in advertisements promoting the cigarettes of RJR Nabisco Co., has been criticized by the U.S. Surgeon General and anti-smoking advocacy groups for making smoking appear glamorous to a young, impressionable audience.

Now one researcher says the ads may account for a turnaround in the 15-year decline in teenage smoking.

While smoking declined among teens by about 1 percent a year during the 1980s, it suddenly began to increase at about the same rate in 1988, when the Joe Camel character first appeared.

"That's an enormous effect," said researcher John Pierce of the University of California at San Diego. The turnaround came at a time when almost no adults started smoking, Pierce told a conference in Oakland, Calif.

Pierce reported that almost 8 percent of California teenagers were smoking in 1990, a 2 percent increase over 1988.

The researcher said he can't prove the ads caused the rise in teen smoking, but research now underway is expected to support the connection, he said.

A spokeswoman for the tobacco company told Associated Press such a link is merely "conjecture" and that the ad campaign was designed to get smokers to switch brands, not start smoking.

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-- By Greg Warner

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