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

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Fellowship OKs missionaries, staff, budget, foundation

By Greg Warner

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship appointed five missionaries, approved five new staff positions, adopted a budget for half of 1995 and agreed to start a foundation to endow the three-year-old organization.

Those were among the actions taken by the Coordinating Council, the 83-member group that directs the Fellowship's work. The council met Feb. 17-19 in Nashville, Tenn.

An appointment service during the three-day meeting sent five new workers to the mission field, bringing to 31 the number of Fellowship missionaries.

-- Tom and Beth Ogburn will be strategic coordinators for an unreached people group in an unspecified country in Asia. He is from Birmingham, Ala., and she is from Murfreesboro, N.C.

-- Sam and Latha Bandela, natives of India, will work with the Chamblee-Doraville International Project, which ministers to internationals in northeast Atlanta.

-- Rachel Stephen of Sonora, Texas, was commissioned for a two-year assignment teaching English as a second language in the Czech Republic.

Five staff positions were approved -- a chief financial officer, a computer systems manager, an associate for missions education, and two secretaries to support the global missions staff. Once filled the five staffers will join the 12 people already on the Atlanta-based staff.

The moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship took on other signs of permanence during the Nashville meeting. Considerable discussion focused on the shape of the Fellowship's future, most notably how the group will spend its money.

Contributions to the Fellowship have grown rapidly in the past three years -- from \$4.5 million in 1991 to \$11.2 million last year. While about a third of the money is designated by donors for traditional Southern Baptist causes, the rest funds the Fellowship and other moderate-backed ministries. The Fellowship spends about three fourths of the money at its disposal on

global missions.

The Coordinating Council, which shapes Fellowship spending, adopted a budget for the first half of 1995, when the organization will shift its fiscal year to begin July 1 and end June 30.

The budget, which anticipates \$8.9 million in revenue during the first six months of 1995 -- \$5.6 million for Fellowship-sponsored efforts -- was adopted with little debate. What did attract debate was how the Fellowship spends any overage, money received over the basic budget.

A recommendation from the finance committee would have allowed the council's global missions group to spend its pro-rata share of any overage plus half of all other money that comes in over budget.

But some council members complained that policy would slight other worthwhile Fellowship causes, such as theological education.

"This is a very, very important policy decision," said William Shurden, head of the Christianity department at Mercer University in Macon, Ga. "We are establishing priorities by this ... vote."

Shurden offered an amendment that would have reduced the amount of the overage going to missions.

But James Lacy of Midland, Texas, said creating an impression that less money will go to missions would hurt Fellowship funding. Others countered that missions should be defined broadly enough to include ministry too.

"Missions may be the heartbeat of the vast majority of Southern Baptists and even Fellowship people, but ministry is also a part of that heartbeat and could be included in missions," said Cindy Johnson of Gaithersburg, Md.

Several council members said pitting missions against ministry was misleading and unproductive. In the end, the council voted to refer the motion back to the missions committee for reconsideration.

Also during the council meeting:

-- A one-time gift of \$100,000 for the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union was approved from the global missions budget. Keith Parks, Fellowship missions coordinator, said WMU did not request and was not aware of the donation. A year ago WMU agreed to provide missions materials and support -- but not money -- to the Fellowship and other non-Southern Baptist missions groups. "Our interaction with WMU is as wholesome as it could possibly be," Parks said. "We feel that our future and theirs are tightly tied together."

-- A new ministry group was approved to address "the pressing needs" of ministers, as well as their families and congregations. Among the targets are placement, stress, ministerial ethics, crisis intervention and recovery. The council's five other ministry groups coordinate the Fellowship's involvement with laity, missions, theological education, Christian education, and ethics and public policy.

-- Gary Leazer, who was forced to resign from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board over his work on the issue of Freemasonry, was granted \$2,000 a month for six months from the Fellowship's "safety net," a fund set up to assist Southern Baptist employees who are terminated or resign as a matter of conscience.

-- Layman Patrick Anderson of Lakeland, Fla., was nominated to be moderator-elect. If approved by the Fellowship's general assembly in May, the criminology professor from Florida Southern College would assume the Fellowship's highest elected position in 1995. He would succeed Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, retired executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, who takes the one-year post in May.

-- Plans for the May 5-7 general assembly were announced. Keynote speakers include an African-American and a female pastor -- William A. Jones, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., and Julie Pennington-

Russell, pastor of Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church in San Francisco. Pennington-Russell's church was excluded from the California Southern Baptist Convention last fall by conservatives who oppose women as pastors.

-- Council members heard updates from three task forces looking into the Fellowship's future. The groups are focusing on the Fellowship's vision for the future, commitment to inclusiveness, and relationships with other moderate-backed ventures.

The budget adopted for the first half of 1995 employs a new method for funding Fellowship efforts. Previously contributors picked one of three budget plans, which distributed funds according to established percentages. Beginning in 1995, all of the Fellowship's programs, as well as the independent organizations it supports, will be approved for a specific dollar. The funding plans will be adjusted to reflect the dollar allocations.

The change will give Fellowship leaders more control over how money is spent, finance officials said.

Here's how council members voted to spend the \$5,622,000 that budget officials anticipate will be available for Fellowship projects in the first six months of 1995:

-- Global missions, \$4.2 million. Three-fourths of all funds available to the Fellowship in the first half of 1995 will support global missions, which includes both direct funding for mission projects and support for missionaries at home and abroad. The Fellowship expects \$2.2 million to be available from general receipts and \$2 million from the annual global missions offering. The focus of Fellowship missions is on the one-fourth of the world's population that has little or no access to the gospel message.

-- Theological education, \$385,000. The largest grants would go to two new theological schools -- Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (\$145,000) and Truett Seminary at Baylor University (\$100,000). Baptist studies programs at Duke and Emory universities would get \$15,000 each. Scholarships at those four schools and others would share \$85,000.

-- Christian education, \$74,850. Included is start-up funding for a faculty position in Christian education at the Richmond Seminary. The Fellowship will provide \$40,000 in 1995, then gradually reduce the amount until the seminary begins fully funding the position in 1998. Also under consideration is a Fellowship staff position and resource center to link local churches with education resources.

-- Ethics and public policy, \$69,800. The largest portion -- \$30,000 -- would support the Baptist Center for Ethics, a Nashville-based think tank and resource center. Also benefiting are Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (\$10,000), the Baptist Joint Committee (\$4,800), Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America (\$3,000), Habitat for Humanity (\$2,500), Southern Baptist Women in Ministry (\$2,500) and Bread for the World (\$2,000).

-- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Foundation, \$50,000. The foundation will be chartered as soon as possible, a task force reported. The objective is to build endowment for the Fellowship and moderate-backed ventures.

-- Communications, \$184,000. In addition to funding internal communications, \$25,000 would support the bimonthly newspaper Baptists Today, provided certain financial reporting conditions are met.

-- Equipping the laity, \$3,100. The ministry group works to educate and mobilize moderate laypersons within churches.

-- Administrative costs, \$391,950. This includes expenses for personnel, operations, general assembly and committees.

Three organizations will receive direct funding from the Fellowship budget: Baptist Joint Committee, \$137,134; Associated Baptist Press, \$65,000; and Baptist World Alliance, \$45,000.

Fellowship support strongest
in traditional SBC states

By Greg Warner

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Baptists recently got their first close look at the giving patterns among supporters of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, as well as the first hint that the rapid growth of the Fellowship may begin to slow.

During the Feb. 17-19 meeting of the Fellowship's Coordinating Council, council members were given a state-by-state breakdown of contributions to the organization -- the most comprehensive picture yet of Fellowship support.

The report showed, among other things, that six states account for 70 percent of all Fellowship support -- Texas, 20.0 percent; North Carolina, 15.0 percent; Georgia, 11.7 percent; Tennessee, 8.5 percent; South Carolina, 7.7 percent; and Virginia, 7.4 percent.

All six are historically strong Southern Baptist states, combining for 47 percent of all 1993 gifts to traditional Southern Baptist causes like the Cooperative Program.

Contributions to the Fellowship have grown rapidly in the past three years -- from \$4.5 million in 1991 to \$7.3 million in 1992 to \$11.2 million last year.

Although the dollar amounts continue to rise, the annual increase has gotten smaller each year -- from 62 percent in 1992 to 53 percent in 1993. The number of churches contributing has grown as well -- from 391 in 1991 to 841 in 1992 to 1,210 in 1993 -- but those increases, though still significant, likewise are getting smaller.

"I don't think (continued growth) can be presumed," Fellowship Coordinator Cecil Sherman told council members Feb. 18. "It will be increasingly difficult for churches to come to CBF."

One reason is political pressure. Conservative leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention have made the Fellowship the primary target of their criticism, and have sought ways to ostracize those who support the moderate organization.

Those who contribute to the Fellowship's alternative missions funds or attend its meetings have been excluded from service on denominational committees at both the state and national levels. That makes it harder for pastors to lead their churches to identify with the three-year-old group, Sherman said.

"What we are asking them to do has a penalty attached to it professionally," he said. "It is almost contrary to the conditioning of the average Baptist pastor and layperson."

As a result, many moderate Baptists are choosing not to identify with either the SBC or the Fellowship, Sherman said.

In years past, moderate leaders said the independent nature of conservative churches made them less likely to fund the Southern Baptist Convention. But Sherman said he is alarmed by a new phenomenon -- "the rise of independent moderate Baptist churches."

"Far more moderate Baptist churches are just backing off of cooperative missions than are coming to CBF," he said. "They are privatizing church. ... The privatizing of church life is the death of cooperative mission."

Many observers have predicted the Fellowship will part company with Southern Baptists and form a new denomination. If they do, it likely will be a small group.

Despite the Fellowship's growth, still only a fraction of the nation's Southern Baptist churches support the organization -- 3.2 percent nationwide.

The highest concentration is in Virginia, where 14.1 percent of the churches fund the Fellowship directly.

In Maryland-Delaware, the figure is 6.6 percent, followed by North Carolina (6.2 percent), South Carolina (4.3 percent), Georgia (3.7 percent) and Texas (3.7 percent).

The state with the most contributing churches is North Carolina, with 221, followed by Virginia (216) and Texas (165).

While 1,210 churches nationwide funded the Fellowship in 1993, twice as many individuals contributed -- 2,510 -- in many cases because their churches would not forward funds to the Fellowship.

The states with the largest numbers of individual contributors are Texas (377) and Georgia (353). In 10 states, most with small Baptist populations, individual contributors account for more Fellowship money than churches.

But the bulk of Fellowship support (83 percent) comes from churches, either as designations from individuals or church-approved donations.

In the past year, growth of the Fellowship has been strongest in Virginia, which went from 84 supporting churches to 216. Texas churches increased from 119 to 165. And the list of North Carolina churches grew from 150 to 221. Those three states posted the largest dollar increases as well.

But contributions grew faster in some unlikely places. Gifts from Illinois Baptists increased eightfold, from \$554 in 1992 to \$6,125. Contributions also grew significantly in Hawaii (\$824 to \$6,057), Arkansas (\$59,145 to \$154,683), and Georgia (\$744,066 to \$1,088,564).

Last year about a third of the money given to the Fellowship was designated by donors for traditional Southern Baptist causes, such as SBC institutions and state conventions. The rest funded the Fellowship and Fellowship-endorsed ministries.

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Sources of CBF Contributions in 1993

Alabama, 145 individuals, \$76,848; 30 churches, \$479,754; total \$556,602.
Arkansas, 44 individuals, \$35,736; 22 churches, \$154,683; total \$190,419.
Arizona, 17 individuals, \$10,193; 3 churches, \$2,174; total \$12,367.
California, 17 individuals, \$9,512; 4 churches, \$5,649; total \$15,161.
Colorado, 7 individuals, \$2,335; 1 church, \$200; total \$2,535.
Connecticut, 5 individuals, \$2,200; 2 churches, \$6,450; total \$8,650.
District of Columbia, 1 individual, \$100; 2 churches, \$1,270; total \$1,370.
Delaware, 1 individual, \$350; 1 church, \$625; total \$975.
Florida, 127 individuals, \$214,264; 47 churches, \$361,713; total \$575,977.
Georgia, 353 indiv., \$194,573; 114 churches, \$1,088,564; total 1,283,137.
Hawaii, 4 individuals, \$495; 3 churches \$6,057; total \$6,552.
Iowa, 0 individuals; 2 churches, \$4,388; total \$4,388.
Illinois, 29 individuals, \$9,357; 7 churches, \$6,125 total \$15,482.
Indiana, 8 individuals, \$1,460; 5 churches, \$6,959; total \$8,419.
Kansas, 10 individuals, \$2,901; 4 churches, \$12,689; total \$15,590.
Kentucky, 132 individuals, \$56,357; 88 churches, \$445,924; total \$502,281.
Louisiana, 58 individuals, \$45,220; 15 churches \$117,136; total \$162,356.
Maryland, 37 individuals \$14,836; 19 churches, \$39,462; total \$54,298.
Michigan, 4 individuals, \$2,816; 3 churches, \$9,655; total \$11,471.
Missouri, 89 individuals, \$33,982; 51 churches, \$372,476; total \$406,458.
Mississippi, 64 individuals, \$56,549; 22 churches, \$102,577; total \$159,126.
N. Carolina, 245 indiv., \$105,918; 221 churches, \$1,546,215; total \$1,652,133

New Jersey, 3 individuals, \$395; 1 church, \$2,670; total \$3,065.
 New Hampshire, 1 individual, \$3,800; 0 churches; total \$3,800.
 New England, 2 individuals, \$920; 0 churches; total \$920.
 New Mexico, 11 individuals, \$5,090; 4 churches, \$10,357; total \$15,447.
 Nevada, 2 individuals, \$3,050; 1 church, \$825; total \$3,875.
 New York, 4 individuals, \$1,425; 4 churches, \$3,169; total \$4,594.
 Ohio, 4 individuals, \$445; 4 churches, \$18,981; total \$19,426.
 Oklahoma, 112 individuals, \$80,387; 15 churches, \$353,375; total \$433,762.
 Oregon, 1 individual, \$50; 0 churches; total \$50.
 Pennsylvania, 2 individuals, \$1,450; 5 churches, \$5,742; total \$7,192.
 Rhode Island, 0 individuals; 2 churches, \$379; total \$379.
 South Carolina, 173 indiv., \$91,531; 78 churches, \$752,122; total \$843,653.
 Tennessee, 196 individuals, \$146,932; 63 churches, \$786,450; total \$933,382.
 Texas, 377 individuals, \$231,735; 165 churches, \$1,952,259; total \$2,183,994.
 Virginia, 219 individuals, \$126,468; 216 churches, \$683,135; total \$809,603.
 Washington, 1 individual, \$105; 0 churches; total \$105.
 Wisconsin, 3 individuals, \$7,620; 0 churches; total \$7,620.
 West Virginia, 1 individual, \$126; 1 church, \$275; total \$401.
 Wyoming, 1 individual, \$30; 0 churches; total \$30.
 Total contributions: \$10,950,078

** Funds from churches may be designated gifts from individuals and do not necessarily indicate church-approved support for CBF. Total contributions do not include other funds. Total receipts for 1993 were approximately \$11,201,000.

Smyth & Helwys to debut
 Bible commentary in '98

By Greg Warner

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Smyth & Helwys Publishing has begun work on a new 30-volume Bible commentary.

The project will take 14 or 15 years to complete, and the first volume will debut in 1998, said Publisher Cecil Staton.

The commentary "will nurture our faith and take advantage of the best of biblical scholarship," Staton told members of the Coordinating Council of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Feb. 18.

Smyth & Helwys is an independent book and curriculum publisher based in Macon, Ga. Founded in 1990, it is an outgrowth of the moderate movement in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Since the 1970s, Southern Baptists have relied heavily on the Broadman Bible Commentary, published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. While still popular, the commentary has been criticized by the SBC's ruling conservatives, prompting the board to publish a commentary committed to biblical inerrancy, the New American Commentary.

Staton told Associated Baptist Press the new Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary will not adopt such a theological standard. "It is going to be a commentary that fully honors biblical scholarship. We are not going to tie the authors' hands in any way. ... We are offering the writers the chance to be true to their own skills, gifts and insights."

As a result, Staton said, Smyth & Helwys will not encounter the problem that confronted Broadman, which had to withdraw its volume on Genesis because of conservative complaints. "There is not going to be any denominational control over this enterprise," he said.

"This is a deliberate effort to allow for freedom in scholarship," agreed Scott Nash of Smyth & Helwys, editor of the New Testament. "The writers will not be hampered by any strict theological statement."

But neither will the commentary be dull, lofty scholarship, the pair said. The design will be "user friendly," said Staton. "We want to make a commentary less threatening to those who use them."

The pages will be "visually stimulating," designed to resemble advanced word-processing computer programs which make supplementary information available through pull-down menus, said Nash.

About a third of the text will be set apart in special-interest boxes containing historical charts, word studies, maps, discussions of literary structure, quotations and the like. "You won't have 200 pages of just text," Nash said.

"To our knowledge," Staton said, "this will be the first commentary to utilize the full graphic capability of desktop publishing."

Smyth & Helwys will gear the commentary toward not only the traditional market of scholars and ministers but also Sunday school teachers and laypersons. "We want this commentary to be useable for persons who don't normally use commentaries," Nash said.

The project, which Staton said represents a \$1 million investment by Smyth & Helwys, has been in the works for a year and a half. The first writers' conference was held Feb. 11-12 in Atlanta.

Most of the writers will be Baptists but not all, Nash said. They will include Southern Baptists, American Baptists, National Baptists and British Baptists. And, Staton added, "We are making a conscious effort to involve women scholars."

Editors for the Old Testament will be Staton, Sam Ballentine of Baptist Theological Seminary of Richmond, Jeffrey Rogers of Furman University and Kandy Queen-Sutherland of Stetson University.

All of those will write Old Testament volumes, as will Milton Horne of William Jewell College, William Bellinger of Baylor University, Walter Brueggemann of Columbia Theological Seminary, Rex Mason of Oxford University and Ronald Clements, retired from the University of London and Cambridge University.

Editors for the New Testament will be Nash, Alan Culpepper of Baylor and Paul Duke, pastor of Kirkwood Baptist Church in St. Louis, Mo. Also writing New Testament volumes will be Hulitt Gloer of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Mitchell Reddish of Stetson, Edgar McKnight of Furman and Alexandra Brown of Washington and Lee University.

The volumes slated to debut in 1998 are Isaiah by Rogers, Revelation by Reddish and Mark by Culpepper.

Jimmy Draper, president of the rival Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, was undaunted by news of the Smyth & Helwys commentary. "I'm pretty stoical about these things," said Draper, whose agency publishes both the Broadman Bible Commentary and New American Commentary.

"If they think what they are doing is needed, and if they are willing to go to the trouble of doing it, God bless them," Draper said.

Religion, and lack of it,
shape society, historians say

By Mark Baggett

(ABP) -- Whatever happened to religion? Even President Bill Clinton -- joining a growing number of religious leaders, columnists, and commentators -- recently wondered whether the United States has become too "secular."

His remarks echoed the theme of "A Culture of Disbelief," a 1993 book by Yale professor Stephen Carter, who suggests that it has become embarrassing to mention any religious affiliation in public, much less profess one's faith.

Carter and other authors -- such as Richard John Neuhaus in "The Naked Public Square," argue that evidences of religious faith are disappearing from American mainstream culture:

- Prime-time TV shows contain practically no references to religion;
- Public school textbooks tiptoe around the subject of religion in discussing the Puritans or Martin Luther King Jr.; and
- The news media, when it covers religion at all, focuses primarily on the scandals, infighting and excesses of religious figures or of denominations;

But the widespread lament may indicate a very real interest in religious issues.

"I don't think religion has disappeared (from public life)," said Bill Leonard, chairman of the department of religion at Samford University and a former seminary professor of church history.

"The fact that so many people -- from the left and from the right -- are asking what happened to religion is evidence that it hasn't disappeared."

But, Leonard said, Americans are in a transitional period of history, and that has brought about the cultural shift.

When Americans discuss the nature of civil religion, he said, they are discussing "a common core of values by which a population can shape its identity, if not agree on those values."

In earlier times, he said, those core values were Protestant. New religious groups have had to fight to participate in that discussion from colonial times to the present. "America has never willingly invited new religions into the arena," he said.

Now the religious mix includes both a proliferation of new religions and "non-religion," or secularism.

"We're in a crisis about this, not because religion is failing, but because we are processing old religions, new religions and non-religion," he said.

"For example, we bemoan the ban on school prayer. But if we were to start a prayer in schools tomorrow, who would pray? Baptists on Monday, Jews on Tuesday, Catholics on Wednesday, Mormons on Thursday and Buddhists on Friday? Would Baptists be willing to have school prayer where Mormons and Muslims would pray for their children?"

"This is evidence of secularism. Secularism doesn't really know what to do about faith, just as people didn't know what to do, for example, with Jimmy Carter's born-again faith, which may have started the whole thing."

Leonard's colleague at Samford, Beeson School of Divinity Dean Timothy George, also sees a process of secularization and believes that it goes beyond the threat of "secular humanism."

"There has been a long-standing erosion of beliefs and values -- a long, slow evolutionary kind of change," George said. "The New Right movement in the late 1970s and early '80s by people like (Jerry) Falwell and Pat

Robertson is a manifestation of the protest or deeply felt concerns about that erosion.

"There has been a sense of crisis, an impending doom about moving away from a sense of core values. People see a sea-change taking place; abortion protests and gay-rights protests are symptoms of that concern.

"We must bear witness in an alien, even pagan culture. It's no longer just humanist. I think it goes beyond the secular humanist label. It's really neo-paganism."

Both George and Leonard believe the Christian church must address the rise of secularism with integrity.

"What's called for is a renewal of our own sense of identity," George said. "The church needs to be the church. The people of God need to be the people of God. That's the greatest impact we can have on society, which is not to say that we shouldn't take a public stance. But we've got to be faithful witnesses with integrity in the Christian community, giving a positive proclamation and also a negative prophetic response to some of these trends."

Leonard warned that secularism may not only capture the public arena but may also wag the tail of the Christian church.

"It's a double-edged sword," he said. "Christians and religious folk have to be alert to how secularism finds its way into the religious community, such as marketing techniques used by churches."

Nevertheless, Leonard sees "a strong interest in spirituality" in the American public. The question will be "which new paradigms will address this spirituality," he said.

"In my opinion, 19th century revivalism is no longer an effective method of doing evangelism," Leonard said. "But many religious institutions shaped by that very healthy method don't know what to do instead."

"I hope we can be as creative in responding to this cultural transition as 19th century evangelicals were in response to post-European, post-Constitution, post-Revolution society. We're living at the end of the denominational era. We're in-between."

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Richmond Seminary
receives record gift

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond has received a donation of more than \$235,000, its largest single gift to date.

The donation, from Charlotte L. Hoover of Annandale, Va., will establish two funds. The Lawrence and Charlotte Hoover Fund will underwrite the seminary's general budget.

And an endowed Lawrence Hoover Lectureship, named for Charlotte Hoover's late husband, will bring scholars and church leaders to the seminary each year to speak on issues related to the life of the church and Christian ministry.

Charlotte Hoover, a native of Virginia, is a longtime member of Annandale Baptist Church and has contributed to Southern Baptist institutions.

The gift exceeds the seminary's previous benchmark, set in January, when an anonymous donor gave the school \$100,000.

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-- By Beth McMahon

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