

# Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Greg Warner  
Associate Editor: Bob Allen  
Phone: (904) 262-6626  
Fax: (904) 262-7745

August 1, 1994

## In this issue:

- Texas study group proposes sanctioning gifts to SBC, CBF
- Sherman says missionary dancing incident shows SBC 'Pharisaism'
- Washington celebration marks teens' pledge of abstinence
- Joel Gregory marries former parishioner
- Texas Baptist music consultant mugged on Baylor campus
- Editor's Note

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

## **Texas study group proposes sanctioning gifts to SBC, CBF**

DALLAS (ABP) – Though the Southern Baptist Convention has declared the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship a rival, the SBC's largest affiliate -- the Baptist General Convention of Texas -- apparently has no quarrel with the moderate organization.

The Southern Baptist Convention, as of its June vote, no longer allows its agencies to accept contributions channeled through the Fellowship. But a Texas committee studying missions giving is asking that all churches contributing to the state convention be viewed on an equal plane, whether they support the SBC, the CBF or neither.

A Texas Baptist committee studying missions funding approved a plan that affirms the state convention's traditional tie to the SBC yet also sanctions support for the Fellowship, a moderate organization offering alternative missions programs to those of the conservative-dominated SBC. The proposal, if approved, will allow churches to fund the Fellowship or other groups, or even to keep all their mission contributions in Texas, and remain in good standing with the state convention.

The 22-member Cooperative Missions Giving Study Committee adopted the compromise proposal, with five votes opposing, after more than six hours of discussion July 29. The panel will fine tune the recommendation at a final meeting -- its fifth -- in August, before the convention's executive board takes it up Sept. 13 in Dallas. Eventually it will come as a recommendation to this year's Baptist General Convention of Texas meeting, scheduled Oct. 31-Nov. 1 in Amarillo.

The Texas plan would give the state's 4,381 Baptist churches two broad options:

-- The "BGCT-operated" budget. This is the traditional Cooperative Program plan, in which contributions are divided between Texas and SBC causes at a percentage determined by the state convention. Churches that pick this option also can decide to leave all their Cooperative Program gifts in Texas, with none going to the national SBC. And the BGCT will continue to allow churches to delete up to five items from the Texas or SBC budgets and still have their gifts counted as "Cooperative Program."

-- The "BGCT-directed" budget. This is a customized approach that allows churches to decide how much of their mission funding stays in Texas and how much goes to support a variety of worldwide Baptist causes. These include the Southern Baptist Convention, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Baptist World Alliance, individual agencies and causes, and special missions offerings for the BGCT, SBC foreign missions and SBC home missions.

Contributions to both plans would be counted as "Cooperative Program" -- a term usually reserved for gifts channeled through the traditional Cooperative Program budget of the BGCT and SBC.

The committee abandoned an earlier proposal to keep all mission gifts in Texas unless a church instructed otherwise. No "default" option is included in the proposal; churches must choose a plan for themselves.

The proposal would make Texas the third state in which Baptists have altered the traditional way Cooperative Program funds are handled. The other states are Virginia and North Carolina. With 1.6 million Baptists, the Texas convention is the largest affiliated with the SBC.

The Baptist Standard, newsjournal of Texas Baptists, covers the meetings of the study committee under background rules that prohibit direct quotes of committee members or attribution of positions taken.

Chairman Cecil Ray of Georgetown, commenting after the meeting, said it is significant that the committee affirmed the traditional Cooperative Program partnership of local church, state convention and Southern Baptist Convention.

"Contrary to rumors that we have been moving toward separating the state convention from the SBC," said Ray, "we have reaffirmed the Cooperative Program partnership."

"At the same time, the committee has chosen to honor the gifts of loyal Texas Baptists who out of conviction have chosen to support missions through other channels," he said.

Ray and others voiced strong sentiment against doing anything that would "destroy" the traditional Cooperative Program.

The committee wrestled with several options during discussion, at one time considering that Cooperative Baptist Fellowship funds be placed in a separate "other missions gifts" category rather than a "Cooperative Program" category.

Advocates of that option argued that the "Cooperative Program" designation has referred traditionally to the partnership between local church and state and Southern Baptist conventions in support of missions, education and benevolence efforts. They asked that Cooperative Program describe only gifts supporting traditional Texas Baptist or Southern Baptist causes.

Others who advocated that CBF funds be counted as "Cooperative Program" said that designating them otherwise would perpetuate a "second class" status for churches choosing to channel their gifts through the Fellowship or another non-traditional channel. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is a three-year-old organization of Southern Baptist moderates displeased with the conservative direction of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Fellowship operates its own mission agency and funds other ministries that SBC leaders say compete with Southern Baptist causes.

The 1993 Baptist General Convention of Texas authorized the study committee by approving a motion by Ben Loring, pastor of First Baptist Church in Amarillo, calling for a special committee of the state convention to study how to enhance cooperative missions giving among all Texas Baptists and report their findings and recommendations to the 1994 convention in Amarillo.

In addition to the recommendations, the committee's report includes "findings" which detail Texas Baptists' relationship to the Cooperative Program since its founding in 1925, how perceptions of the CP have changed, and the effect on the plan of 15 years of controversy in the denomination.

Morris Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee, has said he opposes any change in the traditional handling of the Cooperative Program. He was unavailable for comment.

-- By Toby Druin and Bob Allen

## Sherman says missionary dancing incident shows SBC 'Pharisaism'

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- A couple who recently resigned as Southern Baptist Convention foreign missionaries because they would not "recant of the sin of dancing" illustrates a narrow-minded "Pharisaism" currently afflicting SBC missions, according to Cecil Sherman.

Sherman, coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, made that charge in a speech to about 80 people in Louisville July 25. He was on an eight-stop tour through Kentucky sponsored by the Kentucky Baptist Fellowship.

The point, he said, is that many moderate Southern Baptists may be financing SBC agencies that have turned more sharply to the right than they realize.

To those who say, "I'm going to hold my nose and stay with it," Sherman advised: "You're empowering some things you don't agree with."

Sherman's comments come at a critical time, when moderate churches and individuals who have been supporting both Fellowship causes and SBC entities through one check to the Fellowship are scrambling to respond to recent action by the SBC. In June, SBC messengers directed SBC entities not to accept any more money channeled through the Fellowship.

Sherman told the Kentucky crowd he believes the SBC's action on Fellowship funds is wrong and is an "imposition on some basic Baptist ground."

But while he would not tell any church how they could give their missions money, Sherman said, he does want churches to know the kind of actions they are supporting with their money.

That feeling is shared by Butch and Nell Green, Texans who served eight years with the SBC Foreign Mission Board in Senegal, West Africa, until they were reprimanded for holding a wedding reception in their home that included dancing. Since returning to the United States, the Greens have been appointed by the Fellowship for mission work in Miami.

Sherman told part of the Greens' story in his Kentucky speech, but he did not identify them by name. But when contacted July 26, the Greens agreed to tell their story publicly for the first time.

"We're not vindictive, but we feel like many, many Southern Baptists don't know what's going on," Green said. "Whether they agree or disagree, that's fine. That's their choice. But they need to be sure they know what they're choosing."

A spokeswoman for the FMB, however, portrayed the conflict the Greens experienced in Senegal as minor and emphasized that they were not fired but resigned of their own accord.

The Greens were excellent missionaries who could have stayed on the field, said Betty Kay Yamaoka, associate area director for west Africa. "They elected to make this an important issue. They elected to resign."

Yamaoka and other FMB officials suggested that missionaries seldom resign over just one incident, so it may not be fair to characterize the dancing conflict as the only factor in the Greens' decision.

But Butch Green said this incident was "the straw that broke our backs."

Although the conflict began over the issue of dancing, it became much larger than that, he said. "This was telling us virtually that the nationals could not interpret the Bible by themselves."

By all accounts, the conflict began when an administrator for the Baptist mission to which the Greens were assigned learned of plans to have dancing at the wedding reception.

A national Christian who had worked closely with the Greens was to marry a former Muslim woman the

Greens had led to faith in Jesus Christ. This was to be the first Christian wedding held in the local-language church the Greens had started.

The bride and groom specifically asked to have dancing at the reception, Green said. Realizing some of the other missionaries might frown on dancing at the church, Green said, the reception was held at their home.

"As we were planning the wedding, (the couple) came to us and said they would like to have a reception with dancing, which is normal," Green explained. "That's what the Senegalese do. ... They have dances at birthdays, weddings, baptisms, everything."

The Greens agreed, with the stipulation that certain types of music would not be played, he said.

In the custom of the region, the couple hired a DJ who played various cassette recordings of African music, western music and Jamaican music, Green explained. "We tried to do it just as (the native people) do it," he said.

When the administrator arrived at the reception, he said, "I hear there's going to be dancing here," Green recalled.

"I said, 'Yes, that's what they've asked for.' Then his exact words were that he and his wife consider dancing morally objectionable in any form or fashion."

The administrator did not stay for the reception, which was held on a Saturday, but called the Greens to a meeting the next Monday, Green said.

"He said, 'I have the authority to tell you this, that you work for a conservative board and you are to behave in a conservative way.'"

After finding no agreement in that meeting, the administrator arranged a meeting with the Greens and a higher-ranking FMB administrator, Green said. "We were told not to discuss (the meeting) with anyone inside or outside the mission. We couldn't even ask for prayer for it," he said. "That really upset us."

During the four days before meeting with the second official, the couple "really searched our hearts to see if we were wrong," he said. "We searched the Scriptures, prayed and fasted for the next few days."

Yet they could not convince themselves they had done the wrong thing, Green said. They had received only affirmation from the national Baptists, he said, and felt it was important for the nationals to determine their own beliefs in light of Scripture.

At the second meeting, the higher-ranking administrator also "told us dancing is morally wrong in any fashion or form," Green recalled. "We couldn't believe what was going on."

Had the conflict been over something more important than dancing, the Greens would have understood, he said.

"It's one thing if you're talking about something central to the gospel. If we were out teaching that Jesus was not born of a virgin or raised from the dead, we would understand the concern," Green said.

At the second meeting, the higher-ranking administrator told the Greens, "'You are not to contradict by word or deed the conservative philosophy,'" Green recalled. "He said that we worked for a conservative board and were to adhere to a conservative philosophy."

That made the missionary couple wonder how they would handle issues more difficult than dancing, Green said.

"We asked, what if someone comes to us and says, 'What do you think?' about a certain issue. We were told we could not even give our opinion if it contradicted a conservative philosophy."

Within a matter of weeks, the Greens had requested an early furlough. They left Senegal on Jan. 5, 1994. After a few months of reflection, they resigned from the FMB.

The irony, Green said, is that he doesn't even like to dance himself. "I dislike dancing, really."

Yamaoka, the FMB's associate area director who works in Richmond, Va., disagreed with the Greens' interpretation of the dispute.

The mission officials who protested the Greens' actions were offended by the dancing because it is "definitely not a part of the evangelical community habit in Senegal," Yamaoka said.

"After the fact, this issue was discussed with Butch and Nell ... in the context of it is divisive, it will be introducing something new over which there is not agreement," Yamaoka reported. "They were asked, 'Are you willing to refrain from hosting such an event in the future?' They said 'No.'"

Yamaoka said she believes "the majority of Baptists" would find approval of dancing to be "offensive behavior" in their missionaries. "This would be one of those things like smoking and drinking and cussing that we would not want our missionaries to participate in ... because it is offensive to many."

Yamaoka said the Greens "knew this would be divisive, and they did it anyway."

There are many circumstances, she said, in which missionaries must elect not to exercise certain personal freedoms "for the sake of harmony, for the sake of unity, for the sake of the opinion of a lot of folks who support them."

"This does not have anything to do with the rightness or wrongness of a certain action," she said.

In his Kentucky speech, Sherman labeled what happened to the Greens as akin to the Salem witch trials in early American history.

He said the Fellowship has a broader view of missions on several points, including the ability of divorced individuals to serve, the role of women and affirmations about the Bible required of missionary candidates.

"There are people who, for reasons of conscience, are not going to say the word 'inerrancy,'" he explained. "You can be a missionary with us if you don't. You can say that Scripture is the inspired word of God, and that's enough for us."

Further, the Fellowship in September will appoint a divorced woman as a missionary, he said.

The FMB has had a longstanding policy against appointing divorced individuals as career missionaries. The SBC Home Mission Board likewise has a ban on appointing divorced individuals.

The Fellowship's upcoming appointment does not mean the organization favors divorce, Sherman said. Rather, the Fellowship recognizes there are some situations when God calls people to ministry despite their pasts, he said.

The "Pharisaism" fostered by the FMB's more conservative direction is causing pain for hundreds of other FMB missionaries, Sherman declared. He said the Fellowship has letters on file from 300 FMB missionaries who would like to switch over to the Fellowship because of conflicts with the FMB's more conservative direction.

Yamaoka said Sherman is entitled to think of the Greens' experience as an example of pharisaism if he wants. But the other side is the importance of maintaining harmony, she said.

"Is dancing or some other similar issue a strong enough point that it should be brought forth to cause disharmony or to cause controversy?" she asked.

-30-

## Washington celebration marks teens' pledge of abstinence

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A movement begun as a project of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board brought more than 20,000 young people to the nation's capital to celebrate their commitment not to have sex before marriage.

"True Love Waits," an international campaign promoting sexual abstinence among teenagers, caught on during the last year, leading more than 200,000 American teens to sign covenant cards pledging to abstain from sex until marriage. The cards were planted on the National Mall and served as a focal point for the celebration.

The SBC Brotherhood Commission coordinated staking the 203,335 covenant cards on the mall, the 146-acre courtyard around which many of Washington's monuments and museums are arranged. One thousand youth, from 16 states participated in "The Great Stake Out."

Teen representatives of each state also went to the White House to meet with President Clinton and voice their concerns.

The True Love Waits national rally was held in conjunction with DC '94, a five-day evangelism training conference sponsored by Youth for Christ. DC '94, the largest event of its kind, was held July 27-31 at the Washington Convention Center.

True Love Waits began in 1993 with a team from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board that was spearheaded by Richard Ross. Ross, youth minister at Tulip Grove Baptist Church, Hermitage, Tenn., presented the team's message of abstinence to his own youth group.

"My kids got up in front of 1,200 youth ministers and said that they were willing to take a stand for this cause," Ross said.

True Love Waits has gained the support of 26 denominations and other religious organizations since 1993. With the involvement of the Baptist World Alliance, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and Christian leaders in Europe and Africa, abstinence rallies took place simultaneously in Ottawa, Ontario, and Kampala, Uganda.

At the D.C. event government officials, Christian artists and other national figures indicated their support for the program. Speaking for other congressmen, Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., said, "True Love Waits promotes healthy relationships and allows kids to reach their full potential."

Two youths from Cook Baptist Church in Ruston, La., agreed. "We feel like we're constantly being told that we're missing out by not having sex," said Kyle Hennigan of Cook Baptist Church. And fellow church member Brandie Kent added, "It feels good to see all of these people here and know we're not alone."

Ross said that the statements made by these teens have two goals: to inform teens that their peers accept the abstinence message and to tell adults that teens are willing to make this commitment.

The True Love Waits rally and DC '94 featured inspirational speakers, including Miles McPherson, former defensive back for the San Diego Chargers. McPherson pioneered Project Intercept, a Christian mentor program for youths.

"The promises these kids make in their hearts is far more important than writing their names on those cards," McPherson said.

Tony Campolo, professor of sociology at Eastern College in St. David's, Pa., and head of an inner-city Philadelphia ministry, spoke to the 20,000 youths attending DC '94, which featured the theme, "Know, Live, Tell."

"God is looking for a generation of young people who will say, 'Here am I, Lord, send me,'" Campolo said.

Christian vocalist Lisa Bevill said, "I remember being these kids' age and wanting nothing more than to be in love. We need to let them know we understand them and help them to realize that there is so much more to be concerned with, and God will provide them with true love in his time."

Award-winning Christian music artist Steven Curtis Chapman added, "There is a common message going to our young people from MTV and the secular music industry that says, 'If it feels good, do it.' But my message to them is, 'If God says it, do it.'"

The first two nights of DC '94 at the Washington Convention Center featured surprise appearances by popular artists Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith.

Youth For Christ is preparing for DC '97, as well as working on a program called Worth the Wait that will include film, radio and television programs, and public school curriculum.

The Sunday School Board is developing a True Love Waits planning kit for churches interested in educating youths and college students about the biblical view of sexuality.

## Joel Gregory marries former parishioner

By Greg Warner

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Joel Gregory, who resigned as pastor of the famous First Baptist Church of Dallas in 1992 and was divorced a year later, remarried July 30 in nearby Fort Worth.

Gregory's new wife, Sherry Elaine Lemon, 41, was a member of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth while Gregory, 46, was pastor there. Gregory left that church to become pastor of First Baptist of Dallas in 1990.

After 21 months of sharing pastoral duties with First Baptist's legendary pastor W. A. Criswell, Gregory abruptly resigned Sept. 30, 1992, in a dispute over leadership of the church. Gregory said Criswell, 84, breached his promise to leave the pulpit "a few months" after Gregory's arrival. Gregory's brief pastorate at the 29,000-member Dallas church is the subject of his forthcoming book, "Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Super Church."

Gregory and his first wife, Linda, separated in April 1993, seven months after he resigned. Their divorce was final in December. In a joint statement released in November, the Gregorys said the dissolution of their 26-year marriage was "a mutual, joint decision" based on "a long-term difference in expectations compounded by the stress of public events in recent years."

Gregory told Associated Baptist Press July 28 that his divorce had nothing to do with his departure from First Baptist. "We stated (in November 1993) that we had longterm differences about our relative roles and the relationship, and that is true," he said. "No, I don't think either of us would target First Baptist or that situation."

As for the pressure of being a pastor, Gregory -- once the most sought-after Southern Baptist preacher -- said, "I'm sure that everything like that that happened to both of us made a contribution."

Gregory declined to elaborate further about the relationship. "Linda and I made a very strong agreement -- as strong on her part as mine -- about what we would say, and that's what we agreed, in that statement that we released. I just honor her." He noted he and his former wife "are not adversarial."

Gregory was likewise mum about his new wife, a divorcee with three children who "has very strong feelings about her privacy. I'm going to have to honor the feelings she has about her privacy," he said.

The Gregorys and the Lemons had been acquainted for about seven years, before either couple was divorced, Gregory said. "I've known her in her former family setting, as she has me and as I have known thousands of people. We had gone through a similar experience (of divorce)."

Lemon also worked for two weeks at First Baptist of Dallas in 1991, while Gregory was pastor there, but she was not Gregory's secretary as was rumored. Gregory and Lemon were seen around Fort Worth before his April 1993 separation was acknowledged publicly, leading many people to speculate about the appropriateness of the relationship.

"I'm not inured to the kinds of speculation that go on," Gregory told ABP. "I'm a big boy." But Gregory said it should surprise no one that he would marry a former parishioner.

"Anybody that I was likely to meet and know would have been somebody I would have met and known in the context of where I have been. I get a little bit irate with some people's viewpoint. I don't know whether they thought I should have gone out here to some westside bar, and it would have been more favorable for me to have met somebody that I never knew. A Baptist preacher in big churches lives in a sea of women. The most likely person you would meet would be somebody who may have been divorced or widowed where you've been. That's just life."

Joel and Sherry Gregory were married in a private ceremony at Thistle Hill, a historic Fort Worth mansion, by Richard Blair, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church of Fort Worth. Eighty guests attended the ceremony,

which was protected by security guards. Guards also were present at the June news conference announcing Gregory's book because of threats he says he has received since resigning.

The couple took a honeymoon to an undisclosed island outside the United States. They will live in Fort Worth, where Gregory works for Greenwood-Mt. Olivet Funeral Home and Cemetery, going door-to-door selling pre-arranged funerals and burial plots. Sherry Gregory manages a physician's office in Fort Worth.

Gregory and his former wife have joint custody of their two sons. Grant, 20, lives in Dallas and is an art student at Southern Methodist University. Garrett, who turns 17 in August, lives with Linda Gregory and is a junior at Arlington Heights High School in Fort Worth.

Gregory's book is due for release Sept. 29, two years after Gregory's resignation and three days before Criswell celebrates his 50th anniversary as pastor of the church.

-30-

### **Texas Baptist music consultant mugged on Baylor campus**

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Donald McCall of Grapevine, Texas, consultant in the church music department of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, was mugged on the campus of Baylor University in Waco at about 10 p.m. July 31.

McCall, 48, sustained serious blows to his head and cuts near his eyes requiring 10 stitches as a result of the assault which occurred near the corner of Seventh Street and James Avenue.

McCall allegedly was approached by three Hispanic males in their late teens. One of the trio pulled a gun, held it to McCall's head and demanded that he give them everything he had.

Since he had emptied his pockets earlier, McCall pulled out his motel room key, explaining it was the only thing he had with him. Frustrated that the robbery attempt was unsuccessful, the youth then pistol-whipped McCall.

Baylor University security officers responded when McCall pulled the lever on a nearby emergency call-box. McCall was treated at a local hospital and released. No suspects were in custody Aug. 1.

-30-

-- By Ken Camp

EDITOR'S NOTE: ABP will not have an issue Tuesday, Aug. 2, unless events warrant.

---

END