

# Associated Baptist Press

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- **FMB trustees adopt new guiding principles**
- **Southwestern Seminary to appeal probation**
- **Speakers challenge Baptists to "do good" in public square**
- **Gambling's social costs catastrophic, economist tells Texas legislators**

## **FMB trustees adopt new guiding principles**

By Pam Parry

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- The trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board adopted a new set of principles, heard reports on a record-breaking year in overseas work and appointed 44 missionaries during a Feb. 13-15 meeting in Wake Forest, N.C.

The trustees, meeting on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, unanimously adopted seven basic principles that FMB President Jerry Rankin said would help the agency stay on target with its mission. The principles replace an existing set and reflect core values, he added.

After the adoption of the principles, trustee Paul Brooks of Missouri made a motion that "trustees of the Foreign Mission Board be given an opportunity to sign the document." The motion was unanimously approved, and during discussion trustees raised the possibility that FMB staff and missionaries may be asked to sign the principles as well.

The principles:

- "Our basic commitment is obedience to the lordship of Jesus Christ and to God's infallible Word.
- "Our basic belief is that Jesus Christ is God's only provision for salvation and that people without personal faith in him are lost and will spend eternity in hell.
- "Our basic means of understanding and fulfilling God's mission is prayer.
- "Our basic purpose is to provide all people an opportunity to hear, understand and respond to the gospel in their own cultural context.
- "Our basic task is evangelism through proclamation, discipling, equipping and ministry that results in indigenous Baptist churches.
- "Our basic strategy is to send and support gifted, God-called missionaries who, with mutual respect, accountability and cooperation, carry out the Great Commission in an incarnational witness.
- "Our basic role is to lead and facilitate the international missionary involvement of Southern Baptists in partnership with overseas Baptists and other Christians who are fulfilling the Great Commission."

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Since their introduction last December, the principles were changed to add "infallible" to the first principle and the reference to "eternity in hell" in the second.

The board adopted accompanying vision and mission statements at its Dec. 14, 1994, meeting.

For the first time in its history, the FMB recorded more than 300,000 baptisms in 1994, marking a 15 percent increase over the previous year, Rankin reported.

The board also appointed a record 545 missionaries in 1994, breaking the 500 mark for the first time. Most of those (290) are short-term missionaries, usually serving two-year terms; 255 are career missionaries.

In a Feb. 14 service, trustees appointed 44 new missionaries, bringing the total to more than 4,000 missionaries serving in 131 countries. Forty-seven people responded to the invitation during the appointment service, and another four made decisions the next day during chapel.

In other business, the trustees:

-- Adopted unanimously an amendment to board guidelines dealing with missionaries who resign or are terminated under unsatisfactory circumstances. The new guidelines would note when a missionary failed to meet board standards in job performance or lifestyle.

-- Adopted unanimously a conflict-of-interest policy that the FMB will refrain from conducting business with trustees, employees or their relatives in which they have a direct or substantial interest. The full board must approve exceptions

-- Voiced appreciation for the service of Leland Webb, editor of Commission magazine, who plans to retire at the end of February. The policy defines relatives as spouse, parents, children, brothers and sisters, including in-laws.

The next FMB trustee meeting is slated for April 27-29 in Huntsville, Ala.

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## **Southwestern Seminary to appeal probation**

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will appeal the probation placed on it by the Association of Theological Schools, the president of the seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, announced.

"We feel like it's in the best interest of the institution that we appeal, and we feel like we have a good case," Ken Hemphill, seminary president, said Feb. 13.

The association's Commission on Accrediting put the school on a two-year probation in January, citing violations of procedures by the school's trustees when they fired former president Russell Dilday last March and continuing concerns about academic freedom.

The 3,200-student seminary, the largest of the six seminaries owned by the Southern Baptist Convention, must correct problems noted in the probation or risk losing its accreditation.

Accreditation is seen as a seal of approval for educational institutions. It carries prestige and helps student enrollment and fund-raising efforts.

Hemphill said he believes the seminary responded to all the concerns raised by the accrediting agency and should not have been put on probation.

The appeal process includes several steps, said Nancy Merrill, a spokeswoman for the Pittsburgh, Pa.,-based accrediting agency.

First, seminary officials will meet with three members of the accrediting commission, she said. After that consultation, if the seminary still believes probation is unjust, it may appeal in writing within 60 days.

A written appeal goes to a five-member ATS appeals panel. The appeals panel then has 120 days to arrange a hearing before the 12-member Commission on Accrediting.

The ATS, which includes 206 graduate schools of theology in the U.S. and Canada, is the major accrediting body for Southwestern.

A regional accrediting group, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, will visit the seminary in March to consider whether it will place the school on probation as well.

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--Jim Jones of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram contributed to this story.

## **Speakers challenge Baptists to "do good" in public square**

By Ken Camp

AUSTIN, Texas (ABP) -- Christians could learn most effectively how to "do good in the public square" by getting involved in their communities through local congregation -- if they were just given the chance -- according to the keynote speaker at a Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission conference.

"Doing Good in the Public Square" was the theme of the annual statewide conference of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission Feb. 13-14 at First Baptist Church, Austin. Speakers examined the theme from historical, constitutional, congregational and public-school perspectives.

"American political history and Baptist polity unite in identifying the local arena as the most foundational level at which to learn how to do good in the public square," said Bill Hull, provost for academic affairs at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

But many churches are hesitant to enter the public square because pastors are afraid of having the "social gospel" label hung on them, they were never trained in applied Christianity, they are under relentless pressure to meet their congregations' internal needs, and they are not rewarded for involvement in the community, he said.

"Pastors quickly learn that the way you make brownie points with pulpit committees is through membership growth, and the way you make brownie points with denominational leaders in a position to recommend you is through missions giving," he said. "The only thing most pastors ever get out of civic involvement is a plastic paperweight for speaking at Rotary."

Christians can recover public concern by fashioning a public theology for a public church that embodies the ministry of Jesus and fosters the concept of the church as debtor to its community, Hull said.

Churches need to learn how to build coalitions in the public square without compromising their relationship to God, according to Chris Hamlin, pastor of the historic Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala.

"If society is to change -- if Christians in general and Baptists in particular are to engage the world -- we must learn how to value partnerships," Hamlin said.

African-American Baptists particularly have been willing to build partnerships -- even with government -- when doing so advanced causes of social liberation and economic justice, he said. And in the coming years, these partnerships will become even more imperative.

"In order for a better, healthier and stronger America to emerge, it will become essential for government and the church -- and Baptists -- to enter partnerships of mutual respect," Hamlin said.

If the church wants to "do good in the public square," it must be left alone to carry out its mission, according to Doug Laycock, professor of law at the University of Texas, Austin. But increasingly, he said, government entities and zoning boards are defining the church's mission for it.

Laycock pointed out that if the rights of religious believers are to be protected, the rights of persons with whom Christians would disagree must also be defended.

It is time for Baptists to "do a little peacemaking" in the area of public education, saying "no" to the theocrats on the right and the secularists on the left and "yes" to those who are helping public schools deal with religion in a proper and serious manner, according to Oliver Thomas, consultant with the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

"The public square in America is neither naked nor sacred. It is civil," said Thomas, former general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee. "It is a place where all religions are welcome but none is promoted by the state. The common vision for the common good is the vision we must pursue in our public schools."

The Baptist vision of Christian faith is at its best on the edge of exile and is compromised when it becomes too cozy with the establishment, according to Bill Leonard, chairman of the department of religion and philosophy at Samford University.

As exiles from Massachusetts Bay Colony, Roger Williams and the early Baptists gave the New World a radical notion of religious liberty -- that faith cannot be compelled or nationalized. But as they grew to be the majority in the 19th century South, Baptists sought to legitimize slavery and discrimination against African-Americans, Leonard said.

"What is the Baptist -- no, the gospel -- message for today? Beware of the majority and turn loose the gospel," he said.

Pointing out that majoritarian religion banished Williams from Massachusetts, boarded up Baptist churches in Virginia and hanged a female Quaker preacher on Boston Commons, Leonard said, "Sometimes the religious majority has come out on the backside of grace. The will of the majority is not always the same as the will of the living God."

Southern Baptists in particular have developed an "establishment mentality" and lost much of their dissenting heritage, becoming more comfortable with the Puritan John Cotton than the seeker Roger Williams, Leonard said.

"We're always tempted to exchange radical faith for a mess of establishment pottage," he said. "At their best, Baptists have maintained a healthy suspicion of majority religion, ever living on the edge of exile."

America will never be a Christian nation in form and structure as long as constitutional liberties are protected, but it can be more Christian in its character as believers exercise their citizenship with integrity, according to Rosalie Beck, associate professor of religion in Baylor University in Waco.

Just as Jesus accepted the possibility of rejection and the limits of non-coercion, Beck said, Christians need to proclaim their view of truth while guarding the rights of others to reject it.

"America is a Christian nation as long as freedom to be an American does not contain within it the necessity of advocating a particular religious perspective or a certain interpretation of the Bible," she said. "It is a Christian nation if the people who responsibly accept that label live as Christ in the land."

## **Gambling's social costs catastrophic, economist tells Texas legislators**

By Ken Camp

AUSTIN, Texas (ABP)-- The social costs of gambling, if applied throughout the United States, would equal one Hurricane Andrew every year, according to economist Earl Grinols.

Grinols, who served as research economist for the Department of the Treasury and senior economist for the Council of Economic Advisors in the Reagan administration, was featured speaker at a legislator/constituents breakfast held during the annual statewide conference of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

More than 50 Texas lawmakers attended the breakfast at First Baptist Church, Austin.

Gambling's social costs total at least \$100-to-\$300 per adult each year in any area where gambling has been prevalent for three to five years, said Grinols, professor of economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. These costs include regulation, lost productivity and direct crime costs such as apprehending, adjudicating and incarcerating criminals.

Citing estimates by the American Insurance Institute, Grinols said 40 percent of all white collar crime has its roots in gambling, and \$1.3 billion annually in insurance fraud is due directly to gambling. "That works out to a little bit more than \$10 per working person in the country each year," he said.

States considering expanding forms of legalized gambling can learn from those states where gambling has been prevalent for an extended time, Grinols said. For example, Nevada has the nation's highest rate of suicides, drop-outs, child deaths by abuse and deaths per vehicle mile driven.

Most casinos are taxed at only the 20 percent rate, Grinols said. If they were fully taxed at the maximum rate of 40 percent of gross revenues, the social costs would be reduced, but casino gambling still would cost \$2.25 to \$4.75 in social costs for every dollar raised, Grinols said.

Gambling can bring economic development only through the "beggar thy neighbor" practice of sucking money out of other regions if there is a nearby population base from which to draw, Grinols said. For instance, Las Vegas draws from Southern California, Atlantic City draws from Philadelphia, and Tunica, Miss., draws from Memphis.

Noting the presence of major casinos in other states, he said it is "virtually certain" that legalization of casinos in Texas would not result in economic expansion or creation of jobs for the state.

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