

# Associated Baptist Press

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## Task force named to steer restructuring of SBC

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- A 10-member task force has been appointed to implement the massive restructuring of Southern Baptist Convention agencies approved by messengers to this year's SBC annual meeting.

Bob Reccord, pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., will chair the committee, which includes one woman and one Hispanic. The seven-member Program and Structure Study Committee, which proposed the restructuring, had been criticized for having no black, ethnic or female representation.

Ronnie Floyd, chairman of the SBC Executive Committee and a member of the Program and Structure Study Committee, nominated the implementation task force, which was approved by the SBC Executive Committee Sept. 18 without dissent or discussion.

The next day, the Executive Committee elected David Hankins, a Louisiana pastor and former Executive Committee chairman, to the new staff position of vice president for convention policy. Hankins will carry the primary staff responsibility for implementing the restructuring, which is expected to take several years. Although Hankins' salary was not announced, an SBC official said it is in a range between \$56,000-\$84,000.

Other members of the implementation task force are Michael Hamlet, pastor of North Spartanburg First Baptist Church in Spartanburg, S.C.; Rudy Hernandez, a vocational evangelist from Grand Prairie, Texas; Bill Hogue, retired executive director of the California Southern Baptist Convention; Sarah Maddox, a women's ministry consultant from Nashville; T.C. Pinckney, retired U.S. Air Force general from Alexandria, Va.; Joe Reynolds, an attorney from Houston; Ted Warren, executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board; Don Wills, a businessman from Dallas; and John Yarbrough, pastor of First Baptist Church in Perry, Ga.

Four members of the task force also are members of the SBC Executive Committee, which has ultimate responsibility for implementing the restructuring. They are Reccord, Pinckney, Reynolds and Yarbrough.

The restructuring, called Covenant for a New Century, will consolidate 19 SBC agencies into 12 by dissolving several entities and merging others. The most far-reaching change will be a merger of the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission into a new North American Mission Board.

Floyd said the primary goal of the SBC's new structure is to speed the spread of the gospel. "I want us to leave here this evening on course to do what is our main agenda -- to get the gospel to the world," he said.

Floyd described the purpose of the implementation task force as being "to analyze, study and take actions necessary, including monitoring the transitional actions of all Southern Baptist Convention entities to facilitate the orderly and timely transitions approved by the Southern Baptist Convention in adopting the Covenant for a New Century."

"That is a mammoth task, and I want us to approach that task in the most able manner, the most orderly manner as possible," Floyd said.

According to an outline Floyd distributed to Executive Committee members, the implementation task force will relate primarily to the Executive Committee but may receive counsel from the Program and Structure Study Committee.

Although trustee boards of the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission have appointed their own transition teams -- reportedly with the hope of having some influence over the merger of their agencies -- Floyd's document makes no provision for any formal input from these trustee committees. Nor did it say how potential conflicts between agencies trustees and the task force will be resolved.

Larry Lewis, president of the Home Mission Board, later cautioned Executive Committee members against usurping the role of trustees, who are legally responsible for running their agencies.

But Floyd, in response to reporters' questions, said the task force will interact with agency trustees "to some degree" but won't adjust the new SBC structure to please trustees. While the task force will be "fair," he promised, "the role of the implementation task force is not to rethink the [restructure] plan but to carry out the plan."

The task force "may choose to call upon other Southern Baptists, professional groups or individual specialists and consultants to assist them in their responsibilities," according to the recommendation adopted by the Executive Committee.

Three of the six broad areas of responsibility Floyd outlined for the implementation task force to handle carry instructions to "develop and propose for consideration by elected trustees" certain things. The other three areas apparently will be handled entirely by the implementation task force and Executive Committee.

The six broad responsibilities Floyd has assigned to the implementation task force are:

-- Legal issues, such as dissolution of charters for the Brotherhood Commission, Education Commission, Historical Commission, Stewardship Commission, Home Mission Board and Radio and Television Commission, as well as development of a new charter for the North American Mission Board and revision of charters for the renamed International Mission Board and the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

-- Financial issues, such as obtaining cost analyses of relocating the Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission to Atlanta, of relocating personnel and of reducing the total number of SBC trustees.

-- Physical assets, such as determining what to do with the property, buildings, furnishing and fixtures owned by the Radio and Television Commission, Brotherhood Commission, Home Mission Board, Education Commission, Historical Commission, Stewardship Commission, Southern Baptist Foundation and Commission on the American Baptist Seminary, which are being eliminated or merged.

-- Financial assets, including proposing what to do with the operating capital, endowment funds, investments and financial liabilities of the entities being dissolved or merged.

-- Personnel issues, such as developing a compensation plan for employees whose positions are discontinued, paying insurance premiums for retirees of entities being dissolved, paying relocation expenses for personnel asked to move and providing career transition support for employees displaced by the restructuring.

-- Ministry assignments, including monitoring the implementation of new ministry assignments already outlined in the restructuring plan and proposing changes in ministry statements as necessary.

The implementation task force is required to report to the Executive Committee each time the Executive Committee meets, Floyd said. And the Executive Committee, in turn, will report each year to the SBC annual meeting.

Although the overall restructuring plan was approved by messengers to the June SBC annual meeting in Atlanta, one bylaw change required by the restructuring must be approved again when the SBC meets in New Orleans next June.

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## **Henry urges action to back up racial reconciliation statement**

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- A historic Southern Baptist resolution on racial reconciliation must "take on flesh" in the form of new programs and dialogue efforts, Southern Baptist Convention president Jim Henry said Sept. 18.

In remarks to the Executive Committee, the SBC's administrative board, Henry also pledged to include more women in leadership roles and gently chided denominational leaders to move beyond partisan infighting.

Noting that some have criticized the highly publicized statement on racism as "too little, too late," Henry pledged to work with SBC second vice president Gary Frost, an African American, to pursue dialogue with black Baptists and with leaders of the SBC Executive Committee to commit denominational resources to programs that "work on behalf of minorities."

He cited possibilities such as seminary scholarships, church planting and salary support for black pastors.

"This will speak of the nobility of our intentions," Henry said.

While some black leaders said the resolution was motivated less by remorse for past racism than by a desire to enlist more African Americans into the SBC, Henry said most observers have received the statement well.

"We have some distance yet to travel, but we as a body rose to a higher standard and that has not been lost on those who are objective," Henry said.

While the SBC had taken previous stances against racial bigotry, last summer's resolution was the first to acknowledge the role of slavery in the founding of the nation's largest non-Catholic faith group.

Henry said he would ask Executive Committee leaders to "do whatever the due process is" to "help this resolution take on flesh."

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., elected to a second term as SBC president in June, pledged higher visibility for Southern Baptist women at next year's annual meeting in New Orleans, promising to name a female to chair at least one of the four SBC committees he will appoint.

Many Southern Baptists believe the Bible prohibits women from serving as pastors, but Henry said men and women can work together in churches "without violating Scripture." He called on the SBC to "recognize the Proverbs 31 women the Lord is raising up in our convention," alluding to a biblical passage praising the attributes of devout women.

Many women in Baptist churches have broken through the "glass ceiling" in secular careers and bring considerable contributions in finances and ministry to churches. "Christ has not placed this resource [women] in our midst for decoration," Henry said.

Henry touched lightly on rising tension between the SBC and the Baptist state conventions that contribute to denominational programs. Several moderate state conventions have recently reduced funding to the national convention, which fell under conservative control during the 1980s.

Henry urged state and national leaders to "avoid this independent spirit" and "appreciate each other at all levels."

"We are family. It is not an I-win/you-lose proposition. It is win-win or lose-lose for all of us," he said.

Henry called for dialogue aimed at building trust between state and national leaders. "The only way we will win this battle for the souls of mankind is together," he said.

Henry described response to a massive restructuring approved by the convention in June as "basically positive," adding that people in the pews are "trusting our leadership to do the best thing" for the convention.

A new committee appointed Sept. 18 to begin implementing the restructuring "has an awesome task," Henry commented.

"It is one thing to draw a diagram on the chalk board. It is another to run the play on the field. I believe the fans are with us at this point. We must do all we can not to disappoint them," Henry said.

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### **Agency leaders agree to disagree in meeting behind closed doors**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Leaders of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union have agreed to disagree in a private meeting aimed at resolving a public dispute.

FMB President Jerry Rankin and WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien met for more than four hours in a Sept. 16 meeting at the WMU headquarters building in Birmingham, Ala.

At the meeting, set up at O'Brien's initiative, the leaders "confirmed our friendship and our mutual commitment to work together," Rankin said, but "continue to disagree" over a decision by WMU leaders to begin publishing missions-education supplements for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Rankin said he is "still concerned about the wisdom" of the move, which he has said will fragment missions support by promoting efforts of the Fellowship, which SBC leaders view as a rival to the convention's unified missions program.

In a letter sent to 40,000 SBC churches and denominational leaders, Rankin told WMU members the decision by national WMU leaders departed from the missions auxiliary's traditional role of exclusive promotion of Southern Baptist missions.

O'Brien responded that WMU leaders were angered by Rankin's letter, which she said misrepresented the organization's intent to promote missions among all Southern Baptists.

O'Brien said the recent dispute "is not the first time in history there has been disagreement" between the two agencies.

"For the sake of a greater cause -- that is missions -- there is the need to find ways to work through" the disagreement, O'Brien said.

She said WMU leaders "have not slackened" in their support of SBC missions "and do not intend to."

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-- By Bob Allen

### **New Baylor president reaffirms Baptist roots**

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- New Baylor University President Robert Sloan is emphasizing the school's commitment to its Christian and Baptist roots.

A show of unity Sept. 15 at Sloan's inauguration was in contrast to the tensions that have built up between the university and the state's Baptist leadership over the past five years. Baylor has detached itself from the

dominance of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and conservatives have accused Baylor of pulling away from its Baptist and religious roots.

But Sloan promised to keep the 150-year-old university tied to Christianity and Baptists. "We will be the finest Christian institution of higher education on this planet," Sloan told 4,000 people at Ferrell Center.

Significantly, William Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, was on the inaugural program.

"On behalf of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, we are glad you are one of us," Pinson said to Sloan.

In an inaugural prayer, Pinson spoke of the need to keep Baylor "academically excellent, uniquely Christian and unapologetically Baptist."

Gale Galloway, chairman of Baylor regents, thanked Pinson for his comments and said it is the regents' intention to make sure Baylor remembers its Texas Baptist heritage.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas used to appoint all of the university's regents. But in 1990 Baylor changed that and now allows the group to appoint only a fourth of the members. Although moderate Baptists dominate the state convention, the move was necessary because Baylor might be threatened by a loss of academic freedom if conservatives take control of the state convention, Baylor leaders said.

No direct mention of the longstanding conservative-moderate controversy was made during the inauguration. But one speaker, who praised several past presidents, lauded outgoing president Herbert Reynolds for his stand against conservative Baptists.

"Above all, he made sure that Baylor had the gift of academic freedom," Ann Miller, a professor of English who holds the rank of master teacher at Baylor, said to an applauding crowd.

Baptists founded the school in Independence, Texas, in 1845. It now has an enrollment of 12,500, making it the largest Baptist university.

Sloan is a Baylor graduate who holds a master's from Princeton University and a doctorate from the University of Basil in Switzerland. Before being elected to the presidency, Sloan was a religion professor at Baylor and the founding dean of Baylor's George W. Truett Theological Seminary, now headed by Russell Dilday, who is interim dean.

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-- By Jim Jones. Reprinted with permission from the Fort Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram.

## **Relief workers, supplies aiding Caribbean hurricane victims**

DALLAS (ABP) -- Southern Baptists from Texas and Alabama have sent two field kitchens and a dozen volunteers to St. Thomas to provide disaster relief in the wake of Hurricane Marilyn.

An airliner chartered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency picked up the volunteers in Dallas and Birmingham on Sept. 17. After weather-related delays in Atlanta, where additional FEMA and American Red Cross personnel boarded the aircraft, the plane left the U.S. mainland early the next morning.

The volunteers arrived on St. Thomas before noon on Sept. 18, and they were expected to begin serving meals the next morning, according to John LaNoue of Texas Baptist Men.

"Their greatest need is prayer," LaNoue said. "For the next two weeks, they'll be doing just what Jesus did -- meeting human needs and introducing people to God."

But funds also are needed, LaNoue noted.

Hurricane Marilyn -- the fourth such storm to hit the Caribbean in as many weeks -- claimed at least 17 lives in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, destroyed about one fourth of the homes on St. Thomas and damaged virtually every other building on that island. President Clinton declared the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico disaster areas.

Less than two weeks earlier, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and Texas Baptist Men had provided two water purifiers, each capable of purifying 25,000 gallons of water daily, for disaster relief on St. Martin and Antigua after those islands were hit by Hurricane Luis.

Two dozen construction volunteers are needed for two-week intervals for 90 days beginning Sept. 23 on St. Martin and Antigua. The reconstruction project is being coordinated by the Foreign Mission Board through the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

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--By Ken Camp

### **Senate works to involve churches in welfare system**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate took steps Sept. 13 to preserve church-state separation in a plan that would involve churches in welfare programs.

The sweeping welfare-reform package under debate in the Senate contained a proposal by Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., that would allow churches to use federal funds to provide "sectarian worship and instruction" along with day care, hot meals and other services. Ashcroft and proposal supporters said that churches are better equipped than federal bureaucracies to run food programs and house the poor.

Critics said that the Ashcroft proposal would have unconstitutionally entangled church and state.

On a 59-41 vote, the Senate agreed to an amendment by Sen. William Cohen, R-Maine, that lessened those church-state concerns.

Cohen's amendment stipulated that churches could participate as benefit providers so long as the "programs are implemented consistent with the establishment clause" of the First Amendment. It also struck a federal mandate that would have barred states from requiring churches to establish separate non-sectarian entities to administer the programs.

Melissa Rogers, associate general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, said, "The Cohen amendment makes a bad bill a better one. It plugs a few of the constitutional leaks by emphasizing the establishment clause and giving states greater latitude to disburse funds in ways they feel are constitutionally sound."

The Senate is expected to vote on the welfare bill this week. The House-approved version does not have a similar provision related to churches.

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--By Pam Parry

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