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Contemporary sounds provide counterpoint to traditional hymns

By Diane Winston

DALLAS (ABP) -- Ask what he likes to listen to and Armond Brown doesn't hesitate. Handel, Bach and Beethoven soothe his soul; he's happiest humming an operatic aria. But when Brown steps into the pulpit of Fellowship Baptist Church in Oak Cliff, Texas, he doesn't expect his congregation to share his musical taste. He knows they want a more contemporary sound.

"Our approach to music is flexible," said Brown, a classically trained musician who also directs the Dallas-Fort Worth Mass Choir. "If you come to my church, you'll hear traditional gospel music, popular hymns, contemporary gospel, and usually on the third Sunday night of the month, rap or reggae. But it's all Christo-centric."

Fellowship Baptist's musical mix is a growing trend among churches today. Racial, regional and denominational differences notwithstanding, church music is in a state of flux. The wide-ranging influences of mass media and popular music have brought new sounds to congregations big and small. Music ministers talk in terms of flexibility and balance, weighing the merits of both synthesizers and organs, new hymnals and overhead projectors, Bach oratorios and contemporary Christian performers.

To those comfortable with change, informality and pop sound, contemporary church music is likened to a worship revival. It's a way to reach the unchurched and to help worshipers speak directly with God. But to supporters of tradition and formality, the present trend is likened to a tidal wave, a destructive force swamping religious aesthetics and the pursuit of the holy.

"The big issue is whether a style derived from the revolution of the 1960s can be appropriate to the worship of God. Can it carry the content of the liturgy?" asked Steve Pilkington, chairman of the Department of Church Music at Westminster Choir College of Rider University in Princeton, N.J. "We have a generation of the unchurched who want to make things as simplistic as possible. They're stripping the mystery out of Christianity and leaving American pop music."

That's not what Stan Durham thinks. The pastor of music and media at the Fellowship of Las Colinas, Texas, gets annoyed when he hears the familiar criticism of the new pop style. He says he doesn't criticize what others choose to do.

"It takes all different kinds," Durham explained. "Our ultimate goal is to make a difference in people's lives and to give everyone the opportunity to know the answer to life's problems is Jesus Christ."

Seeking to show that Christians aren't "nerdy," Durham designs services that feature drama, video and secular music. Following a sermon on "Honesty," the church band, several vocalists and a rhythm section played Billy Joel's song of the same name. After hearing about "Commitment," the congregation was treated to Billy Idol's "When the Going Gets Tough."

Durham's music selection is typical of many megachurches, large evangelical congregations that aim to attract unchurched baby boomers and busters. Modeled after the wildly successful Willow Creek Church in suburban Chicago, megachurches mix contemporary Christian music, such as hits by Amy Grant or Michael W. Smith, with secular songs. The music is performed by vocalists and a band rather than sung by the congregation, and the goal is to make services accessible to families more likely to frequent movie theaters, sports arenas or musical revues than church.

At Wednesday night services for more "mature" Christians, the Fellowship of Las Colinas, which is Southern Baptist, uses praise and worship music. This musical genre, popular with megachurches, has seeped into mainline congregations, too. Congregants sing choruses that are projected on an overhead screen. The songs blend contemporary-style tunes with lyrics that speak directly to God.

"Praise and worship music personalizes the worship experience," said Todd Bell, minister of music at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas. "People are hungry to experience God in a fresh, new way."

Bell believes that a "worship revolution" occurred in the past 15 years as praise and worship music moved from the periphery to the center of Christian life.

"There's been a renewed interest and excitement in corporate worship," he said. "And it crosses denominational lines."

At Prestonwood, Bell's philosophy is to "balance and blend." The congregation sings traditional hymns from a hymnal as well as praise and worship choruses from an overhead screen. A mammoth music program -- consisting of five adult ensembles, two youth choirs, 12 children's choruses, an orchestra, a praise band and a contemporary music group -- ensures that the congregation will eventually hear everything from Handel's Messiah to Sandy Patti's latest hit.

Across town, on the campus of Southern Methodist University, the master of sacred music program teaches students to maintain the best of what's traditional while being open to what's new.

Kenneth Hart, who heads the program sponsored by Perkins School of Theology and Meadows School of the Arts, says church music is always evolving.

"I think the real danger is not in the kind of music being done but in not involving people in the doing of it," said Hart. "The danger I see is when the music is done by a few people and everyone else watches. That's not about worship, that's a spectator sport."

Hart agrees that many Methodist churches are singing more contemporary music alongside their traditional hymns. He also notices a growing interest in music from other regions, including Africa and Asia. Similar trends have also influenced music in Episcopal churches, once considered a bastion of formal, Anglo-European hymnody.

"All around the church, there's been an interest in broadening the repertoire," said Clay Morris, head of the liturgical office for the Episcopal Church in New York City. "The Diocese of Los Angeles celebrates the Eucharist in a dozen languages; so does the Diocese of Long Island. In the past, the only available resource for non-Anglo congregations was a direct translation of their music without any recognition of its cultural ambience. Now, we're interested in what kinds of musical forms are most expressive for a particular congregation."

Paul Marshall, the acting director of the Institute of Sacred Music at Yale University in New Haven, Conn., describes today's body of church music as much broader than a generation ago. The influence of popular music and

world music has made hymnals less denominationally specific. As a result, would-be ministers of music must be willing to adapt and experiment.

For Brown of Fellowship Baptist Church, the aficionado of classical music, the key is flexibility and remembering what's really important.

"You need to keep your eyes on the goals," he said. "The whole purpose of gospel music is to win people. As long as we don't compromise the message, the packaging is incidental."

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-- Diane Winston is a Fellow at the Center for the Study of American Religion at Princeton University. This story is reprinted, with permission, from The Dallas Morning News.

Justices question scope of gay-rights measure

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments Oct. 10 in a dispute over a Colorado law that says state and local governments may not act to protect homosexuals from discrimination.

A 1992 amendment to the Colorado constitution bars laws and policies protecting the civil rights of homosexuals. Colorado voters approved the amendment in a referendum, by a vote of 53 percent to 47 percent.

It has not been implemented, however, because of a court challenge from state residents and the cities of Denver, Aspen and Boulder. Amendment 2 would nullify existing anti-discrimination ordinances in those cities.

The Colorado Supreme Court ruled the amendment unconstitutional, saying it infringes on the right of gay individuals to participate equally in the political process. Colorado officials are asking the nation's high court to overturn that decision.

Opponents of the amendment say it would deny gays equal protection under the law. Supporters say forcing employers or landlords to hire or rent to gays could violate the rights of citizens who oppose homosexuality on religious grounds.

Colorado Solicitor General Timothy Tymkovich contended during oral arguments that Colorado has the right to determine how best to handle its own sensitive issues.

But justices questioned if the amendment goes too far in denying protections to gay citizens.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg asked Tymkovich if hospitals with scarce resources could refuse to treat homosexuals under the amendment. Tymkovich said he did not know.

Justice Stephen Breyer asked if a police department would be prohibited from enacting policies to stop "gay bashing."

Colorado Attorney General Gale Norton said outside the courtroom the amendment would not prevent law enforcement from stopping criminal acts. She said the people of Colorado did not vote for the amendment because of hatred against gays.

Among other purposes, Tymkovich said, the state wanted the amendment to protect the rights of people who oppose homosexuality because of religious reasons. Under the amendment, homosexuals could no longer claim discrimination when denied housing, employment or public accommodations.

The Colorado Supreme Court rejected the state's religious claim in 1993. The state court acknowledged that Colorado has an interest in protecting the religious freedom of landlords and employers who hold deep religious objections to homosexuality but ruled the amendment was not narrowly tailored to serve that interest.

Permitting religious exemptions to anti-discrimination laws would be an equally effective but less-restrictive solution, the Colorado court suggested.

Religious groups siding with the state in its appeal to the Supreme Court include the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. The CLC, the National Association of Evangelicals and others joined a Christian Legal Society brief supporting Colorado's "use of a constitutional amendment to ensure protection for the rights of religious people."

"Rather than having to lobby or litigate in every city and county for a sufficiently broad religious exemption from homosexual-rights laws, the people ought to be able to resolve the issue democratically and uniformly, as they have attempted through Amendment 2," said Samuel Casey, director of the Christian Legal Society.

Tymkovich argued the state has a right to override city policies and bar state and local laws that would give homosexuals "special protection."

But Justice John Paul Stevens asked, "What is the rational basis for the people outside of Aspen telling the people of Aspen they cannot have that statute?"

Justice Ginsburg suggested that if a state had passed such an amendment before women's suffrage, women would not have been able to generate local support to build a national movement.

Justice Antonin Scalia, meanwhile, sided with the state, observing that employers can refuse to hire someone because they don't like the way their hair is combed. He asked why states should be able to prohibit homosexual conduct in sodomy laws but not ban special protection for homosexuals.

Jean Dubofsky, the attorney arguing against the amendment, said she was pleased the justices asked questions dealing with the scope of the amendment. "The court focused today on what I hoped it would focus on," she said.

She said it is unfair to group people because of their sexual orientation. People are not exclusively defined by their conduct, she added.

"Amendment 2 defeats itself. It targets one specific group of people and that's the problem with equal protection," Dubofsky said.

A decision in the Colorado case, *Romer vs. Evans*, is expected before the court term concludes next summer.

The last time the court heard a case that directly addressed the constitutional rights of homosexuals was in 1986 when the court upheld a Georgia statute making specific acts of sodomy a crime.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following story updates and replaces yesterday's ABP story, "Deal to transfer social work school from Southern to Samford hits snag."

Campbellsville College makes bid for Carver School of Social Work

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- The Carver School of Church Social Work, which had all but packed its bags for a move to Alabama, could be staying in Kentucky.

One day after officials at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary said negotiations to transfer the social work school from the seminary to Samford University had hit a snag, they announced a new offer from Campbellsville College.

The college, located in the small central Kentucky town of Campbellsville, is one of three liberal arts schools affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention. The college has experienced dramatic growth in the last eight years, with enrollment increasing 106 percent.

Campbellsville spokesman Marc Whitt said the college would intend to keep the Carver School in Louisville, Ky., though not on the seminary campus, its current home.

The college's president, Ken Winters, "has a tremendous interest in trying to keep the Carver School in Kentucky and particularly in Louisville," Whitt said.

The original plan negotiated with Samford called for the Alabama Baptist university to assume responsibility for the Carver School on Aug. 1, 1996, and to operate the school on the seminary campus through the 1996-97 academic year. The school then would have been moved to Birmingham, Ala.

Seminary officials would not say what went wrong in the talks with Samford. Officials at Samford declined to speak to reporters, referring all calls back to the seminary.

With 1,366 students, Campbellsville is smaller than Samford, which enrolls nearly 6,000.

Unlike Samford, which has been in the process of developing a master of social work degree that it intends to launch with or without the Carver School transfer, Campbellsville apparently has not previously entertained plans to offer a master's degree in social work.

Campbellsville currently offers a bachelor's degree in social work for which it is seeking accreditation and only one master's degree program, in education. Samford offers an extensive graduate program and has started its own divinity school.

Campbellsville College President Ken Winters and two other administrators met with seminary President Albert Mohler Oct. 11. The seminary issued a news release late that afternoon announcing that negotiations were underway to consider transferring the Carver School and its master of social work degree program to Campbellsville.

A day earlier, seminary trustees had planned to approve transferring the school to Samford. Instead, they met behind closed doors for an hour to approve a recommendation authorizing the administration and trustee executive committee to negotiate an agreement which would "allow the continuation of the master of social work program at another appropriate institution."

Mohler said the trustee action opened the possibility that some institution other than Samford could acquire the Carver School's master of social work degree program. However, he declined to say what the seminary will do if the program cannot be transferred to another school.

Mohler said some report should be made by the executive committee's next meeting, scheduled for Feb. 6, although he did not say whether the issue would be resolved by then. The seminary reportedly faces pressure to resolve the issue before Nov. 8, when an investigative team from three accrediting agencies will visit Southern's campus.

Current students in the Carver School had expressed mixed feelings about the transfer to Samford, but generally had said they were glad some provision would be made to continue the school and to allow them to complete accredited degrees.

The apparent disruption of that plan, however, renewed anxiety among students. And the infusion of Campbellsville into the picture -- a school less-familiar than Samford to many Carver School students -- added confusion.

"As far as our students are concerned, we are back to March," when the crisis arose, Janet Spressart, acting dean of the Carver School, said the day after the trustee action. In the spring, "they didn't know how to plan for this fall. They were made a lot of promises regarding course work and the opportunity to graduate. Now it's just slipping away."

Students on track to graduate in May 1996 should be "safe," Spressart said. They will be able to take their required courses on the Southern Seminary campus in Louisville.

But students who are on track to graduate in 1997 are in jeopardy, she added. "They have no clarity for graduation," she explained. "We hoped they would know something by this trustee meeting. But the board basically said, 'We'll get back to you -- maybe in February, maybe in April.'"

And that's too late, because they cannot make plans for completing their degrees when they don't know where, or if, required courses will be available, she said.

"It's hard to encourage them to stay," Spressart said. "I don't see how I can encourage them to make decisions except to leave this place."

Spressart and Diana Garland, whom Mohler fired as Carver School dean last March, are the only two remaining full-time faculty members in the school. Neither professor has indicated how long she will continue to teach at Southern Seminary.

Nevertheless, Mohler and trustee officials repeatedly pledged to "protect the interest of the students" in their negotiations. Mohler earlier had promised that anyone on track to graduate by the spring of 1997 would have an opportunity to complete the degree program.

In a news conference after the trustee meeting, Mohler and trustee Chairman Rick White refused to say what caused the breakdown in negotiations with Samford.

"We have not formally severed conversations with Samford," Mohler said. He later said "impasse" is not an appropriate word to describe the problem. "There are issues where there was not a mutual understanding" between the seminary and Samford, he said.

Comments made by Mohler and trustees hinted that the problem could involve misunderstandings about what assets of the Carver School would transfer to Samford. In earlier announcements about the proposed transfer, seminary officials talked about moving the Carver School. In public statements the day of the trustee meeting, they carefully avoided that language and instead talked about transferring the seminary's master of social work degree program.

Among the assets that could be in dispute are the Carver School name, its curriculum and endowments which currently benefit Carver School faculty and students. The seminary has one endowed chair and some scholarship funds specifically tied to the Carver School.

Mohler declined to state the value of those endowment funds, saying the seminary "never considered transferring" them to Samford.

The current entity known as the Carver School of Church Social Work is only 11 years old, but it evolved from the Woman's Missionary Training School, which was founded in Louisville in 1907.

The WMU Training School was begun at a time when the seminary did not accept women as students. As that policy changed, the Training School in 1952 was renamed the Carver School of Missions and Social Work. In 1957, WMU transferred ownership of the Carver School to the Southern Baptist Convention. And in 1962, Southern Seminary assumed full responsibility for the Carver School from the SBC.

The seminary began offering a master of divinity degree with emphasis in social work in 1969. In 1984, the Carver School of Church Social Work was formed as a separate school within the seminary, and the master of social work degree was offered, with accreditation by the Council on Social Work Education.

In the news conference, Mohler emphasized that Southern Seminary was interested in transferring to another school only the parts of the Carver School established in 1984, and not anything related to the earlier Carver School of Missions and Social Work.

The seminary will continue to offer courses in social work, just as it did prior to 1984, Mohler said. The primary change will be the elimination of the accredited master of social work degree program, he said.

If Southern can't transfer its master of social work degree program to another institution, the degree program apparently will die.

The trustee committee appointed last spring to study the future of the Carver School reported to the full trustee board that it "would not be feasible" to continue offering an accredited master of social work degree program through the seminary. The study committee was appointed after Mohler fired Garland as dean, prompting student protests and inquiries from three accrediting agencies.

Garland was fired after she told a gathering of social work students that Mohler's restrictive hiring policies were prohibiting the Carver School from obtaining an adequate number of qualified faculty members. Mohler vetoed the nomination of a faculty candidate after learning the candidate thought it possible that God could call a woman to be a pastor.

• The trustee committee's printed report noted that "considerable differences exist in the structures, processes and issues of social work education and theological studies."

In the news conference, Mohler cited the National Council on Social Work's code of ethics as part of the problem. That code of ethics prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual orientation -- an issue that has concerned conservatives who adamantly oppose any openness to homosexuality and who believe women's roles in the church should be different from men's.

The study committee also considered concerns about some Carver School students doing field placements in secular social service agencies with no explicit religious mission, Mohler said.

Mohler also repeatedly has stated that his vision for the seminary is to focus on the master of divinity degree and not follow the trend of other seminaries by offering a variety of other degrees as well.

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Baylor kicks off \$1 million global ventures campaign

By Bob Allen

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Baylor University recently kicked off a \$1 million endowment campaign to fund short-term overseas missions projects for faculty and students.

Planners of the Global Missions Ventures campaign hope to sponsor at least two faculty members each quarter and 100 students each summer in direct missions projects in Third World nations, said Milton Cunningham, director of denomination ministries at the Baptist university in Waco, Texas.

The campaign's goal is to raise \$1 million over the next two years, Cunningham said. In addition to sending faculty and students overseas, interest from the fund could also provide scholarships allowing church leaders from developing nations to attend classes either in Baylor's undergraduate degree programs or its George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

The endowment campaign was established at the recommendation of a global task force established 18 months ago to look at ways to involve Baylor more directly in world missions, Cunningham said.

Cunningham said several faculty members are already involved in missions projects and more than 230 Baylor students have volunteered for missions service next summer. "We thought it would be wonderful if we could bring it under one umbrella and help people become aware of how many Baylor people were active in bringing their witness to the world," he said.

The fund will also give students who aspire to service as career missionaries "some sort of internship" before seeking appointment by missions-sending agencies, he said.

At the banquet kicking off the campaign, Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, said missions is an important key to spiritual vitality. "If our churches have become dead, it is because they are not involved in missions," Lotz said. "If fire is not burning in our individual lives, it is because we are not involved in the mission of Jesus Christ."

Lotz said it is particularly important to involve American students in missions. Lotz said drugs, divorce and other societal failures are causing young people to lose God's vision for the world.

The banquet also honored two families of Baylor alumni with distinguished records in missions. The Bagby and Glass-Cauthen families, who laid the foundation of Southern Baptist missions work in Spain and China, have through the generations dedicated a cumulative total of 700 years to missions service, Cunningham said.

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Billy Graham announces '96 crusade in Charlotte

MINNEAPOLIS (ABP) -- Billy Graham will hold a crusade in Charlotte, N.C., next September -- the evangelist's first in his hometown in almost 25 years.

Graham, 77, plans to preach at the now-unfinished Carolina Panthers stadium Sept. 26-29.

"Billy Graham has been a model in ministry for me for many years," said Charles Page, pastor of First Baptist Church of Charlotte. "My excitement in his coming to Charlotte for a crusade in 1996 is overflowing," added Page, a member of the interdenominational advisory committee which issued the invitation.

Following a summer of rest and recuperation after a brief hospitalization in June, Graham is scheduled to hold a crusade in Sacramento, Calif., Oct. 18-22. It will be his first appearance since speaking to the Southern Baptist Convention June 22 in Atlanta.

The evangelist also plans to lead crusades in four cities in Australia and New Zealand in February and March and in Minneapolis/St. Paul next June.

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-- By Bob Allen

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