

Associated Baptist Press

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

December 12, 1995

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

In this issue:

- Foreign Mission Board upholds firing of charismatic missionary
- Baptists plan joint relief in war-torn Bosnia
- Louisiana pastor tapped to lead Arkansas Baptists
- Bill Webb named editor of Missouri's Word & Way
- Senate votes to ban rare abortion procedure
- Civil Rights enactment cited as model for religion in politics
- Group criticizes NCC leaders for 'laying hands' on Clinton
- Religious women achieve higher education, study says
- Contraception program failed to lower pregnancy, study says
- Divorce rates increase when laws relaxed

Foreign Mission Board upholds firing of charismatic missionary

By Greg Warner

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (ABP) -- "Falling down in the Spirit" is outside the bounds for Southern Baptist missionaries, says the Foreign Mission Board, which voted Dec. 12 to fire a missionary couple accused of promoting the controversial charismatic practice.

Charles and Sharon Carroll of Singapore, FMB missionaries for 13 years, appealed their firing to FMB trustees meeting in Memphis, Tenn., but were told the practices of their Singapore church are "outside of generally accepted practices of Southern Baptists."

The FMB trustee committee that oversees work in southern Asia and the Pacific area, which heard the appeal, expressed appreciation for the Carrolls' service but told the couple "it is no longer appropriate for you to represent the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Charles Carroll serves as pastor of Community of Praise Baptist Church in Singapore, a 400-member church which the couple founded in 1990. "Falling," in which a worshiper falls to the floor apparently in an unconscious or semi-conscious state, is not a major element in worship at the Singapore church, Carroll said, but it has been seen more frequently in recent months.

FMB officials could identify only one other Southern Baptist missionary ever fired for doctrinal reasons -- Michael Willett, a seminary teacher appointed to Venezuela who was dismissed in 1988 for doubting miracles in the Bible.

The Carrolls were asked to resign but refused.

The area committee met with the Carrolls in private for three hours Dec. 11 and then conferred among themselves for two more hours before adjourning after 1 a.m. They voted without opposition to recommend that the full trustee board terminate the couple Jan. 1 "for failure to preform duties in keeping with the expectations for missionaries of the Foreign Mission Board."

The full board adopted the committee's recommendation Dec. 12 without debate and with no votes in opposition. The Carrolls did not ask to address the full trustee board and were not present for the vote.

Bill Richardson of Troy, Ill., chair of the area committee, told trustees the group "came to a point where we understood there was very little area for them [the Carrolls] to move except to accept this termination. They had as much peace about that as they could."

"All of us appreciate the ministry of the Carrolls," trustee chairman Leon Hyatt of Pineville, La., told reporters before the board vote. "I love him more because I know about his good work. We're going to continue to pray for them. But they have adopted typical Pentecostal practices."

Falling down, also called being slain in the Spirit, is a practice "Southern Baptists do not believe in and do not stand for," Hyatt said. "We don't think Southern Baptists want to change."

Jerry Rankin, FMB president, told reporters the practice of falling down is not biblical.

"Southern Baptists have a great deal of flexibility, diversity, latitude in many areas, including spiritual gifts and manifestations of the Spirit," Rankin told reporters. "Where we would come down representing Southern Baptists is on the basis of sound biblical justification."

There is "no evidence" in the Bible for falling down, he said.

Before his election as FMB president, Rankin was area director in Singapore and supervised the Carrolls' work in the early 1990s, when some charismatic practices -- but not falling down -- were in evidence. Rankin said he had to admonish Carroll about possible excesses.

Although Rankin said he has not visited the church recently, "from the reports, they definitely have moved to much more extreme manifestations, beyond what we would consider to have any sound biblical basis."

Carroll's church reportedly saw an increase in the "falling" practice after Wallace Henley, pastor of a charismatic Southern Baptist church in Houston, preached there on recent mission trips.

Carroll acknowledged "falling down" is not common among Baptists, but he defended the practice as biblical. "While the Bible does not teach that this experience is a normative encounter with God (i.e., that every person who encounters God must experience falling), the practice is not excluded from Scripture," he wrote in a 24-page written appeal to trustees.

Carroll's appeal cited biblical accounts said to depict the practice (I Samuel 19:23-24; II Chronicles 5:14; Acts 26:14; Revelation 1:17 and 19:4). He also cited examples from Christian history, including John Wesley in the 18th century and the Shantung revival involving Baptist missionaries in 20th century China -- all of which he said experienced "falling."

"Furthermore, we believe that the FMB's determination that falling is outside the boundaries of traditional Southern Baptist practice is based on culture, a style of ministry, and a worldview that is basically Western," he added. "That is, such a practice is not a traditional part of typical Southern Baptist ministry styles in the United States. However, this should not invalidate the experience."

"Since we are encouraged as missionaries not to impose our Western worldview in cross-cultural communication, we would like to encourage the FMB to allow missionaries more freedom to practice the gospel (including its expression in signs and wonders) beyond the boundaries of what is traditionally acceptable in the USA."

Rankin noted: "We would not infringe on the autonomy of a local church, but we would expect our missionaries to teach and practice doctrines and manifestations ... in a way that is compatible with Southern Baptists."

Although charismatic practices, such as speaking in tongues, prayer for healing and exorcism, are part of worship in a few Southern Baptist churches, most Southern Baptist churches shun such practices.

The "falling down" experience, long a part of traditional Pentecostal worship, has drawn more public attention recently because of the "Toronto blessing" or "laughing revival," a charismatic revival based in Canada characterized by falling down and uncontrollable laughter, as well as roaring like lions and other animals.

Confusion over the "Toronto blessing," which had surfaced in some Singapore churches, made the situation at Community of Praise worse, Rankin said. But Carroll said there is no similarity or connection between what is happening at Community of Praise and the Toronto revival.

Rankin, whose 1993 election as FMB president was threatened by his own private, infrequent practice of speaking in tongues, was himself almost fired while serving in Southeast Asia because of his openness to charismatic practices on the mission field.

While area director, Rankin drew criticism when he encouraged FMB missionaries to attend a seminar by John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard Christian movement and an advocate of charismatic practices. But Rankin said he suggested missionaries attend only to inform themselves about the movement, which was becoming popular in Singapore, and did not endorse it.

"I always felt my inerrant view of Scripture confirmed the validity of charismatic gifts," he told ABP. The FMB supports missionaries who see charismatic gifts as valid, he said, "but when that moves into doctrinal matters, we have to have wisdom." Teaching that charismatic experiences are "normative" is theologically out of bounds, he explained.

Carroll, 41, the son of Southern Baptist missionaries, said he opened himself to the Holy Spirit and experienced a "spiritual renewal" in 1989. When he started Community of Praise in Singapore, he said, "we wanted to just step out of the way and see what God could do."

From a beginning of 24 people, the church grew to 200 in weekly worship in first year -- large for a Baptist church in Singapore. Now averaging 400 worshipers a week, the church ministers to people from 20 different countries and has started 63 churches and missions in India and other nations of the region.

Carroll said he hopes to remain as pastor of the Singapore congregation. The church has agreed to take on the financial responsibility of paying his support.

He said he will miss his association with Southern Baptists. "We feel the loss of the spiritual covenant. There will be an emptiness. There will be a void there."

-30-

Baptists plan joint relief in war-torn Bosnia

HAMBURG, Germany (ABP) -- Seventeen European Baptist leaders met Dec. 9 to explore and develop cooperative relief efforts in the wake of the recent peace accord aimed at ending the four-year-old war in Bosnia.

The three Baptist unions in the former Yugoslavia -- the Croatian Baptist Union, the Baptist Union of Serbia and the Evangelical Christian Baptist Union of Yugoslavia -- were represented at the roundtable meeting in Hamburg, Germany. Other leaders at the meeting included Karl Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation; Paul Montacute, director of Baptist World Aid, the relief arm of the Baptist World Alliance; and three Southern Baptist missionaries.

According to European Baptist Press Service, the leaders agreed to channel relief to Baptists in Serbia and Croatia as they try to minister to the needs of 3 million people displaced by war and to grant special assistance to 300 Serbian refugees who recently fled to Serbia to help them become established in the predominantly Orthodox Serbia.

They also agreed:

-- That Baptist church properties in Croatian areas recently vacated by the Serbs should be handed over to the Croatian Baptist Union to be used for worship by people as they resettle those communities.

-- To acknowledge the need for Bibles in the Serbian language, aid and education for pastors and church buildings.

-- To offer help to the Baptist church in Sarajevo, assisting the Baptist Union of Croatia in supporting a pastor, developing mission work, distributing Bibles and Christian literature and providing operating expenses. The small congregation, led by a recent Muslim convert, is regarded as a strategic site for developing evangelistic work in Bosnia.

Montacute and Walter will visit Serbia in January to investigate further needs in the area, the group agreed.

EBPS reported that participants in the roundtable discussion described goals and dreams for the area in "honest and open conversations, yet always with Christian sensitivity."

Vinko Peterlin, director of humanitarian aid of the Baptist Union of Croatia termed the roundtable discussion "very constructive and cooperative, especially for our brothers in Serbia."

Dragisa Armus, president of the Evangelical Christian Baptist Union of Yugoslavia, said the discussion "gave me a special hope" and predicted the decisions "will be an encouragement to pastors in our Union."

Dane Vidovic of the Baptist Union of Serbia said he was "really thankful" for the discussions and that he wished such talks "could have taken place earlier."

The group agreed that U.S. fund-raising for the joint relief effort would be coordinated through the Baptist World Alliance.

"After the trauma of the four years of war, Baptists in Croatia and Yugoslavia now have the opportunity to have a part in putting their country back together again," Montacute said. "I know that Baptists around the world will want to help them accomplish this."

-30-

-- By ABP staff

EDITOR'S NOTE: Contributions to the joint relief effort may be sent to Baptist World Aid at the Baptist World Alliance, 6733 Curran Street, McLean, Va., 22101-6005, phone (703) 790-8980.

Louisiana pastor tapped to lead Arkansas Baptists

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (ABP) -- Louisiana pastor Emil Turner has been elected executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Turner, 45, pastor of First Baptist Church in Lake Charles, La., was elected Dec. 12 by unanimous vote of the state convention's executive board. He will begin his new job Jan. 15. He succeeds Don Moore, who retires in February as the top administrator at the 500,000-member state convention.

A native of Louisiana, Turner has been a pastor in Arkansas. He led Mount Olive Baptist Church in Crossett from 1987 to 1991. He also has been pastor of First Baptist Church in Harrisonburg, La.; a staff member of Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Ky.; and a director for Campus Crusade for Christ.

The chairman of the executive director search committee, Billy Kite, director of missions for Ashley County Association, described Turner as "a soul-winner" who has "personal concern for people who need the Lord."

"I believe he's going to do a great job for Arkansas," Kite said. "He's a visionary. He dreams big and then he implements his dreams by the grace of God. He's a gifted administrator, a people person and a great communicator."

A graduate of Louisiana State University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Turner currently is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

-30-

-- By Trennis Henderson

Bill Webb named editor of Missouri's Word & Way

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Veteran Baptist journalist Bill Webb has been elected editor of *Word & Way*, a weekly newspaper with 50,000 subscribers published by the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Webb, 45, of Springfield, Ill., was elected unanimously Dec. 12 by the Missouri Baptist executive board. Webb will begin work March 1. He succeeds 20-year editor Bob Terry, who left the paper in August to become editor of the Alabama Baptist.

Since 1984, Webb has been editor of the *Illinois Baptist*, newspaper for the Illinois Baptist State Association with 11,000 subscribers. Before that he worked as a news writer for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

A native of Mount Vernon, Ill., Webb is a graduate of Southern Illinois University. He also attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"We wanted someone who would be fair and even handed in reporting news of importance to Missouri Baptists," said Lyndell Worthen, chairman of the *Word & Way* committee which recommended Webb for the position.

He added that Webb met the committee's desire for an editor "who had an understanding of these difficult years we have been through and would report the unity and strengths of Missouri Baptists."

-30-

-- By Bob Allen and Tim Palmer

Senate votes to ban rare abortion procedure

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate voted Dec. 7 to ban a rarely used late-term abortion procedure after accepting an amendment to allow the procedure in certain instances.

The 54 to 44 vote followed the approval of an amendment offered by Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., and Sen. Robert Smith, R-N.H. The Senate rejected a broader amendment offered by Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. Both amendments would permit the so-called "partial-birth" abortion in certain cases.

Boxer's amendment, defeated 47 to 51, would have allowed the controversial procedure if "necessary to preserve the life of the woman and avert serious adverse health consequences."

The Dole-Smith amendment, approved 98 to 0, makes allowances to "save the life of a mother whose life is endangered by a physical disorder, illness or injury, provided that no other medical procedure would suffice for that purpose."

Boxer said the Dole-Smith amendment requires a woman to have been severely injured or have a pre-existing condition, such as heart trouble, before the procedure could be used.

Under the Senate bill, doctors convicted of illegally performing the procedure could serve up to two years in prison. The procedure involves delivering the entire fetus, except for the head, through the birth canal before ending its life.

The House is expected to request a conference with the Senate to consider the Dole-Smith provision, according to a congressional spokesman. A physician charged with violating the House version of the bill would have to prove there was no other way to save the life of the mother.

President Clinton is expected to veto the bill if there is not a clear exception for the life and health of the mother, according to news reports.

Opponents of the bill have said the procedure saves women's lives and the ban is a first step by abortion opponents to undermine the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling, which recognized a woman's right of privacy when making abortion decisions.

Opponents claim lawmakers should not begin "entering the operating room" to decide what procedures doctors can or cannot use.

Proponents countered that the procedure is often used as an elective way of ending a pregnancy and that many doctors consider the procedure unacceptable.

-30-

Civil Rights enactment cited as model for religion in politics

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The question of whether people of faith should engage in public policy debates has been decided, said Jim Wallis, founding editor of Sojourners magazine.

Wallis told religious leaders at a National Council of Churches of Christ meeting that the new battle is over what role religion will play.

Religious leaders gathered Dec. 6 at National Cathedral for a tribute to Jim Hamilton, deputy general secretary of the NCC. Hamilton is retiring from the NCC after 38 years of service.

The program featured panels and discussions about lessons religious leaders have learned in Washington and the role religion should play in politics.

Wallis criticized both political parties. He said that Republicans believe public money should not be spent on the poor, while Democrats think a government program is always the solution. He suggested religious bodies could form a new kind of partnership with private companies and government that would help citizens be more like the biblical figure Amos.

Leaders suggested that religious Americans working together across denominational lines helped influence enactment of the civil rights legislation in the 1960s. They expressed concern that too often, the far religious right is seen as the only "authentic" religious voice.

Robert Drinan, retired congressman from Massachusetts and a Catholic priest, said the religious right's school prayer amendments "keep coming back like sin and dandruff."

James Corman, retired congressman from California, said the churches came together to support civil rights, and they can do it again for the poor. Corman noted that today's budget troubles stem from government's failure in the 1980s to tax as much as it spent.

Corman also said claiming the welfare system has failed is wrong, because the system has yet to be tried. "When it costs a person \$12,000 to live at the poverty line and we only give a person \$4,000, of course it won't work."

-30-

Group criticizes NCC leaders for 'laying hands' on Clinton

NEW YORK (ABP) -- A conservative Christian group has criticized liberal church leaders for laying hands on President Clinton and praying for him at a recent White House meeting.

The Institute on Religion and Democracy, a 14-year-old agency which monitors social and political action of churches, accused leaders of the National Council of Churches of "employing rites of the Church for partisan political advocacy," reported Ecumenical News International.

More than a dozen leaders of the National Council of Churches, an interdenominational, cooperative body that includes most major Protestant and Orthodox denominations in the United States, met with Clinton in the Oval Office Nov. 18.

At the close of a 45-minute meeting, at which the NCC delegation delivered the text of a resolution urging Clinton and Congress not to cut social welfare budgets, the group "laid hands" on Clinton and prayed that God would "make the president strong for the task" as he negotiated with Congress on the national budget.

The IRD, a frequent critic of the NCC, asked in a letter and press release why there was no similar delegation to "lay hands" on prominent Republican politicians Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole.

The NCC reacted sharply to the criticism. "I want to register my surprise to learn that the IRD is critical of Christians praying," wrote NCC General Secretary Joan Brown Campbell in a letter of response.

Campbell denied the NCC is taking sides politically and added "the liturgical traditions of many of our churches regularly include prayers for the president and other leaders."

President Clinton has not commented on the dispute.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

Religious women achieve higher education, study says

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Religious commitment boosts educational achievement among women but not necessarily among Baptist women, according to a recent study by the City University of New York's Graduate Center.

"There is a relationship between religion and the education of white women that is maintained beyond other socio-demographic factors," the researchers report in the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion.

The random telephone survey of more than 19,000 white women asked them to identify themselves in one of 12 religious categories, including "no religion." The study found women in nine of the religious categories outranked women with no religion in level of education attained.

Researchers said they were surprised that "the secularized, liberal, no-religion category, which we expected to be the most positive form of feminism," lagged behind the others, even behind the "traditional conservative Protestant category, which we might have expected to be the most negative toward women's advancement."

Compared to non-religious women in the 18 to 24 age group, Jewish women were nearly three times more likely to go to college. Episcopalians were more than two-and-one-half times more likely to go to college, Methodists were 50 percent more likely to do so, Presbyterians 40 percent, Mormons 30 percent, Lutherans 20 percent and Catholics 10 percent.

Only Pentecostal and Baptist women attended college less often than non-religious women, the study found.

-30-

-- By Mark Wingfield

Contraception program failed to lower pregnancy, study says

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A \$2.5 million program in Philadelphia designed to lower teen pregnancy rates by increasing contraceptive awareness had little impact, according to a recent study published in Family Planning Perspectives.

Sociologists extensively surveyed teens both before and after the two-year program to measure its impact. By expanding contraceptive services in clinics, targeting neighborhoods with teens especially at risk for pregnancy, the program intended to reduce pregnancy rates.

Despite initial evidence that pointed toward success, a final analysis showed no improvement in the target areas in comparison to the rest of the city. In fact, pregnancy rates actually increased slightly during the two-year period among the target area and the city at large.

"Our results suggest that devoting increased resources to teenage clinics ... is ineffective in ... reducing pregnancy rates in the teenage population," the authors reported.

The authors suggest the best strategy for reducing the U.S. teen birth rate is a drive to make sexual abstinence the norm.

"One strategy, consistent with our data, is to focus on changing what is considered normal behavior for teenagers through intensive public health campaigns akin to those focusing on smoking," they noted. With such a strategy, over time behavioral norms could shift "toward abstinence and safer sex," they added.

-30-

-- By Mark Wingfield

Divorce rates increase when laws relaxed

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Divorce rates nearly doubled in some states when no-fault divorce laws were enacted, according to data from the National Center for Health Statistics.

In this study, researchers examined the divorce rate per 1,000 people both three years before and three years after a no-fault law was passed. In 44 of 50 states, the divorce rate increased substantially after the passage of the law.

No-fault divorce was designed to lessen the adversarial process by no longer requiring a spouse to be proved innocent or guilty of violating the marriage commitment through adultery, cruelty or desertion. It also permitted one spouse to divorce without the consent of the other, making divorce much more accessible and less restrictive.

All 50 states currently have no-fault divorce laws, enacted from 1953 to 1987.

-30-

-- By Mark Wingfield

END