

Associated Baptist Press

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

February 19, 1997

(97-15)

In this Issue:

- **CLC, seminaries gain money in budget for restructured SBC**
- **Executive Committee hears restructuring update**
- **Re-energize faith, cut debt, Elliff urges Southern Baptists**
- **Religious freedom should play role in U.S. foreign policy, Albright says**
- **Mixture of motives behind church arsons, task force says**
- **Former Oklahoma pastor sentenced on porn charge**

CLC, seminaries gain money in budget for restructured SBC

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The first budget for a restructured Southern Baptist Convention proposes increased spending for seminaries and the Christian Life Commission while leaving funding levels for foreign missions unchanged.

A new North American Mission Board will receive less than combined allocations of the three current agencies it replaces, but planners say cost savings from the merger will result in more dollars being freed up for missions.

During its Feb. 17-18 meeting in Nashville, Tenn., the SBC Executive Committee handled its customary task of proposing annual allocations from the convention's Cooperative Program unified budget. That task took on unusual significance this time, however, because a denominational restructuring plan to take effect in June will reduce from 19 to 12 the number of agencies vying for Cooperative Program funding. The 1997-98 budget will fund the first full year of the new structure.

Advocates of the denominational restructuring plan repeatedly have said it will allow the SBC to shift additional funding to "front-line" missions and ministries and away from administrative overhead.

Funding for foreign missions will remain at the same percentage level, with a renamed Foreign Mission Board receiving 50 percent of Cooperative Program receipts. The restructuring renames the agency the International Mission Board but has little effect on its operation.

A primary source of savings in the restructuring is the creation of a new North American Mission Board, to be formed by merging the existing Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission. Under the budget plan being recommended by the Executive Committee, NAMB will receive 22.79 percent of Cooperative Program receipts. That's 1.36 points less than the 24.15 percent the three agencies to be merged currently receive.

Officials administering the restructuring said major cost savings should be experienced by eliminating duplication of support services such as accounting, personnel and management functions in the merger.

The NAMB merger and elimination of four other small entities freed up about 2.5 percent of annual Cooperative Program receipts for reallocation. That amounts to about \$3.7 million in the 1997-98 budget of \$148 million, which is 3 percent larger than this year's spending plan.

Gaining most in the budget realignment is the Christian Life Commission, which will be renamed the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. The CLC will receive 50 percent more in the 1997-98 budget than in the current year's budget -- 1.49 percent of all Cooperative Program receipts rather than 0.99 percent.

That means a \$770,503 funding increase for the moral concerns agency -- from \$1.44 million this year to \$2.21 million next year.

The "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring plan, approved at SBC annual meetings in 1995 and 1996, promised a higher profile for Southern Baptists' moral-concerns and religious-liberty agency. That followed rapid growth of the Christian Life Commission in recent years, due in part to the SBC's defunding of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and subsequent assignment of religious-liberty issues to the CLC.

With the adoption of the 1997-98 budget, the CLC's allocation will have increased nearly threefold since 1987, from 0.6 percent of all Cooperative Program receipts to 1.49 percent.

CLC President Richard Land lobbied hard for additional funds, saying the agency urgently needs to expand its influence in Washington and beyond. Since the SBC pulled out of the Baptist Joint Committee, the CLC has operated two offices, one in Nashville and one in Washington.

Land, who earlier called a news conference to publicly ask for a 300-percent funding increase, said final decisions about how the new money will be allocated must be made by his board of trustees. However, he identified three priority projects already approved by trustees:

- Adding a staff person to serve as a child-advocacy expert from a "biblical and conservative perspective."
- Producing a weekly radio program for national distribution to give Southern Baptist perspectives on public-policy issues.
- Hiring an additional media representative in Washington.

As a group, the six Southern Baptist seminaries will receive a 1 percent larger allocation in the budget shuffle -- from 20.4 percent to 21.4 percent. Coupled with budget growth, that means more than a \$2 million raise next year, to \$31.7 million.

Due to a sliding seminary funding formula based on full-time enrollment, however, they will share the wealth unequally.

Because of declining enrollment, two schools -- Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. -- will see their portion of Cooperative Program funds shrink next year.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., meanwhile, which reports increased enrollment from 695 in 1993-94 to 993 in 1995-96, earns a greater share of the funding pie.

In addition, the council of seminary presidents also will receive another 0.24 percent of Cooperative Program receipts (\$359,244) to administer the convention's historical library and archives, a function previously handled by the Historical Commission, which is being closed.

The Executive Committee gains some of the redistributed funds. Funds now going to the Southern Baptist Foundation and Stewardship Commission will be reallocated to the Executive Committee, which takes over tasks formerly performed by those agencies.

Other new funds headed for the Executive Committee will cover costs of restructuring, which already have totaled about \$825,000.

According to financial records, the Executive Committee has ended the past two fiscal years with a deficit -- \$258,720 in 1996 and \$239,830 in 1995.

Leaders termed the proposed spending plan a "transition budget," emphasizing allocations could change again next year.

Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin said in an interview that he expects future budgets to include more funds for missions. The fact that the current budget plan distributes funding by percentages complicated the process this year, he said, by making it impossible to give more funds to one agency without taking away from another.

A special committee elected at the meeting will study the Executive Committee's budgeting process.

Anticipating cumbersome negotiations this year, leaders departed from protocol which calls for the budget to originate with a program and budget subcommittee of the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee officers convened a Jan. 21 meeting in Dallas with agency heads and representatives of a task force overseeing the denominational restructuring.

During the six-hour, closed-door meeting, the leaders hashed out a consensus budget that participants called "historic" and "miraculous."

"I sense a greater commitment to each other than we have ever had," Rankin said of the discussion among agency heads.

Rankin said leaders want to increase missions funding in coming years. Included in next year's NAMB budget, he said, are one-time costs related to the merger that could be reallocated to direct missions next year.

Members of the program and budget subcommittee came to their meeting unaware the earlier meeting in Dallas had taken place. While affirming the work, they discussed at length their lack of involvement in the process, saying they wanted to convey they endorsed the document willingly and did not simply "rubber stamp" the proposal.

-30-

-- Bob Allen contributed to this story.

Executive Committee hears restructuring update

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- In addition to drafting a budget for a restructured Southern Baptist Convention, Executive Committee members took action on other matters, including several bylaw changes that formalize the SBC downsizing.

At a Feb. 17-18 meeting of the Executive Committee in Nashville, Tenn., Robert Reccord, chairman of the SBC restructuring implementation team, reported that the SBC Education Commission closed Dec. 31, six months ahead of schedule. Cost savings from the early closing will not be placed in savings but forwarded to "front-line ministry, that is evangelism and missions," said Reccord, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va.

Work is progressing on schedule on phasing out three other agencies -- the Southern Baptist Foundation, Historical Commission and Stewardship Commission -- and replacing three others -- the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission -- with a new North American Mission board, Reccord said.

The old agencies are scheduled to cease at the close of the SBC annual meeting, June 17-19 in Dallas.

In other business, a seven-member committee was elected to study the Executive Committee's procedure for developing the SBC's annual budget. The committee, proposed by Ronnie Floyd, chairman of the group, will look at 1) the ways information is collected, reported and analyzed; 2) the current practice of percentage-allocation funding of denominational agencies; and 3) the formula used to divide funds among the convention's six seminaries based on a floating student count, Floyd said.

Another subcommittee will be named next fall to study the feasibility of cutting the three-day SBC annual meeting to two days. The committee will make a recommendation at the 1988 convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In other business:

-- Denominational giving through the Cooperative Program unified budget is up 6 percent through the first four months of the fiscal year, said Morris Chapman, Executive Committee president and chief executive officer. Other gifts counted as "designated," including the convention's two missions offerings, are also up nearly six percent, Chapman said.

While Southern Baptists face a "generational shift" characterized by "wide differences among us," Chapman said, giving records indicate that "Southern Baptists have a heart for missions and evangelism."

-- Christian Life Commission head Richard Land reported to the Executive Committee that it is "feasible and doable" to set up a proxy voting system to help SBC entities to exert moral influence on companies in which they own stock.

Various SBC agencies have funds invested in stocks, some of which may carry voting privileges. By pooling those votes through a system of appointing proxies, Southern Baptists could potentially influence corporate policies of companies in which they invest.

A proxy system was suggested in a motion at last year's SBC annual meeting that was referred to the Executive Committee. The committee asked Land to provide more specific information and to report again at the group's next meeting in June.

-- The Executive Committee authorized Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to begin a new publication, "The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology." The journal will replace "Review and Expositor," whose independent editorial board decided to leave the seminary for new sponsors more in line with its moderate heritage.

The new journal, scheduled to premiere in March, will encourage pastors, students and pastors "to stand for theological truth in a relativistic age" and "present an orthodox definition of God in a confused world," according to a written purpose statement.

-- The committee received a report that a contract had been signed with Barry McCarty as chief parliamentarian for this year's SBC annual meeting. The contract will pay fees totaling \$8,000 to McCarty, a Church of Christ minister who advised several conservative presidents during a decade-long controversy with moderates. A contract for similar services in 1992-93 cost \$16,700, according to background documents.

The immediate-past SBC president, Jim Henry, did not choose McCarty as chief parliamentarian during his two years as president, saying the job should go to a Southern Baptist rather than an outsider.

The current SBC president, Tom Elliff, picked McCarty because of his record of helping past presidents prepare for the annual meeting, a spokesman said.

-30-

-- By Bob Allen

Re-energize faith, cut debt, Elliff urges Southern Baptists

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- While confronted by an urgency to proclaim the gospel, Southern Baptists are hindered by inactive church members and crippling debt, Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff said Feb. 17.

"I am thoroughly convinced we live in one of the most critical times in the history of the world, if not the most critical time," Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., told members of the SBC Executive Committee meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

To respond to that urgency, Elliff said, Southern Baptists need to reclaim people whose names are on church rolls but who don't demonstrate any faith.

The SBC president urged every Southern Baptist to "certify his or her experience with Christ" by revisiting basic Christian beliefs.

On any given Sunday, he said, most of the 16 million Southern Baptists are not in church. "By what right do we assume these people know Christ as savior and never call them to account?" he asked.

Churches should lead members "to think through their conversion experience," he said.

"It would be tragic if the obituary of the Southern Baptist Convention were this: 'They were many, but they were not much,'" Elliff said.

"If all the people we say are born again were born again, we would be a force for God," Elliff said.

"We need to get this business of what true conversion is into the process of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Elliff also urged Southern Baptists to emerge from what he termed "a stranglehold of debt."

Twenty years ago, Elliff said, debt in Southern Baptist churches totaled \$986 million. Churches paid \$65 million toward debt in 1975, he said, about half as much as they gave that year to the Southern Baptist Convention and Baptist state conventions through the Cooperative Program unified budget.

By 1995, church debt grew to more than \$2.3 billion, he said. Churches spent \$525 million on loan payments, more than they gave to the Cooperative Program and the SBC's two major missions offerings combined.

Interest costs have eroded Southern Baptist missions giving, he said. "One dollar to missions, a dollar and 25 cents to the world."

"We ought to consider making debt not popular but unpopular," he said.

Elliff also urged Southern Baptists to "crucify our egos" and lend support to enterprises they cannot control.

"We are not reaching this nation," Elliff said. He cited one estimate that churches reached 4 percent of the most recent generation. "We have got to have an awakening in this nation and it will not happen as long as any of us believe we have to be the captains of it," he said.

"We can do some really wonderful and astounding things with machinery," Elliff said. "They can be done in a millisecond and without expense by Majesty."

-30-

Religious freedom should play role in U.S. foreign policy, Albright says

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON -- At the first meeting of the State Department's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said the issue of religious freedom belongs in any comprehensive discussions about U.S. foreign policy.

Albright said that "the right to profess and practice one's religion is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to ignore or dismiss violations of that right would degrade respect for human rights generally."

She also said that the freedom of religion is central to America's history. Albright noted that of the three achievements Thomas Jefferson asked be inscribed on his tombstone, one identified him as the originator of a law ensuring religious freedom in Virginia.

"Jefferson understood ... that the struggle for religious liberty could not end when one's own freedom was assured," Albright said. The "issue of religious freedom belongs squarely in any comprehensive discussions that we should be having and are having about American foreign policy," she said.

The advisory committee includes 20 religious leaders and will have two subgroups. One group will deal with religious persecution abroad and another will look into conflict resolution in areas where religious enmity is a threat to peace.

A statement adopted by the committee at the Feb. 13 meeting said, "While the committee recognizes that U.S. foreign policy reflects a process of balancing numerous and sometimes competing interests, it strongly encourages the U.S. government to ensure that support for religious freedom worldwide is a paramount factor in this policy-making process."

The committee will offer reports and recommendations to the administration for enhancing religious freedom, eliminating religious persecution and promoting religious reconciliation.

There has been much debate over the scope of the issues the committee will address.

Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of the Churches, said she earlier was concerned that the committee would focus only on Christian persecution but is now "very comfortable at the broad commission of the committee."

Former Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry, however, said he was more encouraged after the meeting that Christian persecution would be a major focus.

"From what my understanding is, and from what the Secretary said, the religious persecution of Christians will be a major focus but it will also encompass other groups which are being persecuted," Henry said.

"I think that the Christians are the most widely persecuted. It would just be natural, it seems to me, to look at that first and then, with that, hopefully raise the level of concern for others," he said.

Henry added that it was well documented that Christians "are getting the worst edge" of religious persecution. "I want Baptists to really pray for this because we have an opportunity ... to help our brothers and sisters in the faith across the world."

Will Dodson, director of governmental affairs for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, expressed concerns about portions of the meeting and the group's direction..

"I was concerned that their focus would not be specifically on religious persecution in general and persecution of Christians in particular," Dodson said. "There was some concern that they would broaden the definition to include other matters which I feel are outside the legitimate scope of this committee."

Dodson, who is not a member of the committee but observed the meeting, said some members sounded as if they wanted to broaden the scope of religious freedom to include, for example, "individuals who did things in the name of religion which were not really religious persecution but were under the guise of religion. That to me is a reference to terrorism, which the State Department is already dealing adequately with. That doesn't focus upon the victims of persecution who are being persecuted as a result of their religious faith."

Dodson also said he was concerned about the use of the term "proselytizing." He said the term, to many people, includes the concept of witnessing.

Diana Eck, professor at Harvard University, raised the issue of the "relation of Christian persecution to a new wave of aggressive proselytization in some parts of the world that has been seen as targeting either the Muslim world or other parts of the world for ... proselytization that is linked with economic benefits with coercion involved."

A spokesman for the National Association of Evangelicals said proselytizing very often means writing, teaching and soliciting volunteers, acts which are protected under the United Nations' human-rights declaration.

John Shattuck, chair of the advisory committee and assistant secretary of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor at the State Department, said there was consensus that persecution of Christians is a major issue. He said the State Department soon will issue a report, requested by Congress, on the persecution of Christians.

He repeated, however, that the committee was going to deal with all religious persecution.

Shattuck said that when a person of a particular faith defends someone from another faith, the "power of those statements is much greater than when someone from within the religion is calling attention to the persecution of that religion. And that's why I think this committee is such a significant body."

Mixture of motives behind church arsons, task force says

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Blatant racism, religious hatred, financial profit, revenge and vandalism were identified as motives for the 328 attacks on churches across the country since 1995, according to a recent report.

In June 1996, President Clinton declared the investigation and prevention of church arsons a national priority, establishing the National Church Arson Task Force. In an interim report to the president, the task force noted striking results in its first seven months.

The task force has opened investigations of 328 arsons, bombings or attempted bombings that have occurred at houses of worship since Jan. 1, 1995.

Of that number -- which does not include vandalism and desecration of churches -- at least 138 have been fires at African-American churches, with three-quarters of those fires occurring in the South.

Since January 1995, 143 suspects have been arrested in connection with 107 fires -- a 33 percent arrest rate, which is double the general arrest rate for arson. Three-quarters of the defendants were arrested during the seven months since the formation of the task force.

Of the 143 persons arrested, 116 are white, 24 are African-American and three are Hispanic. Sixty-two are juveniles. Of the 54 suspects arrested for arson at African-American churches, 36 are white, 17 are African-American and one is Hispanic.

Forty-eight defendants have been convicted, two acquitted, and the remaining cases are pending trial. In the two acquittals, one defendant was found legally insane and institutionalized, while a 13-year-old defendant who set a pile of leaves on fire behind a Delaware church also was acquitted.

The report included a list of convictions. Some examples include:

-- A juvenile who was a volunteer firefighter pled guilty to setting New Liberty Baptist Church in Tyler, Ala., on fire. Sentenced under the state Youthful Offender Act, he received probation at the request of his victims.

-- Four former members of the Ku Klux Klan pled guilty to federal charges related to the arson of two African-American churches in South Carolina. Their sentences are pending.

-- Three men pled guilty to conspiring to firebomb and erect or burn crosses at two African-American churches in Tennessee. One defendant was sentenced to 57 months in prison, and the other two each received a 46-month sentence.

In addition to intensifying investigations, the federal efforts have focused on rebuilding churches and arson prevention.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development is working with the National Council of Churches and the Congress of National Black Churches in the rebuilding efforts. HUD is administering \$10 million in federal loans to help with the construction, while the NCC is providing grants. To date, 10 churches have been rebuilt, and another 30 are under construction.

In arson-prevention initiatives, the Department of Justice gave \$3 million in grants to counties in 13 states to step up their enforcement and surveillance efforts. More than 200 federal investigators are working with 75 prosecutors and local authorities in one of the largest series of arson investigations in history.

The task force has established a toll-free tip line for citizens to report information about church arsons. The task force has received more than 1,200 calls.

Other arson prevention efforts include:

-- Forty-four VISTA and AmeriCorps volunteers have been assigned to nearly 100 communities. They are conducting community and church-threat assessments and organizing arson watch groups and town hall meetings.

-- The Federal Emergency Management Agency has developed pilot community action programs for arson prevention in Nashville; Charlotte, N.C.; and Macon, Ga.

Summarizing its preliminary conclusions, the task force said the pattern of fires in the South prompted closer coordination between federal and local law enforcement. The investigations unearthed racial hostility as one motive, with nine defendants already convicted of federal civil-rights charges in connection with six fires in Nevada, Tennessee and South Carolina.

"Burning a church, whether racially motivated or not, implicates federal anti-arson and civil-rights laws and warrants swift and certain investigation and prosecution," the report says. "The work of the [task force] continues to be vital to our efforts to prevent these heinous crimes, and to prosecute those responsible, whether they are motivated by racial hostility, religious bigotry, financial profit, revenge or simply a desire to burn down a symbol of authority in the community.

"The commitment of resources and attention to this work by federal, state and local authorities has been essential to the success of the Task Force, and the Task Force remains dedicated to solving these crimes and bringing the perpetrators to justice."

-30-

Former Oklahoma pastor sentenced on porn charge

By Dave Parker

OKLAHOMA CITY (ABP) -- A former Southern Baptist pastor has been sentenced to 15 months in federal prison for possession of child pornography.

Charles Sherrill Lloyd, 52, pleaded guilty Feb. 12 to knowingly keeping child pornography on his church computer, according to a front-page story in the Daily Oklahoman.

Lloyd had been pastor of First Baptist Church of Bethany for four years before resigning in October 1995 when church leaders discovered the photographs.

Lloyd, who now lives in Brandon, Miss., had previous prosecutions dating back to 1972 for indecent exposure.

He was prosecuted in Georgia for exposing himself to minors in the 1980s. Under Georgia law, that is considered child molestation.

Lloyd's attorney asked U.S. District Judge Wayne Alley to put him on probation, but Alley said Lloyd's criminal history shows an "episodic" problem.

The single count to which Lloyd pleaded guilty carries a maximum sentence of five years. Under federal sentencing guidelines, Alley could have chosen between 15 and 21 months.

After the prison term, Lloyd must serve three years of supervised release, including community service the first year.

He was released on bond and ordered to report for his prison sentence March 26.

Charles Womack, current pastor of the Bethany church, said the congregation grieves for the Lloyd family but also supports the actions taken to prosecute Lloyd.

"The church is strongly opposed to pornography," he said. "We do not see this as a victimless crime. It ruins the lives of children, voluntary and involuntary participants in making pornography, and leads to rape, violent crimes and abortions.

"We ask for prayers for the wife and children of Lloyd, who are suffering tremendously because of his failure," Womack said.

He said that since the incident, the church has initiated tough new employment guidelines that include background checks for all employees.

END