

# Associated Baptist Press

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## In this issue:

- **Clinton unveils guidelines for religious expression in workplace**
- **University of Mobile trustees adopt budget, beating deadline**
- **Accrediting agency drops notations against seminary**
- **Wife of Baptist leader charged with arson**
- **Baptist Women in Ministry supports gender-accurate NIV**
- **Baptist Peace Fellowship elects new officers**
- **'Inspiration socks' inventor hopes to save more than soles**

## **Clinton unveils guidelines for religious expression in workplace**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- President Bill Clinton issued guidelines Aug. 14 to "clarify and reinforce the right of religious expression in the federal workplace."

Clinton ordered distribution of the guidelines to federal agencies around the country.

The guidelines state that religious expression in government agencies should be protected except in cases where it would create the appearance of an official endorsement of religion or impede an agency's service.

The guidelines bar federal employers from discriminating on the basis of religion and instruct them to reasonably accommodate employees' religious practices.

Clinton, joined by Vice President Al Gore and numerous religious leaders, called the delicate balance protecting the free exercise of religion while prohibiting its establishment "the enduring genius of the First Amendment."

Clinton drew on his own religious experience, saying: "I have been immeasurably enriched by the power of the Torah, the beauty of the Koran, the piercing insights of religions of East and South Asia and of our own Native Americans, the joyful energy that I have felt in black and Pentecostal churches and, yes, even the probing questions of the skeptics. That is America at its best."

Gore said the United States is the most religiously observant nation in the world, "because people come to it of their own accord, their own free will."

The guidelines state that federal workers may engage in personal religious expression "to the greatest extent possible, consistent with workplace efficiency and the requirements of the law."

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The guidelines offer federal agency leaders a series of examples of how to handle hypothetical cases. Examples from a draft copy include:

-- An employee may keep a Bible or Koran on her private desk and read it during breaks.

-- Workers are entitled to discuss their religious views in informal settings, such as cafeterias or hallways, subject to the same rules of order as apply to other employee expression.

-- Employees may invite other workers to attend worship services, even if the invitee is a devout adherent of another faith. But if the recipient asks that the invitation not be repeated, that request should be respected.

-- A supervisor may not impose extra work on an atheist because that employee does not share the supervisor's religious beliefs.

-- A boss may invite co-workers to a child's confirmation in a church, a bar mitzvah in a synagogue or to his own wedding at a temple. But a supervisor should not say: "I didn't see you in church this week. I expect to see you there this Sunday."

-- An agency must adjust work schedules to accommodate an employee's observance of a Sabbath or religious holiday, if an adequate substitute is available.

-- An employee must be permitted to wear religious attire that is part of the worker's religious practice or expression -- such as a crucifix or yarmulke -- if it does not unduly interfere with the functioning of the workplace.

Religious leaders hailed the guidelines and applauded the Clinton administration's policies on religious freedom.

"The presidency is a 'bully pulpit,' and the president has used that pulpit today to reassert, underscore and act to protect the First Amendment rights of federal employees directly and all Americans indirectly," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, called the Clinton administration "the most supportive administration to religious freedom and religious liberty of American citizens of any administration in the history of this nation."

Brent Walker, Baptist Joint Committee general counsel, said the directive does not create new laws, but "in gray areas of the law, it gives religion the benefit of the doubt."

The workplace guidelines are applicable only to federal employees, but Dwight Jessup, vice president of academic affairs at Taylor University in Upland, Ind., said state governments and the private sector should use the guidelines as a model.

In a memorandum to the heads of federal agencies, Clinton said "strict adherence to these guidelines will ensure that agencies will respect the rights of those who engage in religious practices or espouse religious beliefs, as well as those who reject religion altogether."

Many of the religious groups represented at the White House ceremony are members of the Coalition for the Free Exercise of Religion, which pushed for passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court ruled that RFRA was unconstitutional because Congress lacked the authority to impose the 1993 law on the states.

In his first public remarks on the decision, Clinton said that only "parts" of RFRA were struck down by the court. He said the measure, which requires government to show a "compelling interest" before taking actions that infringe on religious practice, is still applicable to the federal government.

## **University of Mobile trustees adopt budget, beating deadline**

By Bob Allen

MOBILE, Ala. (ABP) -- University of Mobile trustees adopted a balanced budget July 14, a decisive first step toward resolving financial issues related to the Baptist school's troubled branch campus in San Marcos, Nicaragua.

At a called meeting held in executive session, trustees also unveiled plans to reduce an internal debt by returning funds used for start-up of the Latin American branch to the main campus in Alabama.

The actions beat by one day a deadline imposed in June by Alabama Baptist State Convention officials for the university trustees to show how they would get the Nicaraguan campus out of debt to the main campus or risk losing state convention funds.

The university's Nicaragua branch, established in 1993, owes the Mobile campus about \$3.3 million and is losing about \$200,000 a year, according to reports. A May report said the university was facing an overall budget shortfall of \$2.2 million this year and long-term debt of up to \$9 million.

Facing mounting financial pressures, the university's 13-year president, Michael Magnoli, 50, resigned May 13 with severance benefits totaling \$400,000.

The university's trustees approved an agreement with the state convention in 1994 to limit funding for the Latin American branch to gifts specifically given to or earmarked for that school and to return about \$2.3 million to the Mobile campus that had been used to start up the Nicaraguan school.

On May 22, however, the university's board chairman told the Alabama Baptist state board of missions that the school had "sinned as an institution" by breaking those agreements. Instead of declining, the internal debt continued to increase, explained Walter Hovell, a former trustee named interim president May 30.

Based on those revelations, the state board asked university trustees to certify by July 15 they were now in compliance with the 1994 agreement or risk losing about \$2.1 million a year from the state convention, a tenth of the school's budget.

According to the Alabama Baptist newspaper, the new 1997-98 University of Mobile budget projects a \$200,000 surplus for the Nicaraguan campus in the fiscal year ending June 30, 1998. That surplus would allow funds used for start-up to be returned to the Mobile campus, according to a trustee resolution.

The total university budget of just over \$25 million projects \$1.9 million more income than in the 1996-97 school year and cuts expenditures by \$2.2 million.

Most of the anticipated income growth is in tuition and fees, based on projected increases in the numbers of students and total credit hours taken at the Mobile campus.

Currently the university enrolls about 2,700 students on its two campuses, 450 of them at the Latin American branch.

The trustees also employed the Price Waterhouse accounting firm of Managua, Nicaragua, to audit finances of the Latin American campus.

Vowing to set the university's financial house in order, interim president Hovell fired Magnoli's top assistant administrator, Rick Cagle, in May. Another top administrator, University of Mobile Foundation director William Colley, was fired weeks later. Other layoffs are said to be likely.

At a meeting June 8, university trustees appointed a search committee for a permanent president and gave the interim president authority to "do everything that he deems necessary and proper" to develop a balanced budget.

In response to the financial crisis, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools imposed a six-month probation on the university.

Alabama Baptist ministers were in July mailed a 67-page document detailing financial and other issues related to the University of Mobile, much of it a compilation of newspaper reports from the Mobile Register.

"While we do not wish to add to the university's problems, we do feel that the ministers of our churches should, and must, be informed," explained a July 14 cover letter signed by the state convention's president, executive director and state-mission-board chairman.

The Mobile Register sent two reporters to San Marcos, Nicaragua, to investigate concerns about the university's Latin American branch.

The paper raised questions about financial dealings related to the school and about side business ventures owned by Magnoli and Roger Gonzales, the Nicaraguan native who serves as a University of Mobile vice president responsible for running the San Marcos campus.

Among findings, the paper reported:

-- An off-campus house used as a dormitory for faculty members was deeded to Magnoli and Gonzales. Ownership and value of the house are now disputed.

-- The university paid higher-than-standard prices for some furnishings at the Nicaragua campus produced by a company controlled by Gonzales' family.

-- Sources claimed Gonzales used university scholarships to gain influence with government officials, a charge Gonzales denied.

-- The city's former mayor alleged the college was grabbing land and that Gonzales was using the college as a front for personal business deals.

-- The university leased a hotel in nearby Jinotepe seized by the Sandanistas in 1979, despite a Nicaraguan family's efforts to reclaim it.

In later reports, the newspaper said the San Marcos campus apparently does not belong to the university but to a Nicaraguan foundation headed by Gonzales, raising questions about how much authority the university has over the branch's operation.

At the July 14 meeting, university trustees called for the resignation of the foundation's self-perpetuating, seven-member board, to be replaced by a board chosen with trustee involvement.

A June 29 report said Magnoli also was involved in business deals related to the Nicaraguan campus. Seven separate for-profit businesses listed the tax-exempt University of Mobile's presidential mansion as an address, the Register reported.

One, Global Concepts Inc., tried to negotiate a deal to import 50 truckloads of mahogany to Alabama using Magnoli's Mobile-based company as an intermediary. The retail value of the lumber shipment in the United States was estimated at \$1.75 million.

The deal reportedly fell through when Magnoli, unable to stop the budget deficit at the Latin American branch, resigned as University of Mobile president May 13.

Afterward, a Nicaraguan lumber dealer was jailed in a contract dispute under a Nicaraguan law that allows persons filing a lawsuit to have the other party jailed if the defendant failed to carry out terms of a contract and might flee.

Trustees of the Alabama school have been harshly criticized for their role in the controversy.

A July 14 editorial in the Mobile Register called for board members to resign, saying trustees who failed to supervise Magnoli should not be the ones to hire his replacement.

Alabama Baptist editor Bob Terry editorialized in May that revelations about the university "point to a breakdown in the Baptist system of trusteeship."

"Trusteeship is a responsibility, not just an honor," Terry wrote. "Trustees are required to know about their entities in order to fulfill the mission placed on them by their fellow Alabama Baptists. Anything less is a breach of trust."

## **Accrediting agency drops notations against seminary**

By Bob Allen

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- A Southern Baptist seminary cited three years ago for problems between trustees and administration has had two black marks removed from its accreditation status.

The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada has removed two notations it placed against Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1994.

The notations were placed in 1994 by a team which visited the campus in Kansas City, Mo., to investigate concerns over trustees' refusal to grant tenure to a professor.

The ATS notations accused the school's board of trustees of exercising "inappropriate control over the administration and faculty" and noted a general tone at the seminary which "impairs the capacity to provide significant theological education and ministerial training."

Seminary trustees drew ATS scrutiny in 1993 by denying tenure to theology professor Wilburn Stancil over his view of the Bible, despite a recommendation by then-president Milton Ferguson.

Stancil refused to say the Bible is "inerrant," leading the board to view him as too liberal to teach at the seminary. Ferguson warned that the confrontation over faculty tenure could lead to "the devastation of this institution."

Another accrediting team at the seminary on a scheduled five-year focused evaluation visit this February, however, found relations among faculty, trustees and administration much improved since the election of a new seminary president in 1995.

Trustees chose Mark Coppenger, a conservative, to succeed Ferguson, a moderate, who had led the seminary 23 years.

The accrediting team said a policy statement on "Academic Freedom and Tenure" adopted by trustees in 1996 with faculty approval adequately addressed accrediting concerns about inappropriate control by trustees. The board also planned to revise its trustee handbook to clarify trustee and administration roles, the team reported.

In addition, trustees interviewed said they now feel they have more information about what is going on in the life of the seminary and reported "confidence in the relationship between the seminary and the president."

In fact, the team reported it was a "bit concerned" that the relationship between trustees and president had become too open. "In the interest of being as open as possible, the president might be encouraging trustees to get too involved in listening to students ... and then passing on that information to the president instead of encouraging the students to speak directly with the person who may be more directly responsible regarding the student's concern."

Following up on the notation regarding the seminary's "general tone," the accrediting team discussed the overall climate on campus with the president's cabinet, the faculty and a group of 22 students.

"A consensus clearly emerged," the team reported. "The atmosphere is very positive. There has been upheaval and there continue to be adjustments but the transition has been handled reasonably smoothly. Six new faculty members have been welcomed."

Faculty are "admittedly" less involved in some decision-making processes because Coppenger is less prone to use committees than Ferguson, the team reported. "Faculty influence, therefore, is more informal than formal."

Students said issues related to the transition in leadership are not brought into the classroom. Many students said they knew of controversy at the school before coming and decided to attend because they agreed with the conservative direction of the Southern Baptist Convention and the new seminary president. Some remarked that controversy at another Southern Baptist seminary was far more disruptive.

The seminary asked the accrediting team to review the notations, along with two earlier notations citing seminary finances and evaluation procedures. While noting progress in finances and evaluation, the team decided

to leave those notations in place for now, pending additional reports due in December 1998.

One notation criticized the seminary for inadequate future financial planning. The other said processes for planning and evaluation were "insufficiently developed or implemented."

The recent visiting team described the overall fiscal situation as "very positive at the present time" but said the seminary needs more time to develop a "comprehensive financial plan."

The accrediting team also said Midwestern "has made excellent progress" in its evaluation process but needs additional work on evaluation of the president, vice presidents and trustees and the academic assessment of students.

A final notation regards the Master of Divinity Correlated Degree Program described in the seminary's catalogue. A 1992 notation found the program "inadequate with respect to duration." Since the school did not ask that it be removed, it was not reviewed by the accrediting team.

A copy of the visiting team's report was mailed anonymously to Associated Baptist Press. Seminary President Mark Coppenger confirmed the ATS action and said the seminary is expecting final word from another accrediting agency, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, in August.

Coppenger said seminary leaders were "very encouraged" by the visiting team's comments.

Accreditation is a seminary's seal of approval. A notation is an incremental step used by an accrediting agency to cite a violation of agency standards. More serious or uncorrected infractions can result in probation or in revoking accreditation.

The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, based in Pittsburgh, Pa., is the accrediting and program agency for graduate theological education in North America. Its 224 member schools enroll a total of more than 66,000 students in graduate professional and academic degrees for church-related professions.

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## **Wife of Baptist leader charged with arson**

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (ABP) -- Deborah Lyons, wife of embattled African-American Baptist leader Henry Lyons, was officially charged with arson Aug. 8.

She is accused of setting fire to a \$700,000 Florida home owned by her husband and another woman.

Lyons, pastor of Bethel Metropolitan Baptist Church in St. Petersburg, Fla., and president of the 8.5 million-member National Baptist Convention USA Inc., had said he didn't want his wife prosecuted.

An official, however, said Lyons was not the only victim in the case. "We've got the lives of the firemen at stake and the lives and property of neighbors at stake," said assistant state attorney Frank Piazza.

Since Deborah Lyons' July 6 arrest, numerous questions have been raised about Henry Lyons' marital fidelity and finances.

The St. Petersburg Times reported Aug. 10 that Lyons was married twice before wedding Deborah Lyons in 1972. The St. Petersburg church was interested in hiring him as pastor but balked because he was single, the paper reported. He married the then Deborah Louise Manuel in Cincinnati, indicating on his marriage license he had never been married.

In fact, he had been married twice, in 1966 and 1969, divorcing his second wife in 1972, the paper said.

In other recent developments:

-- Lyons said Aug. 3 he would take a break from preaching and sever business ties with Bernice Edwards, a convicted embezzler he hired as the denomination's public relations director.

Lyons announced in Bethel Metropolitan Church's Sunday bulletin he planned to "take a moment of rest and reflection during the month of August."

Lyons said in remarks prior to his Sunday sermon that he was severing business ties with Edwards, though

he and his wife maintained a strong personal bond with her. If anything should happen to Edwards, he said, the Lyonses had agreed to take in and raise her three children.

"There's nothing going on; nothing illicit," he said. "Just family friends."

Lyons hired Edwards as public relations director for the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. in 1994, the year she was convicted of embezzling funds from a school she ran in Milwaukee.

Lyons purchased a \$700,000 house in an exclusive St. Petersburg neighborhood with Edwards, listing himself as unmarried on the property deed.

Lyons' wife originally told police she broke into the house and set several small fires after discovering evidence that her husband was having an affair with Edwards. Later, she said she had been misunderstood and did not suspect Lyons of adultery.

-- According to a July 11 newspaper report, Lyons was investigated for federal bank fraud in 1991. Although he was never charged, he agreed to pay \$85,000 in restitution in an agreement with federal prosecutors, the paper said.

-- An Aug. 8 report alleged that \$10,000 in Baptist convention funds was used last year to buy a 5.56-carat diamond ring for Bernice Edwards. The check to a St. Petersburg jewelry store was drawn on the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., Baptist Builder Fund, a fund maintained by Lyons in St. Petersburg.

-- An attorney for Lyons said the national Baptist group gives the president "virtually unbridled authority" to spend funds as he chooses.

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-- By ABP staff

## **Baptist Women in Ministry supports gender-accurate NIV**

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (ABP) -- At the request of directors, Baptist Women in Ministry president Becca Gurney has written the International Bible Society expressing disappointment in a recent decision to drop plans for a gender-accurate translation of the New International Version Bible.

Gurney, who was elected president of Baptist Women in Ministry in June, encouraged translators to revisit plans to publish a Bible using more gender-inclusive language than the current NIV, according to a news release.

"Language is not a static entity. Rather it is dynamic, changing and growing as we all participate in communicating with each other and with God," wrote Gurney, associate pastor of University Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.

Officials of the Bible society and Zondervan Publishing House dropped plans for the new translation after critics charged the intent was to replace the current NIV with a "unisex" version that would alter the basic meaning of sacred texts.

Translators said those reports were untrue and that gender-accurate revisions were needed to make the translation more easily understood in the 1990s.

Baptist Women in Ministry "applauds any effort which enables language to be more accurate," Gurney wrote.

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-- By Bob Allen

## **Baptist Peace Fellowship elects new officers**

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. (ABP) -- Ohio pastor and campus minister Steve Hammond has been elected 1998 president of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

Hammond, co-pastor of First Baptist Church in Oberlin, Ohio, was among a slate of officers elected recently by the organization's board of directors, according to an article in the summer issue of Baptist Peacemaker. He also is executive director of Ohio Campus Ministries.

Hammond, a member of the BPFNA board since 1990, succeeds former president Glenda Fontenot, an ordained Southern Baptist minister from Houston.

Other officers are Lindsay Penn Matheson of Ontario, Canada, who was re-elected as vice president; Isabel Docampo of Washington, D.C., secretary; and Beverly Donald of Fredonia, Wisc., treasurer. The remaining officer, board "pastor," is Angela Ferguson. She is coordinator of spiritual services for the AIDS interfaith network in Fort Worth, Texas.

Founded in 1984, the Baptist Peace Fellowship is a network linking Baptists involved in justice and peace issues throughout North America. Its board of directors is composed of members affiliated with 12 Baptist conventions and five racial/ethnic groups in Canada, the United States, Puerto Rico and Mexico.

Ken Sehested is the organization's executive director. It is based in Lake Junaluska, N.C.

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-- By ABP staff

## **'Inspiration socks' inventor hopes to save more than soles**

By Sarah Jacoway Hill

FORT PAYNE, Ala. (ABP) -- Socks advertising one's allegiance to a particular sports team are common. But one Alabama Baptist is manufacturing socks advertising his allegiance to a specific team -- God's team.

Nineteen-year-old Ryan Johnson, the vice president of Ider Hosiery, is using basic tube socks as a testament to God. Rather than the Nike swoosh or the Asics stripes, Johnson has three crosses, the word "faith," the fish symbol with "Jesus" inside of it and other designs.

Johnson hopes that the socks bring about "a love revolution for Christ."

"If people will wear the socks, [other] people will see them and that will be the beginning of a conversation," he said.

For Johnson the marketing idea is not about making money or getting attention, it is about his commitment to Christ.

"My goal in life is to spread the word, and the socks are the best way that I can do it." Johnson and his wife are active in New Home Baptist Church in Pisgah.

Ider Hosiery, located on Sand Mountain, is in the midst of Fort Payne -- the official sock capital of the world. More than half of DeKalb County's 300 hosiery mills are located in Fort Payne, the county seat.

Johnson admits he has given away more socks than he's sold, but that's beginning to change. The socks, marketed by Cornerstone Distributing Inc., can currently be found in four southeastern states and in more than 30 Christian book stores in Alabama. They are also soon to be marketed in Canada, Australia and the United States through Worship Wear out of Ontario.

April Helms of Cornerstone says the socks sell themselves. "I was wearing a pair of the socks while I was in a bookstore talking to the owner about putting some in his store. He was initially reluctant until a customer came in, saw my socks and asked where I got them," she said. The owner placed an order immediately and has since ordered more, she noted.

Church athletic teams are ordering the socks as a part of their uniforms, and the socks were a big sales item at Father's Day, Helms said.

Johnson has talked to people in 42 states about the socks. He has been interviewed for the "700 Club" and is shooting a portfolio for commercials.

The witness is subtle but nevertheless effective. Johnson's goal is summed up on the package of socks. With a picture of kids playing basketball, the message simply states, "Walk a little closer to God."

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-- Sarah Jacoway Hill is a correspondent for The Alabama Baptist

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**END**