

NOV 13 1997

Associated Baptist Press

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

November 6, 1997

(97-96)

In this issue:

- **NAMB elects executive VP, limits ecumenical efforts**
- **Inauguration speaker challenges Reccord to rise above 'bureaucracy'**
- **Clinton, Chinese leader disagree over human rights**
- **Jiang invites U.S. delegation of religious leaders to China**

NAMB elects executive VP, limits ecumenical efforts

By Bob Allen

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (ABP) -- Trustees of the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board elected a Virginia lawyer to a key administrative post and adopted guidelines on cooperation with other faith groups at a meeting Nov. 5 in Alpharetta, Ga.

The night before, trustees gathered with other Southern Baptist leaders and guests to inaugurate Robert Reccord as the agency's first president. NAMB was established this summer in a merger of three agencies in a massive restructuring of the SBC.

Roughly two months after the new agency's leadership team took office, trustees elected Randy Singer, an attorney from Chesapeake, Va., as executive vice president. Singer will assist NAMB's president and trustees "in developing, coordinating, executing and evaluating a strategy to impact North America for Jesus Christ," according to a position description.

Singer, 41, is a partner and head of the trial section at Willcox and Savage, a Norfolk, Va., law firm, and an adjunct professor at Regent University Law School. He is a member of First Baptist Church in Norfolk, where Reccord was pastor until his election as NAMB's first president in June.

Singer told trustees the agency should focus on reaching people in America's schools and "the marketplace."

"We've got to capture the minds of professionals in our country," Singer said. "I wouldn't be willing to come out of the marketplace if I didn't believe that by coming out of the marketplace I could make a bigger impact than by staying in."

Singer said the workplace is growing increasingly hostile to the gospel, adding that Christians who insist on bearing witness to their faith with coworkers can expect to be sued for harassment. "NAMB could become a frequent flyer in the courts of this country," he predicted.

In other business, trustees adopted guidelines for interdenominational cooperation. The guidelines limit NAMB's cooperation in "evangelism and missions" to groups that describe themselves as "evangelical" and hold views that people must be born again to be saved, that the Bible is the sole authority for faith and that salvation comes through faith alone.

"It is acknowledged by the North American Mission Board that genuine biblical unity is built solely upon the affirmation and advocacy of biblical truth," the guidelines say.

In cooperation with entities which use "a non-baptistic form of church government" or practice "an indiscriminate use of 'spiritual gifts,'" the guidelines say NAMB will be "sensitive and alert to espouse SBC positions in all its relationships and operations."

The guidelines ban cooperation "for the mere sake of popular ecumenism" but says the agency will not attempt to be "spiritual isolationists."

Before the merger creating NAMB, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board was criticized for ecumenical involvement when its president signed a document pledging cooperation with Catholics and when agency staff took part in planning this summer's Reconciliation '97 meeting in England.

Reccord, who drafted the guidelines with interfaith-witness expert Phil Roberts, said they are intended to safeguard doctrinal integrity but not handcuff the agency from working with like-minded groups.

"One thing we cannot do is [assume] that everything in the Kingdom of God rides in isolation on the shoulders of Southern Baptists," he said.

The guidelines are for use by administrators but are not a formal policy. Trustees rejected an effort to amend the guidelines to elevate their status to "policy."

Several hundred Southern Baptist leaders, NAMB trustees and staff, family and other guests attended Reccord's Nov. 4 inauguration at Roswell Street Baptist Church in nearby Marietta, Ga. Prayer, music and testimonials punctuated the two-and-one-half-hour service.

In a keynote message, former SBC president Ed Young urged Reccord to "get above the bureaucracy" of denominational life and become a "Johnny one-note" for evangelism and church planting.

"I want Bob Reccord to be the most boring man I've ever spoken with, because all he wants to talk about is winning people to Jesus and planting churches," said Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston.

In other business:

-- Trustees approved a \$111.6 million budget for 1998. The budget projects more than \$33 million from the SBC's Cooperative Program unified budget and includes a \$42 million goal for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions.

-- Reccord said he is not yet ready to recommend a vice president of evangelization and encouraged trustees to be patient in filling remaining staff vacancies. "What we do not need in any position we have is somebody who is in a hurry, nor somebody who is looking for it, nor somebody who wants it," Reccord said. "What we need is God's man for it."

-- NAMB will receive \$1.1 million for program advancement and \$960,000 for capital needs from gifts over budgeted amounts through the Cooperative Program unified budget, Reccord reported.

-- Reccord told directors that NAMB will hold a banquet for ambassadors of the United Nations Dec. 11. Congressional leader Newt Gingrich and Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee will be on the program, and each ambassador will be offered a personalized Bible in their native language, he said. "We are charged with North America, but God has brought the world to North America," Reccord said.

-- Trustees received an informational document describing appropriate roles for trustees and staff. Among suggestions were that trustees seek to resolve "tough or inflammatory" issues privately with Reccord or other leaders before discussing them openly in a meeting.

"An excellent maxim for both the leadership team and board to always practice without exception is: I will never talk about you until I talk to you, and then never against you but only for you," the document says.

-- Four retiring staff members were recognized: Huey Perry, a 20-year employee who has directed the board's chaplaincy division since 1986; Wilson Matthews, who has worked 18 years in the HMB's and NAMB's data-

processing office; Betty Simmons, a nine-year employee who worked as a secretary in the HMB's church and community ministries before being transferred to church planting in the restructuring; and Joe Gatlin, facilities manager who has worked at the HMB and NAMB a total of 24 years.

-- The SBC Chaplains Commission, a division of NAMB, endorsed 19 first-time chaplains for military, hospital and professional service and updated endorsement for 49 others.

-30-

Inauguration speaker challenges Reccord to rise above 'bureaucracy'

By Bob Allen

MARIETTA, Ga. (ABP) -- The man leading the new Southern Baptist Convention agency charged with evangelizing North America must rise above "bureaucracy" to strike out in new and innovative ministries, said a speaker at a Nov. 4 inauguration service.

The North American Mission Board was established this summer in a merger of three agencies as part of a larger denominational restructuring. Virginia pastor Robert Reccord was elected its first president in June.

Several hundred Southern Baptist leaders, NAMB trustees and staff, family and other guests attended a two-and-one-half hour inauguration for Reccord at Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga.

In a keynote address, former SBC president Ed Young said to be effective, Reccord must "color outside the lines" and lead out in ways that may raise eyebrows among "all of us in the denominational-status-quo mode."

"You're going to have to do things that have never been tried," said Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston. "You're going to do things in a totally different, radical way."

To do that, Young continued: "You're going to have to get above bureaucracy. SBC and the rest-of-the-alphabet bureaucracy. You're greatest gift, if you're going to be used by God, is to politely say no."

Young said speaking commitments and "shuffling paper" are not the best use of Reccord's time. He said he desired the NAMB executive to become a "Johnny one-note"

"I want Bob Reccord to be the most boring man I've ever spoken with, because all he wants to talk about is winning people to Jesus and planting churches," Young said.

Young related a conversation with a Baptist executive who said he shut down offices one day so the entire staff could go out and share the gospel. The leader described it as an unusual blessing.

"My soul," Young lamented. "Full-time Christian servants of the Lord Jesus Christ and soul winning is a wonderful, new, magical revelation to them?"

"The way we've been doing it is not working," Young said. "The message is unchanged from the inerrant word of God, but the methodology has got to change. We've got to give this brother freedom to run with the Holy Spirit."

Reccord, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va., said in early travels across the United States and Canada he imagined hearing haunting pleas of "come help us."

"This is not a day when anybody should care who gets the credit," Reccord said. "This is not the day for saying, 'This is my responsibility.' ... This is the Kingdom of God's responsibility. Regardless of who gets the credit, are we willing to do whatever it takes to shake North America for Jesus Christ?"

In a videotaped interview, Reccord said NAMB must focus on four key areas: major cities, work with ethnic groups, college students and youth. He noted that statistics show that if children do not profess faith in Christ before they are 18, the probability of them ever doing so drops off dramatically.

"These are crucial, linchpin years," Reccord said. "We need to be focused on getting into a war mentality."

Speakers at the service ranked Reccord's inauguration with other historic moments including the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845 and the establishment of the Cooperative Program unified funding plan in 1925.

Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee, described Reccord as "a visionary leader," "anointed preacher of God's word" and a "soul winner with a compassion for souls."

Bill Hogue, chairman of the committee which incorporated NAMB and nominated Reccord, called his election "a date with divine destiny."

"God in his grace has given us leadership that is beyond our imagination," said Hogue, a retired Baptist state convention executive from California.

Carlisle Driggers, executive director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, stressed the relationship between NAMB and the 39 state and regional groups affiliated with the SBC.

"The partnership between NAMB and state conventions is absolutely critical for the Baptist mission advance in North America," Driggers said. "We're not interested in the North American Mission Board as an end in itself or state conventions as ends in themselves. We are keenly interested in how we can join our efforts ... which really means focusing on our churches."

Other dignitaries praised Reccord via videotaped messages, including Leighton Ford of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, televangelist Pat Roberston, longtime seminary professor Roy Fish, Texas pastor Jack Graham and former SBC president Adrian Rogers.

David Clark, executive director of NAMB's media technology center, represented the agency's employees working out of the former headquarters of the Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth, Texas.

NAMB's broadcasting efforts will help "bring seekers to the local church" and help fulfill the agency's goal that "every person should have the opportunity to hear the gospel and respond in faith to Christ," Clark said.

-30-

Clinton, Chinese leader disagree over human rights

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Chinese President Jiang Zemin, leader of the world's most populous country, encountered protesters and critical remarks over China's practices of restricting religion, the media and human rights during a recent visit to the United States.

Jiang toured several American cities and historical sites, including Independence Hall, during his visit for a U.S.-China summit meeting. It was the first U.S. visit by a Chinese head of state in 12 years.

While Jiang emphasized issues of economic cooperation, the prevention of weapon proliferation and environmental protection, protesters and U.S. leaders refused to ignore a major stumbling block in U.S. relations with China -- human rights.

Among several summit initiatives, Jiang invited a delegation of American religious leaders to visit China and see the religious situation there first hand.

The religious leaders invited to China include Don Argue, president of the National Association of Evangelicals; Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Newark, N.J.; and Rabbi Arthur Schneier, founder and president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation. [See related story.]

The Chinese leader also met with Clinton, top congressional leaders, various state governors and others during his eight-day visit.

After Jiang met Oct. 30 with congressional leaders, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., said: "I reminded our Chinese guests that you cannot have economic freedom without political freedom, and you cannot have political

freedom without religious freedom. You cannot have a system that is half totalitarian and half free. It will not survive."

During formal summit meetings at the White House, an unusual coalition of conservatives and liberals held a rally across from the executive residence opposing Jiang's red-carpet reception.

Sen. Russell Feingold, D-Wis., said it is not wrong to talk with Chinese leaders, "but we should only extend a full welcome after they have rejected oppression and intolerance and tools of statecraft and after they have accepted the basic rights of every man and woman to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

"We should not exchange champagne toasts with a government that brutalizes its people and mocks the principles on which ours was founded," he added.

Other rally participants included Family Research Council President Gary Bauer and actor Richard Gere, a follower of Tibetan Buddhism.

During their meetings, Jiang and President Clinton agreed to:

- Hold regular summit meetings. Clinton will visit China next year.
- Establish a presidential hotline to make it easier for the two leaders to communicate at a moment's notice.
- Urge leaders in North Korea to engage in peace talks with South Korea.
- Strengthen contacts between militaries, including a maritime agreement intended to decrease the chances of "miscalculation."
- Allow U.S. companies to apply for licenses to sell equipment to Chinese nuclear power plants, subject to U.S. monitoring. In exchange, China agreed to use more strict national regulations to control exports of nuclear material, provided assurances addressing U.S. concerns about nuclear cooperation with Iran and other nuclear restrictions.

Despite such agreements, the leaders did not shy away from their differences on human rights at an Oct. 29 press conference.

Clinton said the leaders have "fundamental differences, especially concerning human rights and religious freedom." He said the best way to handle those differences will continue to be through direct dialogue "until this issue is no longer before us, when there is full room for debate, dissent and freedom to worship as part of the fabric of a truly free Chinese society."

One major point of contention between the two world powers remains the 1989 events at Tiananmen Square, when the Chinese government violently suppressed demonstrators demanding political reform and more freedom. Reports document that hundreds, some claim thousands, of demonstrators were killed in the crackdown.

During the Clinton-Jiang press conference, Jiang answered questions about the historic event. "The political disturbance that occurred at the turn of the spring and summer in 1989 seriously disrupted social stability and jeopardized state security. Therefore, the Chinese government had to take necessary measures, according to the law, to quickly resolve the matter to ensure that our country enjoys stability and that our reform and opening up proceeds smoothly," he said.

"The Communist Party of China and the Chinese government have long drawn the correct conclusion on this political disturbance, and facts have also proved that if a country with an over-1.2-billion population does not enjoy social and political stability, it cannot possibly have the situation of reform and opening up that we are having today," Jiang added.

Clinton said it was obvious the two nations have a different view of the events at Tiananmen Square. Continuing "reluctance to tolerate political dissent has kept China from politically developing the level of support in the rest of the world that otherwise would have been developed," Clinton said.

Later, Clinton added: "The United States recognizes that on so many issues China is on the right side of history, and we welcome it. But on this issue we believe the policy of the government is on the wrong side of history."

When Jiang was asked if he intended to release some of the political and religious prisoners being held in China, he said, "I am the president of the People's Republic of China and not the chief judge of the Supreme Court of China."

"This involves China's criminal law and will be resolved gradually according to the legal procedure by the court of China," he said.

-30-

Jiang invites U.S. delegation of religious leaders to China

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Three prominent American religious leaders are organizing a three-week trip to China that will begin Dec. 30, after Chinese officials agreed to allow the U.S. delegation of leaders to set their own itinerary.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin invited the religious leaders after National Association of Evangelicals President Don Argue rejected a White House invitation to a state dinner held for Jiang.

Also invited on the trip were Theodore McCarrick, Catholic Archbishop of Newark, N.J.; and Rabbi Arthur Schneier, founder and president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

The NAE has taken a lead role on the issue of religious persecution, documenting especially the plights of persecuted Christians around the world. The NAE and other religious groups say China is a major violator of religious rights.

Argue and McCarrick are both members of a committee established to advise the State Department on religious-freedom issues. The Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad was established by President Clinton in 1996.

Argue said the group will travel to China from Dec. 30 until Jan. 20. He also said the three will set their own itinerary. "I would not be interested in going if it was just going to be window dressing by the Chinese government," Argue said he told negotiators arranging the trip.

Argue said he was told that the U.S. delegation will be allowed to set its own itinerary. If they get to China and find otherwise, he said, "we will get on a plane, go home and call a press conference."

He said the group will represent the U.S. government but will not accept funds for the trip from either China or the United States. The group will use private funds. Argue would not release the names of any possible donors.

Argue said the group will have four major goals:

- To meet and speak with church leaders and top Chinese leadership.
- To create a greater freedom and openness from those meetings.
- To encourage fellow believers in China. "We know how to meet with leaders of the underground church there so as not to hurt their standing [with Chinese officials]," Argue said.
- To report back to the administration and the American public about the religious situation in China.

"We are trusting that this will result in the Chinese government coming to an understanding of how critical freedom of religion is to American people," Argue said.

"China wants to be a player on the world's stage and they don't understand what role religion plays in that," he said.

Alexandra Arriaga, special coordinator for external affairs at the Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, said the State Department will act as "facilitators" of the trip. She said the three religious leaders hope to meet with registered and unregistered churches in China.

Argue said the three leaders will travel first to Beijing and will leave from Hong Kong, but other details are still being organized. The group will travel to Tibet, he said.

When he rejected the dinner invitation, Argue told the White House he would attend if he were given an appointment to meet with Jiang on religious persecution.

According to Argue, the administration contacted the Chinese government, and Jiang accepted the offer to meet with Argue and extended the invitation for a delegation of religious leaders to visit China. Argue attended the state dinner and met with Jiang.

In July, the State Department released a congressionally mandated report on religious persecution, which focused largely on Christian persecution.

The report says Chinese citizens "enjoy freedom of religious belief," but the government restricts actual religious practice to government-authorized religious organizations and registered places of worship. The report says that during the past three years, Chinese authorities have cracked down on the activities of unregistered Catholic and Protestant movements.

In addition, authorities have tightened restrictions on Buddhists in Tibet and curtailed religious activities in the predominantly Muslim Xingjiang Autonomous Region.

Last month, a U.S.-based Catholic organization said that Roman Catholic Bishop Su Zhimin, a prominent leader of the underground church in China, had been detained by the Chinese government after 17 months in hiding. The underground group swears allegiance to Rome and refuses to register with Chinese authorities.

In July, Peter Xu Yongze, head of the New Birth Church, was arrested for violating Chinese rules on social organizations. Han Wenzao, president of the state-run Christian Council of China, said the arrest was not Christian persecution. "Xu's doings entirely ran counter to the teachings of the Bible and true canons of Christ," Han said.

-30-

END