

# Associated Baptist Press

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## **Fellowship expands services to include annuity, insurance plans**

By Bob Allen

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has expanded services it offers moderate Southern Baptists to include retirement benefits and health insurance for ministers and other church employees.

The Fellowship's Coordinating Council approved two actions Feb. 19-21 in Atlanta offering new services to Fellowship-friendly churches.

One action authorized CBF officers to prepare, adopt and implement a retirement-benefits plan for ministers and employees of "member churches and other affiliated organizations."

In the other vote, the Coordinating Council endorsed Humana Employers Health as a medical-plan provider for employees of churches and organizations related to the CBF. Dental, life and disability coverages are also available under the arrangement. Churches will qualify for the program by contributing to the Fellowship's missions and ministry programs. The arrangement costs the Fellowship nothing.

Formed in 1991 to protest conservative leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention, the Fellowship began mainly by offering an alternative missions program and channeling support to selected SBC agencies. Over time, the Fellowship has expanded services and the SBC no longer accepts CBF funds.

The Fellowship voted down a motion in 1996 to establish itself as a convention, which would have formalized a split with the SBC. Since then, the organization has continued to branch out into new ventures offering moderates more alternatives to denominational programs of the SBC.

Also at the February meeting, the Coordinating Council heard a report that a new committee had endorsed the first five chaplains representing the Fellowship. The first, Paula Peek, chaplain coordinator for Hospice Care Plus in Richmond, Ky., was approved Jan. 22.

Reporting to the Coordinating Council Feb. 20, Ed Beddingfield, chair of the council on endorsement, termed it "significant" that the first chaplain endorsed by the group was a woman.

In an interview, Peek told a reporter last summer's vote by the Fellowship to become a chaplain-endorsing body provided "a welcome and timely opportunity for me and others who do not want Southern Baptist Convention endorsement."

In other business, the Coordinating Council adopted a resolution authorizing the CBF Foundation to lead the Fellowship in a multi-phase capital campaign for endowment.

A fall 1997 feasibility study found the CBF constituency is "willing to enter and is capable of succeeding in a multi-million-dollar capital campaign," the resolution said.

A "preparation phase" begins March 1, said Ruben Swint, foundation president. "There is a great amount ... of goodwill toward our organization," Swint said. "There is also the conviction there is a wealth of money out there."

Swint said the capital campaign would "take pressure off the budgeting process" by adding a source of income for the Fellowship.

Fellowship Coordinator Daniel Vestal described his recent meeting with a potential donor as an example of how the campaign will offer "an opportunity to serve God in a way that will have an impact way beyond his lifetime."

"My conviction is there are an awful lot of Baptists out there who are waiting for that joy," Vestal said. "I am anticipating this capital campaign. I am looking forward to it."

"This is a defining moment for the Fellowship and its future," said Pat Ayres of the CBF Foundation's executive committee.

In other business, the Coordinating Council:

-- Approved a \$14.8 million operating budget for 1998-99. The plan, which must be approved by this summer's general assembly, limits spending to 90 percent of budget levels during the first seven months of the fiscal year.

The 90-percent spending cycle allows the Fellowship to adopt "an aggressive budget" while hedging against a potential shortfall, said finance task group chair Ed Vick.

In early years, the Fellowship's budget grew rapidly. As gifts plateaued in recent years, the group has found it harder to forecast income levels. Twice, below-budget income forced mid-year spending cutbacks.

"We have good expectation of making our forecast of revenue in 1998-99," Vick said. "However, we have no real track record to assure you we can do this."

The plan to scale back spending during the first seven months will "give us the fiscal responsibility to live within the financial support our constituency gives us," Vick predicted.

-- Spent \$40,000 from prior-year reserves to complete an obligation to fund a professor at Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology. The original grant was \$90,000 to three schools. The other schools accepted the money, but Mercer needed only \$50,000 at the time, Vick said.

-- Authorized spending of \$50,000 from prior-year reserves to help fund start-up costs for a new Christian magazine to be published by Associated Baptist Press.

ABP Executive Editor Greg Warner said the magazine would focus on attracting younger readers who are not interested in reading denominational newspapers or magazines.

"Something is not working," Warner told the Coordinating Council. "We are not doing the job of reaching a very large segment of our constituency."

"The Baptist communications system ... is not designed, is not equipped to reach the next generation of Baptists," Warner said. "There is a definite void. We feel it and they feel it."

Warner said the proposed publication would be a 32-page, full-color, glossy magazine combining news and features on a "spectrum of Christian lifestyle issues."

"Our overall objective will be to integrate faith and life," Warner said.

Warner said the magazine would "undergird" the news service's ministry by giving added exposure and developing a new constituency. "The main thing is to begin to reach this next generation," he said.

In response to a question about whether CBF would receive credit in the magazine for providing start-up monies, Warner said it would be a mistake for CBF to view the magazine as a promotional tool. "This is not an organizational publication to promote CBF," he said. "You are funding this as an entrepreneurial venture because you think it serves the cause we are all a part of."

-- Heard a report that a North Korean hunger-relief fund established at last summer's general assembly had raised \$82,000. The funds will be divided evenly for disbursement by Baptist World Aid, the Baptist World Alliance's relief arm, and the CBF's Asian network, reported Harry Poovey, chair of the Fellowship's global missions ministry group.

-- Heard a report on the status of CBF missionaries in Indonesia and Jordan, two areas threatened by unrest. Global Missions Coordinator Keith Parks said Fellowship leaders "are in very frequent contact" with personnel in both places. The Fellowship's policy is for each missionary family to decide for itself whether to evacuate an area of unrest.

"None of them have left at this point," Parks said. While some missionaries were temporarily forced out of Indonesia for renewal of their visas, all missionaries there "continue to serve as best as they can under the circumstance," Parks said.

Parks said the Fellowship is "holding on standby" a person experienced in hostage negotiation. "This is a life insurance policy we hope we don't have to cash," he said.

In the event a CBF missionary is ever taken hostage or kidnapped, Parks pleaded with Coordinating Council members not to "make a public response" but to refer all inquiries to the official spokesperson at the CBF office.

Parks said the Fellowship will not pay ransom for hostages. "To do that will immediately jeopardize all our force," he said. But Parks said "there are many other ways to negotiate release" other than paying ransom.

Parks said he had "been through this only one time in my experience." Parks, a career missionary who was president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board 13 years before joining the Fellowship's staff in 1993, did not elaborate, except to say the episode "never came to public knowledge" and that the "people" were held two weeks before being released unharmed.

-- Approved amended business procedures for handing motions made at the CBF's annual general assembly. The plan as originally proposed by the Fellowship's legal-affairs task group would have killed motions not recommended to the general assembly by either a "breakout" group assigned to discuss the items or by the CBF advisory council.

Johnny McKinney, a council member from Anderson, S.C., proposed an amendment allowing the individual maker of such a motion to appeal to the moderator to poll the general assembly about whether or not to consider it. After debate, the Coordinating Council approved the procedures, with McKinney's amendment.

-- Heard a report by missionary Matt Wallace about a "virtual private network" providing missionaries with encrypted communications on the Internet. "What that does is it frees up the communication between the home office and the people" on the field, said Wallace, who was appointed a CBF missionary last year.

Wallace said most of the Fellowship's 141 missionaries will be on the network by mid-April. It will include all missions personnel except "those with minimal phone access, which we really can't do anything about," he said.

## **CBF endorses first five chaplains and counselors**

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Five candidates from five states comprise the first group of ministers to be approved by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's new council on endorsement for chaplains, counselors and ministers in other specialized settings.

Two endorsements came at the council's Feb. 19 meeting in conjunction with the February 19-21 meeting of the CBF Coordinating Council in Atlanta. Three others were endorsed in late January, said Ed Beddingfield of Sylva, N.C., who chairs the endorsing council. Paula Peek, chaplain coordinator for Hospice Care Plus, a facility for the terminally ill in Richmond, Ky., was the first candidate endorsed at the council on endorsement's Jan. 22 meeting in Atlanta.

The Coordinating Council established the council on endorsement last October. That followed a vote at CBF's 1997 General Assembly in June to declare CBF an endorsing body for chaplains and others.

The endorsees, who come from 160 persons who have contacted CBF for application forms, work in Kentucky, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee and Virginia. They also have ties to Alabama, Mississippi, West Virginia, Georgia, Louisiana, and Oklahoma.

Other January endorsees were James Pruett, executive director of the Anchoring Place Therapy Group, a division of Catto Enterprises International, Spartanburg, S.C., and Timothy Madison, director of pastoral services at Valley Baptist Medical Center, Harlingen, Texas.

February endorsements were Christopher O'Rear, a pastoral counseling resident in Nashville, Tenn.; and Garnett White of Richmond, Va., a practicing clinical psychologist, inpatient care manager of Green Spring of Virginia, and adjunct faculty member of the Medical College of Virginia.

Peek, a native of Suffolk, Va., did chaplaincy residencies at the Baptist Medical Centers in both Columbia, S.C., and Birmingham, Ala. Formerly she was minister to youth and children at Ballardsville Baptist Church in Crestwood, Ky.; children's church director at Macedonia Baptist Church in Gaffney, S.C.; and interned at Augusta Heights Baptist Church and Sans Souci Baptist Church, both in Greenville, S.C.

She earned a B.A. degree from Furman University in 1988; a master of education degree from Converse College in Spartanburg, S.C., in 1990; and a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., in 1994.

Pruett is also co-founder, faculty member and supervisor of WestGate Training and Consultation Network, an accredited postgraduate degree training program in marriage and family therapy of the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education in Washington, D.C.

A native of Memphis, Tenn., Pruett also is on the adjunct faculty at Converse College in Spartanburg, S.C., and has taught adjunctively at three other South Carolina colleges. Other experience includes service as pastor of Baptist churches in South Carolina, Georgia and Mississippi; a Southern Baptist home missionary in West Virginia and Georgia; and a chaplain at Orleans Parish Prison in New Orleans, Central State Hospital in Milledgeville, Ga., and Beckman Mental Health Center in Greenwood, S.C.

Pruett earned a B.A. degree from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., the master of religious education and master of theology degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, a doctor of ministries degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a Ph.D. degree from Louisiana Baptist University in Shreveport.

Madison, a native of Cadiz, Ky., is a former pastor of churches in Pocahontas, Tenn., and Bedford, Ky. He earned a B.A. degree from Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and the master of divinity and Ph.D. degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

White, a former Baptist pastor in King George, Va., has also worked as a resident at Behavioral Services Center in Midlothian, Va., a resident, psychological testing reviewer and clinical and treatment coordinator for Options Mental Health in Richmond, Va., and a staff psychologist for both the Rehabilitation Hospital of Virginia and United Behavioral Systems. He earned B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Richmond; masters and Ph.D. degrees in religion from Vanderbilt University and masters and Ph.D. degrees in counseling psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University.

O'Rear, a native of Birmingham, Ala., currently serves as a pastoral counseling resident at Pastoral Counseling Centers of Tennessee in Nashville. Previously, he was a hospital chaplain resident at Baptist Medical Center in Columbia, S.C., and counselor with the Alcohol and Drug Council of Middle Tennessee in Nashville. He earned a B.S. degree from Samford University, Birmingham, Ala., and master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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-- By Robert O'Brien

### **Kentucky woman first chaplain to be endorsed by Fellowship**

By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Ky. (ABP) -- A Kentucky woman has become the first chaplain endorsed by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Paula Peek, chaplain coordinator for Hospice Care Plus in Richmond, Ky., called her endorsement a "healing" moment in her struggle to become a woman minister in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Fellowship's new council on endorsement approved Peek's application Jan. 22, making her the first chaplain to be endorsed by the Atlanta-based group. Since then four other candidates -- all men -- have also received endorsement by the council.

Reporting to the Fellowship's Coordinating Council Feb. 20, Ed Beddingfield, chair of the council on endorsement, termed it "significant" that the first chaplain endorsed by the group was a woman.

The Fellowship, formed by moderate Southern Baptists in 1991, supports the right of women to minister in all roles, including pastors. The Southern Baptist Convention, which came under conservative control in the 1980s, discourages female pastors while encouraging women to minister in traditional roles.

The Coordinating Council formed the endorsing council last October following a vote at the CBF General Assembly in June declaring the Fellowship an endorsing body for chaplains, counselors and ministers in other specialized settings.

Peek said the Fellowship's vote last summer provided "a welcome and timely opportunity for me and others who do not want Southern Baptist Convention endorsement."

"Endorsement by CBF was healing," she said. "It acknowledged and blessed what I am and who I am as a woman in ministry. Individuals and churches along the way have validated my ministry -- and I value that.

"But endorsement by the Fellowship? That's special!"

Peek said her "healing" began when she attended her first state CBF meeting in Kentucky as a seminary student.

"CBF's support of women in ministry was healing and redemptive," she said. "I appreciated their encouragement and open-mindedness. The strong effort to include lay persons in key leadership seemed to embody the priesthood of the believer in a new way."

Peek grew up as the child of a now-retired pastor serving Southern Baptist churches in Virginia, Tennessee and South Carolina.

She said she considers herself "a daughter of Baptists, nurtured and disciplined by Baptists" -- ever since her mother called her father out of a deacon's meeting in Suffolk, Va., in 1966 to take her to the hospital delivery room. "So began my life as a P.K (preacher's kid)," she said.

So Peek said she had no intention of walking away from Baptists, "even when many of my peers and colleagues, wounded by the changing environment in the SBC and in seminary, were going into other denominations."

She entered Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1991, before trustees elected a conservative president in 1993. The new president, Albert Mohler, steered the seminary sharply to the right, causing tumult among a then predominantly moderate faculty and student body.

Immersed for the first time in SBC politics at the seminary in Louisville, Ky., Peek said she experienced "difficulty and pain at a school in transition and turmoil." She grieved as "professors left, the role of women in ministry was devalued, the school shifted direction, and a general feel of distrust, suspicion and division prevailed on campus."

During that time, though, she found her way to a calling to the chaplaincy and a master-of-divinity degree with emphasis in pastoral care and counseling.

While "a definite call of God" compelled her forward, Peek said she wrestled with denominational endorsement needed by chaplains to advance in their careers and gain necessary professional certifications.

"I felt trapped by the fact that my options were to leave Baptists or be endorsed by a group I could not in good conscience support," she recalled.

"But then, CBF's decision to become an endorsing body gave me a third option, encouraging me to keep moving forward and renewing my hope."

Hope, Peek said, is pivotal both in her personal faith and in her ministry with terminally ill hospice patients.

"I believe there's always hope," she said. "One goal for the hospice patients I work with is to redefine hope in light of the disease and the disease process that's ending their lives. Since I've become a chaplain, goals like this have helped me expand my understanding of hope as I've ministered to patients who live in tension between hope and despair."

Facing that tension in her own life, Peek reflected, "I'm just one of many wounded women and many wounded Baptists who have chosen to maintain hope, move beyond the hurt and move ahead with their lives and ministries."

After she entered seminary, Peek became the first woman staff member of Ballardsville Baptist Church, a rural congregation in Crestwood, Ky. She served for three years as minister to children and youth.

Two days after her graduation from seminary, she became the first woman ever to be ordained by the congregation. The Pentecost Sunday service on May 22, 1994, included participation by the children and youth and a laying on of hands by the entire congregation.

"I hardly remember what anyone said that day," Peek said, "but I'll never forget seeing and feeling the blessings of young and old, black and white, women and men, family and friends."

Since Peek's endorsement, four other candidates -- two men on Jan. 22 and two men on Feb. 19 -- have also been approved by the council.

"We have responded to 160 requests for applications for endorsement," Beddingfield said Feb. 20. "Of those 160, nine have come back to us as applications. Of those, we have endorsed five. Four are still in process."

Fellowship moderator Martha Smith called the endorsements "a pivotal moment in CBF."

## Critics say Christian Coalition plan could threaten church tax status

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The Christian Coalition unveiled a strategy Feb. 18 to recruit 100,000 church liaisons by November 2000 to assist in the group's voter registration and education efforts.

The announcement drew swift criticism that the "Families 2000" initiative could jeopardize the tax-exempt status of thousands of houses of worship.

"TV preacher Pat Robertson is clearly desperate to get his Christian Coalition political machine back on track and he's turning to churches to do it," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Christian Coalition Executive Director Randy Tate said the Families 2000 initiative is designed to "ensure that local, state and federal elected officials in both parties will be held more accountable to the voters than ever before on pro-family issues."

Coalition leaders said the Families 2000 program was successfully "test marketed" in a recent referendum in Maine where voters repealed gay-rights legislation.

"Our Maine victory has set the stage to take this winning formula and apply it nationwide," Tate said.

"Working with 900 churches we added 100,000 new names to our organization in Maine alone," Tate added. "We believe Families 2000 is the winning strategy to recruit 100,000 church liaisons, mobilizing millions of active people of faith for the new century."

According to a coalition press release, the strategy is directly linked to the coalition's national legislative priorities, which include a partial-birth abortion ban, school vouchers, a "religious freedom" amendment to the Constitution, the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act and family tax relief.

The press release also stated that churches "will now serve as the primary source of people interested in ... the nonpartisan voter registration and education efforts of the coalition."

But AU's Lynn charged the initiative would jeopardize the tax-exempt status of churches which use the coalition's voter guides..

"The coalition's voter guides are slanted in favor of certain candidates," Lynn said. "As such, they are partisan material that should not be distributed in churches. Under Internal Revenue Service regulations, churches and other ministries are flatly barred from intervening in partisan political campaigns."

Lynn noted that even some conservative evangelicals have issued warnings about church distribution of voter guides. He said that David Gibbs of the Christian Law Association advised participants at the annual National Religious Broadcaster's convention that churches can lose their tax-exempt status if they fail to adhere to IRS regulations, which say voter guides must be accurate, broadly based and cannot be distributed only at election time.

The Federal Election Commission filed a complaint against the coalition for improperly spending money to influence federal elections in 1996. The IRS has yet to rule on the tax status of the coalition, which has been acting as a 501c(4) "social welfare" organization since Pat Robertson founded the group in 1989.

The coalition has denied charges that the voter guides are slanted and say the FEC lawsuit is "completely baseless."

Another Christian Coalition critic said the Families 2000 initiative marks the end of the Ralph Reed era. Reed stepped down as the coalition's executive director last year.

"Gone is the effort to persuade Americans that the Christian Coalition is a mainstream organization with a broader agenda than bashing gays and trying to outlaw all abortions," said People For the American Way Foundation President Carole Shields.

"Staring down the twin barrels of flagging contributions and an FEC lawsuit, the group is returning to a narrow Religious-Right message, calculated to stir up its members and fill its bank account," she said in a PFAW press release.

The coalition has recently restructured its organization and ended several initiatives, including its attempt to reach out to African-Americans.

The restructuring follows reported financial troubles for the coalition. According to news reports, the group's revenues declined from \$26.5 million in 1996 to \$17 million last year.

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## **Alabama school monitor will report to judge**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Chriss Doss, the court-appointed monitor charged with assuring that DeKalb County, Ala., public schools adhere to a recent injunction against "officially sanctioned" religious activities, said he does not intend to act as a policeman.

The law professor at Samford University's Cumberland Law School said local school officials will first have an opportunity to create a system to deal with problems. "But in cases where I'm needed, I will step in," Doss said.

He told Associated Baptist Press that students, parents and school officials will be advised of where and how to file complaints or make inquiries concerning religious activities in the schools. He added that if disputes cannot be resolved within the public school system, he will investigate the dispute and report findings to the judge.

Judge Ira DeMent's ruling is "right on target." He added, "I said that on the day it came out and I read it."

Doss said educating school officials about religious expression in the schools "will mitigate some of the problems."

Charles Haynes and Oliver Thomas, authors of "Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education," will educate and train Alabama school officials about religion in public schools.

Haynes and Thomas, working on behalf of The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, will use the book, as well as guidelines created by a broad-based coalition of religious groups stating what current law says about religious expression in public schools. The guidelines have been distributed across the nation by the U.S. Department of Education.

Thomas, special counsel for the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., is a former general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, a 60-year-old religious-liberty watchdog.

DeMent's injunction bars activities such as vocal prayer, devotional or scriptural readings and other religious activities when they are conducted as "school-organized or officially sanctioned" activities.

"There has been a very misleading treatment of the situation by many, including news organizations that reported that the judge's orders eliminated prayer in the public school," Doss said.

"Anybody who is really familiar with the history of these cases concerning school prayer -- when they read the judge's opinion with an open mind -- will have to admit that he's right on target," he said.

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## Dunn addresses theological, ethical roots of religious freedom

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Soul freedom is at the biblical and theological center of Baptist life, James Dunn told a combined meeting of state executives from the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, a Washington D.C.-based religious-liberty organization, spoke at a February banquet. He told the crowd that the theological roots of Baptist life can be symbolized by three concentric circles.

He said the circles should be seen as active, similar to circles formed "when a pebble is thrown into a pond."

The theological inner circle symbolizes soul freedom, the ethical mid-circle represents religious liberty and the outer philosophical ring represents the separation of church and state, which assures the protection of the inner circles, he said.

Dunn, a primary target of Southern Baptist conservatives during their takeover of the convention during the 1980s, said the last time he spoke to SBC executives was 1981, "a few years before I became the Southern Baptist designated hitee."

"And it's always kind of puzzled me a little bit because I'm a born-again corn-bred-fed, Texas-bred, spirited, revival-preachin', missions-giving, Bible-teachin' Southern Baptist preacher," he said.

The Southern Baptist Convention severed ties with the BJC in 1991.

At the very least, "soul freedom means immediate and direct access to God," Dunn said. "We don't need any filters. We each one come to God immediately and actively," adding that Baptists are the most "experiential" of all U.S. religions.

"We come to God freely or not really," Dunn said. "We come to him voluntarily or not at all."

Dunn said: "We do not come to a right relationship with God because of obeying some particular moral code, however important. Moral standards, yep. Moral behavior -- you bet ... . But that's the consequence -- it's because we have been saved, not in order to be saved."

Religious liberty for all, the second circle, "includes not only freedom for religion but at least potentially the freedom from religion because if you can't say 'no,' your 'yes' is absolutely empty and meaningless," he said.

"And there are a lot of folks that don't understand how the Baptist Joint Committee can fight for the Santeria sect down in the church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye ... in Hialeah, Florida," he said. "Why in the world would we file an amicus brief to allow them to go on sacrificing chickens?"

Dunn first joked, "Well, when you consider all the chickens that have entered the Baptist ministry ... ." He added that "the religious persecution of Buddhists in Tibet or the Santeria's cult in Florida or any other group is not disconnected from our commitment to real freedom."

Dunn said the third circle -- the separation of church and state -- is the necessary corollary of religious liberty.

"To believe in the separation of church and state does not mean that we believe in the separation of God from government or Christians from their citizenship or even religion from politics," Dunn said.

Church-state separation is necessary "to safeguard authentic religion," he said. "Government, with its touch of mud, should never be involved [in religion.]"

Turning to policy, Dunn criticized a proposed constitutional amendment being supported by the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., is sponsor of the Religious Freedom Amendment, which would open the door for state-sponsored prayer and other religious expressions. The measure would also allow religious groups to compete for government funds on an equal footing with other organizations.

"Mr. Istook is mistook," Dunn said. "But we're going to have to go through the charade of a vote on the floor of the House about whether or not to tinker with the First Amendment."

Dunn said the BJC is going to have to fight the same battle that Thomas Jefferson and James Madison fought against tax-supported religion. Dunn said that Patrick Henry's plan to use taxes for religious schools sounds very much like the voucher proposals being considered today.

"Public money ought to go for public purposes and private money can go for private purposes," Dunn said.

When asked by a reporter if he had any comments on Dunn's remarks, Morris Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, said, "No, I really don't."

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## **'Untouchable' converts begin to evangelize others in India**

By Robert O'Brien

NARSAPUR, India (ABP) -- Yanadi "untouchables," who accepted Christ with their entire village last Easter in India, have begun to spread the gospel among their people, say the missionaries who led them to profess their faith.

Several of the Yanadis have converted family members in other villages, and "six have responded to a call to become evangelists among their people," report Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionaries James and Robbi Francovich.

Eighteen of the 60 villagers who embraced Christianity on Easter were baptized by the Francoviches and an Indian Baptist pastor at a baptismal service on Christmas. They also baptized 15 lepers of the untouchable Lazaris and 19 other former Hindus.

The Yanadi baptisms represented about half of the adults in the original 60. Others are in various stages of discipleship training and will be baptized when ready, said the Francoviches, who won the Yanadi village to Christ.

The Francoviches will enroll the potential evangelists in a one-year training program at their Tribal School of Evangelism that includes both classroom work and field practicum.

The two CBF missionaries and Pastor Adam Sandipudi of Dayspring Church, all clad in traditional Indian dress, baptized the new converts last Christmas in a waist-deep, muddy canal used by villagers to bathe and wash their clothes, cooking vessels and animals.

The three positioned themselves "so people could be baptized two by two, and married couples baptized together as new families in Christ," said Robbi Francovich.

A crowd of curious onlookers gathered quickly to watch as the congregation filed out from a four-hour service at Dayspring Church onto a busy road. They assembled at the canal running alongside it. Passing buses, scooters and bikes slowed to a crawl, and neighbors came out to see what all the excitement was about.

The 15 Lazari lepers, among the 52 persons baptized that day, had met Christ in much the same way as the Yanadi villagers -- through kindness and a loving touch.

Just before Easter, the Francoviches visited the Yanadi village. They shook villagers' hands, embraced them, told them about Jesus, and invited them to a Baptist Good Friday service and meal at Dayspring Church.

Stunned by the kindness -- and the warmth of the Francoviches' touch -- the "untouchable" Yanadis listened intently. The tribe met after the Francoviches left and decided, in one accord, to reject Hindu gods and follow the God of the ones who came to see them. They became regular attenders at Dayspring Church.

The Lazaris, a mixed tribal group of outcasts, had much the same experience after a government official asked the Francoviches to help them. The missionaries visited their temporary homes in stalls behind a vegetable market, embraced them, touched their leprosy-eroded limbs, and told them about Jesus. Pastor Sandipudi invited them to his son's wedding at Dayspring Church, which was attended by people of all castes.

After that experience, they also became regular attenders at church and began to accept Christ.

Local merchants chided the Lazaris for becoming Christians and for bringing pastors and missionaries into the market area and told them to move. Immediately after the baptism some officials descended on the Yanadis and tried to extort bribes for work they had done to help them find land.

"We've walked with them these past months and know their sufferings, their joys, and the cost of following Jesus Christ in a Hindu nation," Robbi Francovich said.

"Despite their suffering, both the Lazaris and the Yanadis asked us to make them more visible as Christians by giving them new Christian names," she said.

"A tribal leader explained it like this: 'Our old names are those of Hindu gods, and we want to change those Satanic names.'

"These people are called 'untouchables' in India, and we've made it our goal to touch them with the love of Jesus Christ. But they've touched us in return with a simple faith that's rock solid against Satan's work in India."

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CORRECTION: In the Feb. 18 ABP story "SBC/BWA study committee calls for continued relationship," please replace the third paragraph with the following:

At the study committee's recommendation, the SBC Executive Committee approved \$425,000 in funding for the BWA in 1998-99, an increase from the \$417,838 budgeted this year. The budget, however, moves the BWA from a percentage allocation of the SBC's unified budget to a flat dollar amount.

CORRECTION: In the Feb. 20 ABP story "Nation's oldest physician still practicing at 100," please replace the first two paragraphs with the following:

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The nation's oldest practicing physician celebrated her 100th birthday Feb. 1.

More than 300 people came to Dr. Leila Daughtrey Denmark's "private" birthday party. She received birthday greetings from Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter and congratulatory calls from around the world.

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