

Associated Baptist Press

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

April 21, 1998

(98-29)

In this issue:

- **Carson-Newman adopts change in trustee-selection process**
- **Jury finds anti-abortion groups liable under racketeering law**
- **Alabama Baptists respond to April tornadoes**
- **Hong Kong Baptist University to launch study-abroad program**
- **Former U.S. ambassador addresses Baptist students**
- **Tornadoes cause minor damage to Baptist buildings in Nashville**

Carson-Newman adopts change in trustee-selection process

By Lonnie Wilkey

JEFFERSON CITY, Tenn. (ABP) -- Trustees of Carson-Newman College voted 29-5 on April 17 to change their trustee-selection process, altering the Jefferson City, Tenn., school's relationship to the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

The trustees, in a called meeting held in executive session, voted to amend the college's charter to allow them to name their own successors. The action takes the selection process out of the hands of the 1.1 million-member Tennessee Baptist Convention, which has nominated and elected the college's trustees since 1919.

The charter amendment returns the 147-year-old institution to its original method of naming trustees. In recent years, many historically Baptist colleges have severed formal ties with sponsoring state conventions, typically to prevent conservative factions from changing their theological course.

At a press conference after the meeting, Carson-Newman board members said the change is not intended to distance the school from Tennessee Baptists or its Baptist heritage.

All trustees must still be Baptists, with at least 75 percent of them coming from Tennessee Baptist churches. In addition, the state convention's president and executive director-treasurer will continue to be designated trustees with full voting privileges.

School officials said the action paves the way for a broader and more representative board of trustees who can expand Carson-Newman's base of financial support and who have a strong commitment to the future of Christian higher education.

"This action will provide a more stable and secure future for Carson-Newman and ensure that the college can remain true to its Baptist heritage and its commitment to serving Tennessee Baptists," said board chairwoman Jeanette Blazier, a member of First Baptist Church in Kingsport, Tenn.

Currently, all but three of Carson-Newman's 36 trustees are Tennessee Baptists. The convention approved a plan in 1994 to allow each of its three colleges to draw as many as three trustees from Baptist alumni living outside the state.

After learning of the proposed charter revision only a week before the called trustee meeting, the state convention's education committee asked for a delay in the vote to allow "adequate opportunity for negotiation and open dialogue" on changes which "might adversely affect the relationship between the Tennessee Baptist Convention and Carson-Newman College."

During the press conference, college officials said trustees discussed the education committee's proposal. "They reluctantly felt they needed to move ahead with their plans," said Carson-Newman President Cordell Maddox.

Maddox, who has been involved in Baptist higher education for 43 years, said the action was hard for him and that he struggled three days before finding peace about the decision.

"I came to the conclusion that this was the best thing to do although I knew it would make some people unhappy," Maddox said. "The trustees made a courageous decision," he affirmed.

One Carson-Newman trustee, Jay McCluskey, pastor of North Cleveland Baptist Church in Cleveland, Tenn., mailed a letter to fellow trustees prior to their April 17 meeting opposing the proposed change.

"Much of the rationale behind the proposal to change the trustee-election format is based on the presumption that the current system of election can no longer be trusted to provide adequate board leadership," McCluskey said in his letter. "Frankly, I see little evidence that the present format has failed to produce a well qualified board of trust," he wrote.

McCluskey said the change was motivated by "a fear that, in the future, those people with a critical agenda toward Carson-Newman College will elect unsuitable candidates to the C-N board."

"While I cannot say whether or not such a threat really exists, I know of no example of an unsuitable candidate ever being elected to this board of trustees," he continued. "We must not hastily react to mere threats of danger."

McCluskey also criticized timing of the called board meeting. He noted a full board meeting was scheduled for early May. "The abruptness of this meeting makes our board's action appear suspicious," he said in the letter.

After the meeting McCluskey told the Tennessee newspaper Baptist and Reflector he was given an opportunity to express his concerns before the board.

State convention president Doug Sager and Executive Director James Porch both attended the meeting as ex-officio board members. Both spoke to the issue before the vote. Sager, pastor of First Baptist Church of Concord, Tenn., said he appealed to the board "to allow us to sit down with leadership to see if we could work out our differences."

Sager called Carson-Newman's decision not to delay their action "disappointing."

"I had hoped for more time," he said. "I could not understand their urgency. Sager said the trustee action "will make it more difficult for us in trying to bring our convention together."

Porch said he cautioned trustees about the possible effect of their action on the college and the convention.

In a statement issued after the meeting, Porch said he was "saddened" and "sincerely regret[s] that the board of trustees of Carson-Newman College felt major action altering the trustee-selection process was necessary."

Porch said continued discussions could have "resulted in a more congenial solution." He expressed "great concern about the scope and intensity of potential effects this action may have both on Carson-Newman College and our state convention."

Other trustees defended the change. Fred Hurst, a medical doctor and member of First Baptist Church in Knoxville, called the decision a "banner day for Carson-Newman."

The majority of the trustees "felt it important for this board to be above, beyond, and apart from the political process that is inevitable in any large organization, including the Tennessee Baptist Convention," Hurst said.

Other trustees said the action does not lessen the board's commitment to the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

"I want to reiterate the strength of our trustees' commitment to Tennessee Baptists and to remaining true to our Baptist heritage and roots," said Fred Steelman, pastor of Red Bank Baptist Church in Chattanooga and chairman of the college's endowment campaign. "Never in its 147-year history has Carson-Newman wavered from its relationship with Tennessee Baptists," Steelman said. "We do not intend to do that now."

Steelman said the college did not sever ties with the convention. "In essence, we are the same as we were yesterday -- made up of loyal Tennessee Baptists," he said. "We merely changed the way we elect our trustees so we can better serve the needs of the college."

Steelman said the trustees have discussed ways the college can maintain a strong relationship with the convention. "It is our desire to sit down with the education committee and solidify ways to further strengthen the relationship between Carson-Newman and the Tennessee Baptist Convention," he said.

Steelman acknowledged the trustees' action could prompt an attempt to escrow state convention funding for the school. The college receives \$2.4 million from the state through the Cooperative Program unified budget. All of that, however, plus about \$1 million more, is used for scholarships for Tennessee Baptist students, Steelman said.

"The consequence [of escrowing funds] would be severe," Steelman said. "We don't want to see it reach that point. We need to sit down and discuss how we can strengthen our relationship and get those monies to Tennessee Baptist students."

-30-

Jury finds anti-abortion groups liable under racketeering law

CHICAGO (ABP) -- Relying on a racketeering law intended to be used against organized crime, a federal jury in Chicago ruled April 20 that anti-abortion groups conspired to use violence or threats of violence to close down abortion clinics.

In a landmark decision, the jury of two men and four women used a 1970 federal law against racketeering to reach a verdict against three pro-life activists and two organizations -- the Pro-Life Action League and Operation Rescue.

The Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act (RICO) makes it illegal for an "enterprise" to use a "pattern of racketeering," including extortion. The law was designed to fight organized crime by allowing crime bosses to be prosecuted for crimes committed by henchmen, even if they are not directly involved.

In 1994, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that abortion clinics represented by the National Organization of Women could sue anti-abortion activists under the law. The 12-year-old lawsuit charged abortion foes with "a nationwide conspiracy to shut down abortion clinics" and with using threatened or actual violence to prevent women from getting abortions.

The jury, following a seven-week trial and three days of deliberations, awarded \$85,000 to two abortion clinics, an amount based on what they spent on security forces against anti-abortion protests. That amount will be tripled because the lawsuit was filed under RICO. The ruling opens the door for 900 other clinics involved in the class-action suit to recover triple damages, potentially costing the pro-life movement millions of dollars.

Fay Clayton, an NOW attorney who represented the abortion clinics in the case, called the verdict "the biggest courtroom defeat for the anti-abortion movement ever."

"They want to bankrupt us -- there's no question about that," Joseph Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League and one of three individual defendants named in the verdict, said as he left the courtroom. Also named as defendants were Andrew Scholberg and Timothy Murphy. Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry was originally named in the lawsuit, but he settled out of court after losing two other lawsuits with awards totaling \$169,000.

During testimony, witnesses disputed how violent protests became at two named clinics in Delaware and Wisconsin. Defendants said they never participated in or condoned acts of violence, but under RICO, jurors had only to find that people associated with the defendants' cause committed acts or threats involving extortion or violence.

In its 1994 ruling clearing the way for the case to proceed, the Supreme Court defined extortion as using intimidation or threats of violence to get something, not necessarily money, reversing a lower-court ruling that RICO could be used only in cases where there is an economic motive.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

Alabama Baptists respond to April tornadoes

By Jennifer Davis Rash

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Almost as quickly as tornadoes smashed through the heart of Alabama April 8, Baptist volunteers were ready for action.

Being first on the scene with an ability to mobilize almost immediately brought an invitation to Baptists by the Alabama Emergency Management Agency to coordinate all volunteer efforts.

Johnny Fox, volunteer service coordinator for the Alabama Baptist State Convention, and Ricky Creech, director of missions for the Birmingham Baptist Association, have tag-teamed the effort since April 9.

Fox, working in the Bessemer and Mud Creek Baptist associations, and Creech, cleaning up areas in Birmingham, had registered close to 4,000 volunteers as of April 19.

Along with the much needed tree and debris cleanup, meal preparation and distribution also has demanded many volunteer hands.

The state convention's disaster-relief van, parked at Concord Baptist Church, has had rotating crews of Alabama Baptists preparing meals provided by Red Cross. As of April 19, nearly 18,000 meals had been served out of the van. Creech noted that several churches and the Salvation Army also had feeding units set up throughout the communities.

"We try to keep churches responsible for one thing," Fox said, noting some churches serve as volunteer check points, some as kitchens, some as clothing-distribution centers and some to house volunteers from out of state.

Union Hill Baptist Church in Bessemer also brought in Children's Homes counselors to provide counseling for area children.

While attention has been focused on west Jefferson County due to the extent of the damage, cleanup efforts also are ongoing in the Tuscaloosa and St. Clair associations through individual churches.

As thousands of volunteers have offered physical assistance, many also are giving financially.

Troy Morrison, executive secretary-treasurer of the ABSC, delivered \$21,500 from the convention's disaster-relief fund to damaged or destroyed churches in five associations. The convention also gave Jamie Weathers, minister of students at Faith Baptist Church in Hueytown, money to help rebuild his home, which was destroyed by a tornado.

Creech noted a radio station from Chattanooga, Tenn., sent four tractor-trailer trucks filled with food and clothing to the tornado-ravaged areas within days of the brutal storm. The radio station also gave \$2,500 to each of the four churches destroyed in Alabama, including two Baptist churches.

-30-

Hong Kong Baptist University to launch study-abroad program

HONG KONG (ABP) -- More than 160 Christian college students from North America will live and study alongside Chinese students in a new program being launched this fall at Hong Kong Baptist University.

In announcing the new study-abroad program, officials said American students from 50 church-related partner institutions in the United States and Canada will attend classes full time while living in campus dormitories with Chinese roommates, most of whom will be non-Christians.

Founded by Hong Kong Baptist Association in 1956, Hong Kong Baptist University is the only accredited Christian university in the Peoples Republic of China. It enrolls 5,000 students in degree programs and another 35,000 night and weekend students. About 1,200 students are Christians, officials report. Most courses are taught in English, to prepare students for international business demands in Hong Kong.

Forty-three colleges and universities from 26 states have signed on as permanent partners in the new program, said Pat Pattillo, a former Samford University official now serving as North American liaison for the Hong Kong school.

Among those schools are flagship Southern Baptist universities including Baylor, Mercer, Stetson, Samford, Furman, Ouachita and Oklahoma Baptist University, he said. Other partner schools include Grand Canyon, East Texas Baptist, Gardner-Webb, Wingate, Belmont and Union universities; Carson-Newman, Georgetown, Judson, Palm Beach Atlantic, California Baptist, Averett, Shorter, Louisiana and Mississippi colleges; and all four Baptist schools in Missouri, Pattillo said.

Also involved are eight schools affiliated with American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. as well as other schools affiliated with Methodist, Lutheran, Disciples and Presbyterian denominations, Pattillo added. Students will also be sponsored each semester through the Baptist Union of Western Canada, he said.

"We believe this study-abroad program will be one of the most effective ways to build lasting personal friendships between North American Christians and many of the future leaders in China," said Daniel Tse, president of Hong Kong Baptist University.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

Former U.S. ambassador addresses Baptist students

By Vicki Stamps

ST. LOUIS (ABP) -- Former United States ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick told Baptist college students in Missouri the world is better and safer now than it was a decade ago.

"Since the end of the Cold War, the world is better and safer," Kirkpatrick told more than 300 participants in the March 28 Missouri Baptist College Leadership Forum in St. Louis. "In many ways, the world is more hospitable to human beings."

Kirkpatrick, who during the Reagan administration was United States representative to the United Nations and a member of the National Security Council, quickly added that many problems remain and some new ones were created by the unexpected end of the Cold War.

"The Cold War shaped all of our foreign policies," she said. "Suddenly, most of our assumptions about foreign affairs became irrelevant. Everything had to be rethought."

Serving in the U.N. amid international tensions during the Cold War, Kirkpatrick said her faith in God became indispensable. In an interview, she described her working environment.

"During the Cold War years, there was no agreement or consensus about anything at the United Nations: values, religion, faith or goals," she said. "The United States was really in a position of isolation."

The former ambassador said she also felt isolation in her personal life. Her husband, now deceased, was working in Washington, while she served at the U.N. in New York.

"I was putting in 14 to 15 hours a day without much support," she said. "I prayed more during those years than I ever had before. Prayer became a pervasive part of my life because I had important decisions to make and I didn't know what to do. I understood our general goals, but I sought God for ways to achieve them."

Kirkpatrick said the Cold War's sudden end sparked an enthusiasm in her that continues. "I'm most excited about the spread of democracy," she said. "The success of democracy is critical to peace in Europe and in the rest of the world. It is important to us that Russia succeed in building a democracy and a representative system on the foundation of the previous system."

Kirkpatrick cited recent history in Central and South America as evidence that democracy is spreading. "All countries except two have democratic governments, and all are making progress in the establishment of rule of law," she said.

Kirkpatrick said the United States should help emerging democracies by discouraging violence and promoting capitalism. "Capitalism goes hand in hand with democracy because it relies on the power of freedom and the creativity of the individual," she said.

Even in places where democracy is spreading more slowly, Kirkpatrick said she is optimistic. In describing the situation in China, Kirkpatrick used the analogy of a sidewalk with a crack in it. "By dropping seeds into the crack -- seeds of individual creativity, choice and freedom -- the dynamic of democracy can grow and crack repression."

Kirkpatrick challenged the group to encourage their representatives to maintain a strong national defense. She also said the U.S. must pay dues it owes to the U.N. if the nation is to maintain its effectiveness in the international community.

"The U.N. provides a place for us to learn, listen and become wiser about what other nations hope for and what they think," she said.

During the question-and-answer time of the meeting, Kirkpatrick said if she could make a change in foreign policy today, she would not deploy U.S. military forces casually and would never deploy them under U.N. command in a conflict situation.

As a Leavey professor at Georgetown University and senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, Kirkpatrick resonated with the idea behind the establishment of the Missouri Baptist College Leadership Forum.

"Contact with a wide range of people active in the world is an important part of education," she said. "It is important to hear real-life perspectives and learn from the insights of others."

Tornadoes cause minor damage to Baptist buildings in Nashville

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The tornadoes that roared through downtown Nashville April 16 caused minor damage to Southern Baptist offices there, but no employees were injured by the storm.

The tornadoes damaged more than 500 buildings in Nashville but claimed no lives there. However, the same band of tornado-producing storms killed at least 11 people in three Southern states.

In downtown Nashville, there was minor damage -- mostly broken windows -- at each of the buildings that are part of the massive Sunday School Board complex. Employees huddled safely inside as the tornado blew past at about 3:30 p.m.

Employee cars in the parking lots were damaged, guard stations were blown away, and three railroad cars were overturned onto one parking lot, reported Linda Lawson, spokeswoman for the Sunday School Board. One employee was slightly injured in a fall after the storm passed. A back-up power supply prevented any loss of data in the board's extensive information systems.

The worst damage was to the east of downtown. East Nashville, an historic part of the city, "is a disaster area," Lawson said.

At the request of the mayor and governor, most downtown businesses were closed the day after, April 17. It was the first time since the early 1970s that the Sunday School Board was closed. The last day of the board's week-long spring revival was cancelled. The revival message from Florida pastor Jerry Vines on the day of the storm: "Are You Ready?"

Across the street at the Executive Committee Building, headquarters for several Southern Baptist Convention agencies, damage was limited to 22 broken windows -- in most cases, the outer pane of double-paned windows. There were no known injuries. Some employees did go to work April 17.

Elsewhere in Nashville, an estimated 100 people were injured. Public officials, however, were relieved that no lives were lost. "I would have said, when I looked around, there would have to be dozens of people [killed]," Mayor Phil Bredesen told the Associated Press. "Providence was looking after us yesterday."

-30-

-- ABP staff

END