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In this issue:

- **SBC approves family statement, declining to add amendments**
- **Commentary expands on family statement**
- **'Southern Baptist elect Patterson president 20 years after he launched 'resurgence**
- **SBC resolutions describe 'true' gospel, demand moral character of leaders**
- **Merritt cautions Southern Baptists, blasts Mormon doctrine**
- **SBC changes agency name, meeting schedule, considers changing convention's name**

SBC approves family statement, declining to add amendments

By Mark Wingfield

SALT LAKE CITY (ABP) -- Attempts to soften language which urges wives to submit to their husbands and to include references to single adults and widows were handily turned aside as a section on family was added to the Southern Baptist Convention's doctrinal statement June 9.

The proposed Article XVIII of the "Baptist Faith and Message," drafted by a seven-member committee, passed overwhelmingly by a show-of-hands vote on the opening day of the SBC's annual meeting in Salt Lake City.

It was the first amendment of the SBC's doctrinal statement in 35 years. The last major revision occurred in 1963, under direction of a committee comprised of the presidents of the state Baptist conventions.

The latest revising committee was appointed by SBC President Tom Elliff last year in response to a motion made at the annual meeting in Dallas. The committee was chaired by Anthony Jordan, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

In a news conference after adoption of the new section, Jordan said the addition was needed because of the challenges modern culture presents to the biblical understanding of family.

Due to the "destruction and break-up of the home," it is time for Southern Baptists to clarify their stance, he said.

The four-paragraph statement says God has "ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society." It defines family as "persons related to one another by marriage, blood or adoption."

Marriage is "the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime," it adds.

The most-discussed portion of the statement highlights the roles of men and women in a marriage and declares that wives must submit to their husbands.

"A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church," it declares. "He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her

husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation."

The first attempt to amend the proposal focused on this section, with a messenger asserting that the committee's work was unbiblical.

"We need to be very clear that when we amend the 'Baptist Faith and Message,' a document that has stood us well as Southern Baptists for nearly three decades, that we do so scripturally," said Tim Owings, pastor of First Baptist Church of Augusta, Ga.

His amendment would have changed the article to read: "Both husband and wife are to submit graciously to each other as servant leaders in the home, even as the church willingly submits to the lordship of Christ."

This is more in keeping with the Bible's teaching in Ephesians 5:21, he said. In that passage, the Apostle Paul admonishes his readers to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

This verse comes immediately prior to Paul's oft-quoted discourse on husbands and wives. Many conservative Christians separate verse 21 from the verses that follow, giving more weight to the verses about wives submitting to husbands.

But other scholars say verse 21 should be understood as the thesis statement of the entire passage that follows. According to this view, the admonition to "submit to one another" is illustrated in the following verses with applications of how wives are to submit to husbands and husbands to wives. This is commonly referred to as language of "mutual submission."

The view of mutual submission was not embraced by the drafting committee, which emphasized not Ephesians 5:21 but later verses in Ephesians 5, such as verses 22 and 23 which say: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church."

In response to Owings' proposed amendment, committee member Dorothy Patterson acknowledged the call for mutual submission in Ephesians 5:21 but said that must yield to other scriptures that give "the very clear admonition for wives to submit to their husbands."

Patterson, a biblical scholar who recently completed a doctorate with a dissertation on the theology of womanhood and is the wife of newly elected SBC President Paige Patterson, spoke more on this subject in a news conference.

"When it comes to submitting to my husband even when he's wrong, I just do it," she said. "He is accountable to God."

Her sentiment was echoed by the other female member of the committee, Mary Mohler, wife of Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"The whole issue comes down to a matter of Scripture," she said. "It's not my prerogative to go through and start cutting and slashing passages. ... It is my pleasure and responsibility to submit to the leadership of my husband in our home. ... My glad acceptance of that says nothing about my gifts or abilities or intelligence."

On the convention floor, one other messenger spoke in favor of the amendment and two others spoke against the amendment, including former SBC President Adrian Rogers. Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., argued that the appeal to mutual submission "confuses things."

"The wife is to love her husband and reverence her husband as the church does the Lord Jesus Christ," he said. The amendment "convolutes all that. It would make it seem as though Christ would find himself submitting to the church ... and turns the entire thing on its head."

Owings returned to the microphone to assure that was not his intent in suggesting the amendment.

"The wording of this change in no way suggests that Christ is to submit to any of us," he said. "Christ is the head. That is without equivocation."

The suggested amendment failed by a large margin on a show-of-hands vote.

A second attempt to amend the committee's wording was made by Dennis Wiles of First Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala.

He suggested an expansion of the statement's description of families as "composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood or adoption."

After this sentence, he would have added: "The Bible contains many examples of the diverse manifestations of the family. Singles adults, childless couples, widows and widowers can comprise legitimate expressions of the family."

Wiles said his concern was that the statement not appear to exclude those who are not parents or who are not married. "I am simply asking that we include a broad biblical statement about the family and not just one about parenting."

His concern was shared by David McNair of First Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss.

"Over one-third of the adult members of SBC churches are in a single state," McNair said. "I appreciate the work the committee has done, but what they have not said is a very important message. They are not addressing singleness in our Southern Baptist churches. This amendment will help with that."

Committee chairman Jordan spoke against the amendment, arguing that "when you talk about being related through marriage, blood or adoption, it covers all those." Further, he said, the committee had worked to keep the statement in a succinct form.

As before, this proposal to amend the statement failed on a show-of-hands vote.

Although most Southern Baptists who oppose aspects of the new statement on family did not attend the annual meeting in Salt Lake City, they and other non-Baptists were quoted widely in the secular and religious press. Critics included pastors, scholars, feminists, ethicists and workers with battered women.

Reba Cobb, a member of Crescent Hill Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., and former director of the Center for Women and Children there, told the Louisville Courier-Journal that the position taken by the SBC is similar to the justification used by some men who beat their wives.

To focus only on the language about wives submitting sends women "a terrible mixed message about what to do when a husband batters them" and leads some women to think they have no choice but to submit, Cobb said. "And we send a message to the husband that he can do whatever he need to because he is the head of the household."

Prior to the SBC, the committee's wording had been criticized by Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville, Tenn. Parham charged that the statement on family "forgot Jesus."

"A Christian definition of family should be grounded in Jesus' definition of family," he said. "Jesus defined family first in terms of loyalty to God, not blood ties. ... The statement forgot Jesus and made June Cleaver a biblical model for motherhood."

Other critics said the statement was offensive to women who work outside the home and that it implies women should do things their husbands demand even if they know those things are wrong.

Committee member Richard Land said that only an "absurd reading" of the statement could be construed to imply that women should not work outside the home. His own wife, he said, earned a doctorate and works as a counselor.

"I think what we're saying is that's a decision for a husband and wife to make," Land explained. "But if a husband doesn't want his wife to work outside the home, then she should not."

Patterson also attempted to explain the limits to which a wife must obey the demands of her husband.

"If Paige were to come in and tell me to shoot my granddaughter, he better run for cover," she said. "There's no way that's from God."

On the other hand, if he said they should take their dog to church, she would obey him. Only she would hope he was preaching that day and would have to suffer through the dog's howling, she said.

Commentary expands on family statement

SALT LAKE CITY (ABP) -- In addition to the four-paragraph statement on family now added to the "Baptist Faith and Message," the committee which drafted the statement has released a brief commentary on it.

The commentary, which was released at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Salt Lake City, was described as an effort to "enhance understanding" of the statement.

Although the statement itself does not directly address homosexuality, the commentary does.

The statement says only that "marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime" and that sexual expression is intended only within marriage.

The commentary expands upon that with this paragraph: "Believers must resist any claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships that biblically have been declared illicit or perverse, lest they fall prey to an accommodation of the spirit of the age. Deviation from God's plan for marriage mars the image of God and distorts the oneness God intended in the sexual union between one woman and one man. The perversion of homosexuality defies even childbirth, since it negates natural conception."

The commentary also acknowledges the reality of divorce, while the statement mentions only that marriage should last a lifetime.

Breaking marriage bonds "brings hurt to all those involved, and thus every effort ought to be made for marital reconciliation and restoration," the commentary says. The commentary acknowledges, however, that even Jesus said the "hardness of the human heart" could on occasion circumvent God's plan for enduring marriages.

The statement makes no direct mention of single adults or childless couples, a fact brought out by a failed attempt to amend the statement before its adoption.

However, the commentary gives one sentence of explanation on this subject: "Childless couples, as well as single men and women, have the opportunity to pass on a godly legacy through involvement with the children within their extended family circles, in their churches and in their respective communities."

The commentary also sheds further light on the committee's understanding of how wives should "submit" to their husbands and how husbands should "lead" their wives.

A husband is given "headship," the commentary says, which means he "cares responsibly for his wife's spiritual, emotional and physical needs."

This headship is "a responsibility to be assumed with humility and a servant's heart rather than a right to be demanded with pride and oppressive tyranny," the commentary says. "The wife is to respond to her husband's loving headship with honor and respect."

By yielding to her husband's leadership, a wife "becomes a resource for evangelism," glorifies God, becomes a channel for spiritual growth and brings honor to God's word, the commentary explains.

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-- By Mark Wingfield

Southern Baptist elect Patterson president 20 years after he launched 'resurgence'

By Marv Knox

SALT LAKE CITY (ABP) --Twenty years after he launched a movement that steered their convention sharply to the right, Southern Baptists elected Paige Patterson as their leader.

Messengers to the 1998 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Salt Lake City elected Patterson as SBC president June 9. He was the lone candidate for the post and was elected by acclamation.

Patterson, 55, is president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. As the new SBC president, he succeeds Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., who completed a second one-year term as president in Salt Lake City.

Patterson is regarded as one of the two pilots of the theological/political process that gained control of the convention and moved it rapidly and steadily in a more conservative direction.

When he began that process, Patterson was president of Criswell College in Dallas. He joined forces with Paul Pressler, then a judge in Houston, in the late 1970s. They devised a strategy for gaining control of the convention by winning its presidential elections.

Patterson has been credited with crafting the movement's theological language -- championing faithfulness to the Bible and branding opponents as "liberals." Pressler is the acknowledged political strategist, who showed supporters how they could gain control of the SBC's agencies and institutions through the appointive powers of the president.

Patterson's election marked the 20th consecutive time in which his group, the so-called conservatives, won the presidency. His no-contest victory contrasted sharply with the early years, when the Patterson/Pressler coalition's candidates scratched out slim victories over the so-called moderates, who stopped fielding candidates after 1990.

Still, looking back during a post-election news conference, Patterson admitted he never dreamed his political juggernaut would be so successful that it could propel him into the presidency.

"When, in 1978, we began to discuss a 'conservative resurgence' in the Southern Baptist Convention, I personally had no hope of winning," Patterson told reporters.

He described himself as a pessimist and a "denominational child," the son of longtime Texas Baptist Executive Director T.A. Patterson. From that perspective, he realized "it would take overwhelming grassroots support" to win political victories in the face of opposition by the denominational press and agency leadership.

The resulting 20 years of denominational controversy provided "an essential and necessary exercise in self-definition," Patterson said. The process has left Patterson and his supporters firmly in control of the convention, with like-minded trustees and administrators at the helm of SBC agencies and institutions.

Patterson said he is surprised by and grateful for his group's success, but he added he feels an even stronger emotion. "About the only thing I really feel is a sense of awesome responsibility," he explained. "Everything you say or do may have a long-term impact on the kingdom of God."

Of the politics that marked his and the convention's recent past, Patterson said, "That's behind us now." He pledged to dedicate his SBC administration to guiding the convention to new heights in missions and evangelism.

Asked if he would reach out to Southern Baptists who opposed him during the past two decades, Patterson said, "Anybody who believes the Bible is true and is concerned for reaching the world for Christ is going to find themselves increasingly comfortable in the Southern Baptist Convention."

Patterson's personal goal for the convention is for Southern Baptists to see 1 million people baptized -- 500,000 in the United States and 500,000 abroad -- in the year 2000, he reported.

He's also looking forward to the summer of 1999, when Southern Baptists will "plant an enormous number of new churches" in Atlanta in conjunction with that year's SBC annual meeting in that city.

"That's the passion of my soul," Patterson said of evangelism and church-starting. He noted the only thing that ever awakens him in the middle of the night is "the vision of some soul dying without Christ."

Patterson addressed a range of other issues during his meeting with reporters. They included.

-- Mormons.

Patterson's election took place in Salt Lake City, the seat of the Mormon church, and many Southern Baptists spent much of the week sharing their Christian faith with people in the area.

Southern Baptists and Mormons share "some very strong affinities -- morality, concern for socio-political justices, opposition to pornography, support for family" and concern for religious liberty, he acknowledged, "but we are light years apart doctrinally."

-- Family.

During the day of his election, messengers to the annual meeting approved an article on family to be added to the Baptist Faith and Message statement. While calling the woman "equal" to her husband, the article says a wife is to "submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband ..." and to "respect her husband."

Asked if the new article's language is "hot" and possibly offensive to some people, Patterson said, "It's only 'hot' language to someone who happens not to be familiar with the Bible."

The committee which drafted the article described "what Baptists normally believe," he said, adding the article particularly is needed during a time of family disintegration.

The article is not "anti-feminist," he explained, because Southern Baptists believed what it says long before feminism became a philosophical or political force.

The article also speaks to gay-rights groups, he noted. "The biblical position for the home is one man with one woman for life," he explained.

However, Christians also have "no excuse for gay-bashing," despite sharp difference with homosexual advocates, he advised.

"All of us have things in our life that ought not to be, but we need to correct them" in light of the Bible's teachings, he said.

-- National leaders.

Asked if Southern Baptists should draft a statement directed to a fellow Southern Baptist, Bill Clinton, Patterson declined to name names or engage in specific issues regarding the president or other leaders.

"Most Southern Baptists are convinced character ... is a major issue for those serving in public office," Patterson said, citing the need for Americans to elect people of "good character."

-- Political leadership.

Noting James Dobson, keynote speaker for the annual meeting, had called for reform in the Republican party, a reporter asked Patterson if he would take on a similar leadership role among Republicans.

"Baptists are most effective when we are preaching prophetically from our pulpits," Patterson said. That doesn't mean individual Baptists should be discouraged from involvement in politics, he added.

"We are going to continue to preach to the government" and leave "individual political involvement up to individuals and God," he noted.

-- Disney.

A year before Patterson's election, messengers to the 1997 SBC annual meeting approved a statement calling for a boycott of the Disney Company. Asked if he would continue to endorse the boycott, Patterson noted the issue had been assigned to the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and that he "will stand behind that" action.

But he noted two points have been missed regarding the SBC's Disney action.

"First, Southern Baptists were speaking to themselves as much as to others" in calling for the boycott, he said. "We need to be careful what we choose for entertainment. ..."

Second, Disney was called out from among a host of purveyors of anti-family material because Disney "claims to be an organization that is trying to make family life in America better," he explained.

"There's a basic integrity issue that needs to be addressed," he said, adding he is glad Southern Baptists chose to address the issue.

-- SBC name change.

Southern Baptists must think carefully before they consider changing their convention's name, as was proposed twice at the annual meeting, Patterson noted.

"'Southern Baptist' is not accurate as a means of regional identification," he acknowledged. "But 'Southern Baptist' has come to stand for some things -- religious liberty, evangelism and missions. If you change the name, do you give up the high ground of identification?"

Patterson is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he earned master's and doctor's degrees.

While he was president of Criswell College, he was associate pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. He has been pastor of churches in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas.

He and his wife, Dorothy, have two adult children and a grandchild.

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SBC resolutions describe 'true' gospel, demand moral character of leaders

By Bob Allen

SALT LAKE CITY (ABP) -- Meeting near the headquarters of the Mormon church, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution June 10 affirming "the finality, sufficiency and exclusivity" of the Christian gospel and the Bible as "the sole source of saving truth."

The resolution, titled "On the true Christian gospel," does not mention the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by name, but it repudiates several Mormon teachings by affirming the Trinity, stating that Jesus was conceived without sexual relations and rejecting the idea that humans can merit salvation by good works.

SBC messengers, meeting June 9-11 in Salt Lake City, adopted the resolution without discussion. "If you'll read this resolution, you'll understand the significance of this resolution to the world," SBC president Tom Elliff said after the vote.

Michael Whitehead, chairman of the convention's resolutions committee, told reporters the resolution includes Mormons but also has a "broader application" to other faiths that teach there are other paths to salvation than faith in Jesus Christ.

The LDS church, founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith, rejects the historic creeds of orthodox Christianity and sees itself as restoring the state of the Christian faith before it became tainted by Western philosophies.

Mormons read the Bible -- though they interpret it differently than other denominations -- but also accept other writings as authoritative, including the Book of Mormon. Other unique teachings include the idea that God was once a man, that he literally fathered Jesus through sexual intercourse with Mary and that individuals can eventually become gods by leading a devout life.

While Mormons consider themselves to be Christians, a "Belief Bulletin" published by Southern Baptists' interfaith-witness division groups Mormons under a category of "cults, sects and new religious movements."

The resolution describes God as "the only true, eternal Creator and self-sufficient, self-existent Sovereign of the universe" who is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It calls Jesus Christ "the unique and eternal Son of God" who "was supernaturally conceived of the Holy Spirit, without sexual relations, born of the virgin Mary."

It affirms salvation is by grace through faith and that "all human works, merits and forms of righteousness are as filthy rags in God's sight."

The resolution also notes, "There have been and will be many false and counterfeit Christs."

James Smith, a member of the resolutions committee, described the resolution as "a concise statement of what the gospel is."

"This is the gospel all men and women and boys and girls in this city and throughout the world need to know, and this is why we brought this as our first resolution," said Smith, of Louisville, Ky.

Another resolution adopted Wednesday, "on moral character of public officials" noted "serious allegations ... about moral and legal misconduct by certain public officials" and called on Americans to "embrace and act on the conviction that character does count in public office" and to elect officials who "demonstrate consistent honesty, moral purity and the highest character."

The convention rejected an amendment to the resolution that would have mentioned President Bill Clinton by name. "There are plenty of names on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue to which this resolution might be applicable," Whitehead said.

A second report of the resolutions committee is scheduled Thursday.

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Merritt cautions Southern Baptists, blasts Mormon doctrine

By Michael Clingenpeel

SALT LAKE CITY (ABP) -- In the shadow of Mormonism's main temple, the chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's powerful Executive Committee urged Southern Baptists to maintain their stand against theological liberalism and criticized Mormon doctrine as "counterfeit Christianity."

The past 20 years have been Southern Baptists' "finest hour," said James Merritt in the annual convention sermon during the SBC's Wednesday morning session in Salt Lake City. Merritt praised Southern Baptists for turning their denomination around theologically. "A battle was fought, a war was waged, blood was spilled, but we took our stand," Merritt said.

But he cautioned that the two-decade "battle for the soul of our denomination" will never be over. "There may be a cease fire, but ... we can never let our guard down."

Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church in Snellville, Ga., warned against "spiritual crocodiles that line the banks of the river of Christianity" and "stealth liberals who fly in under spiritual radar" to steal colleges, seminaries, churches and denomination.

Taking his text from Jude 3-4, Merritt directed most of his comments to Southern Baptists, who he said must extend the faith, contend for the faith and defend the faith if they are to be used by God. The Georgia pastor included six "non-negotiable" doctrines in his definition of the faith: the infallibility of Scripture, deity of Christ, and Jesus' virgin birth, substitutionary death, physical resurrection and literal return.

He exhorted Southern Baptists to find their unity around salvation, not the Cooperative Program, the SBC's unified giving plan since 1925. "Nothing should excite us more," according to Merritt.

But Merritt used the setting, just two blocks from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints headquarters, to blast Mormons as doctrinally separate from orthodox Christianity. He commended their evangelistic devotion which has produced 60,000 missionaries but declared their message "false."

In a clear attack against the Book of Mormon, a 19th century writing LDS churches hold as an additional revelation from God written on gold tablets and translated by LDS founder Joseph Smith, Merritt argued that God's revelation ended with the Bible.

"When revelation ended, so did inspiration. The Bible is the only word we have from God, and it is the only word we need from God Therefore, we don't need Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Ellen White, golden tablets, dreams and visions or another testament." Any group that views any other book than the Bible as inspired, said Merritt, "let that group be anathema."

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SBC changes agency name, meeting schedule and considers changing convention's name

By Mark Wingfield and Michael Chute

SALT LAKE CITY (ABP) -- More than 100 years of Southern Baptist Convention tradition was changed by two quick votes June 9, and messengers took steps that could produce even more change next year.

Three-day annual meetings of the SBC now are history. Beginning next year, SBC annual meetings will be shortened to two days, still beginning on Tuesday morning but ending on Wednesday evening rather than Thursday morning.

Also, the name of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has been changed to LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Both changes were adopted as part of the SBC Executive Committee's report to messengers in Salt Lake City with little opposition. No one spoke against either recommendation.

During the same opening session of this year's annual meeting, two messengers made motions concerning changing the name of the SBC itself.

David Pope of One Heart Church in Rome, N.Y., asked that the Executive Committee be directed to conduct a feasibility study on changing the convention's name. A second motion from Orville Kool of Southern Hills Baptist Church of Sioux City, Iowa, suggested the name "Baptist Convention of North America."

However, Kool noted that if his proposed name presented legal problems, then the committee be instructed to present an alternate, legally appropriate name that "will reflect cultural sensitivity and will be a more accurate description of where our churches and missions are located."

Both messengers asked the Executive Committee to report results of the proposed study to messengers at the 1999 annual meeting in Atlanta, along with the committee's recommendation on whether to change the name. Both motions were referred by messengers to the Executive Committee for its consideration.

The idea for changing the schedule of annual meetings, adopted this year, mirrors similar changes enacted by many Baptist state conventions in recent years. On both the state and national level, convention leaders have explained that church members have less time to attend denominational meetings and no longer are willing to devote three days to the meetings.

In recent years, less than a quorum of messengers has remained in the convention hall on the final day of the SBC annual meeting, with many people leaving after the major items of business on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The three-day meetings have been the norm since 1971. Prior to that time, SBC annual meetings had been either four or five days long, generally running from Tuesday through Friday.

The change in SBC schedules will become effective next year, when the convention meets in Atlanta, although messengers to the Atlanta convention will be asked to give a second approval to one of the constitutional changes required.

Likewise, a second vote will be required next year on the name change for the Sunday School Board. However, the vote taken this year authorized the publishing agency to make the change effective immediately.

The Sunday School Board has operated under that name since its founding in 1891. President Jimmy Draper told messengers that was the best name for the agency when it was founded.

In 1891, the board's only assignment was to publish Sunday school literature, Draper said. But today, the publication of Sunday school literature accounts for only 25 percent of the board's far-reaching enterprises, he said.

The board's work today includes the publication of books, discipleship materials, youth and children's specialty products, operation of two conference centers, providing support for pastors and other church leaders directly and through national and regional training events, and varied work in multiple languages.

The name LifeWay Christian Resources, taken from the words of Jesus in John 14, more accurately reflects the scope of the board's work, Draper said. "The very name is a witness for Christ."

In an appeal for yet another change, three messengers to this year's meeting asked the Executive Committee to consider changing the location of the SBC's 2000 annual meeting from Orlando to another city in light of Southern Baptists' boycott of the Walt Disney Co. One of the entertainment and media conglomerate's theme parks, Disney World, is located in Orlando.

Skeet Workman of Southcrest Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas, made her motion to move the convention site because of the city of Orlando's decision to allow gay-rights groups to fly homosexual "rainbow" flags during gay week there, June 7-12. She contended the city's action supported the homosexual lifestyle.

Since Southern Baptists "have expressed displeasure with Disney World embracing the homosexual lifestyle through giving employee benefits to gay spouses and allowing Gay Day each year in this theme park," Workman said, the site should be changed "to allow Southern Baptists to not spend time and money where ungodliness has been presented and endorsed."

Wiley Drake, messenger from First Baptist Church of Buena Park, Calif., suggested that the Orlando site be changed to New York City in "light of the Disney boycott." During the 1996 SBC annual meeting, Drake spearheaded a successful effort to toughen the language of a resolution that laid the groundwork for the 1997 boycott.

Ken Wilson, messenger from North Central Baptist Church of Gainesville, Fla., asked that the 2000 meeting be moved from Orlando, suggesting that future convention sites be selected to support the North American Mission Board's focus on reaching urban areas.

Drake said canceling Orlando would do two things. "First, Walt Disney would end up with less money from Baptists by us going to New York. Second, it would be seen by Disney as a show of solidarity if indeed we do cancel."

However, convention officials noted they already had entered into contractual agreements with convention facilities in Orlando. Breaking those agreements could cost the SBC as much as \$300,000, said Herb Hollinger, vice president for convention news for the Executive Committee.

Hollinger pointed out that three major contracts have been signed with hotels in Orlando and a letter of agreement has been signed with the Orlando Convention Center.

All three motions to change the Orlando meeting site were referred to the Executive Committee for action.

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