



Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626
Fax: 904.262.7745
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Nashville, Tennessee

(00-24)

March 21, 2000

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Women carrying heavy load in most churches, Barna says
- Russell Dilday retiring from Truett Seminary post
- Former SBC missionary leads relief effort in Turkey

Women carrying heavy load in most churches, Barna says

By Bob Allen

VENTURA, Calif. (ABP) -- Women are the backbone of Christian congregations in America, according to a recent survey by the Barna Research Group.

While women comprise half of the United States population, there would be nearly 60 percent fewer Christians without them, according to a March press release on the Barna Web site.

Nearly half of the nation's women have beliefs which classify them as "born again," compared to just over a third of men, according to the study. That means there are between 11 million and 13 million more born-again women than men.

Women also tend to be "spiritual heavy-weights" when compared to men, the study says. Nearly eight in 10 women (79 percent) said the term "spiritual" describes them accurately, compared to 63 percent of men. Nearly seven out of 10 women (69 percent) identified with the phrase "deeply spiritual," compared to 50 percent of men.

More than 40 percent of female respondents said they have set specific spiritual goals they hope to accomplish during the next year or two. That compares with 29 percent of men.

Women are also more likely than men to say that religious faith is very important in their life, by a margin of 75 percent to 60 percent.

The study found women more active than men in 12 of 13 areas of religious participation. They are twice as likely to be involved in discipleship, 57 percent more likely to attend adult Sunday school; 56 percent more likely to hold a leadership position at church; 54 percent more likely to participate in a small group; 46 percent more likely to disciple others; 39 percent more likely to have a devotional or quiet time; 33 percent more likely to volunteer for a church; 29 percent more likely to read the Bible, attend church and share their faith with others; 23 percent more likely to give to a church and 16 percent more likely to pray. In one religious activity -- seeking a spiritual coach -- men and women participate equally. About 19 percent of each said they are involved in such an activity.

"Women, more often than not, take the lead role in the spiritual life of the family," said George Barna, president of the firm that conducted the research. "Women typically emerge as the primary -- or only -- spiritual mentor and role model for family members."

Barna said the trend "puts a tremendous burden on wives and mothers" and indicates an "apparent lack of spiritual leadership exhibited by millions of Christian men."

Barna said the results were not surprising, since men often emphasize issues such as career attainment and financial independence, while most women place a value on faith.

When asked to identify conditions that would create a desirable life, 75 percent of women said that having a close personal relationship with God was "very" desirable, ranking only behind having one marriage partner for life and good health. Other desirable conditions for women include having a clear purpose for life, living with a high degree of integrity and having close, personal friendships.

While 59 percent of women said that being deeply committed to the Christian life is very desirable and 49 percent strongly desire to be personally active in a church, Barna said there is evidence that many women are "burning out" from too much involvement. He noted a 22 percent slip in church attendance since 1991 and a 21 percent decline in the percentage of women who volunteer in a church.

"Churches need to consider whether or not they are providing sufficient opportunities for women to receive ministry and not just provide ministry to others," Barna said. Otherwise, he warned, churches might continue to lose women dropouts by the thousands.

While women dominate the ranks of lay leaders in the typical church, Barna said, that is not true of ordained clergy. Only 5 percent of the nation's churches are led by a female senior pastor.

The research is based upon six telephone surveys late last year and early this year among 4,755 men and women in 48 states. The margin of error is estimated at plus-or-minus 2 percent.

The Barna Research Group is an independent marketing-research company located in Ventura, Calif. The organization has been studying cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors since 1984.

-30-

Russell Dilday retiring from Truett Seminary post

By Bob Allen

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- Russell Dilday, whose 1994 firing as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary proved a watershed in a long-running battle between theological factions in the Southern Baptist Convention, is retiring after six years as a professor at Baylor University's George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

Dilday, 69, will retire in August, Baylor officials announced March 17. He was scheduled to speak during the seminary's chapel service March 23 with a reception honoring him and his wife, Betty, later that day.

"All of us at Baylor University are grateful for the service of Russell Dilday, not only to the university and Truett Seminary, but also for his lifetime of extraordinary service to Texas Baptists and, indeed, Baptists throughout the world," Baylor President Robert Sloan said in a statement.

Dilday, a distinguished professor of homiletics and special assistant to the president, also served as Truett's interim dean, when Sloan, the seminary's original dean, became president of the Baptist-affiliated university in Waco, Texas, in 1995.

Truett's current dean, Bradley Creed, called Dilday "a national treasure among Baptists" and "a very effective and popular teacher of ministry students."

Dilday said in a statement that his six years at Truett Seminary "have been fulfilling" and that he would continue to support the new seminary in the future. When he joined the seminary faculty in August 1994, Dilday said he probably would work for at least another three or four years.

Dilday, who teaches courses in preaching and biblical studies, was one of Truett Seminary's first faculty members. He came to the school, which currently meets at First Baptist Church in Waco but recently broke ground for a \$17 million permanent campus complex, five months after opponents on Southwestern's board of trustees succeeded in getting him fired as president of the seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

While replacing the 16-year president of the 4,000-student seminary has been described as one of the biggest accomplishments of the "conservative resurgence" party that controls the Southern Baptist Convention, it also galvanized moderate opposition as few events in a two-decade power struggle in the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

The abrupt dismissal of the respected and popular leader alarmed many Baptists, as did the method used to carry it out. Trustees, who a day earlier had given Dilday a positive performance review, voted on pre-printed ballots to fire him and within minutes had locks changed on his office door.

Dilday went on to serve two terms as president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, which in recent years has taken steps to distance the state's 2.7 million Baptists from conservatives that lead the SBC.

The 6,000-church BGCT, by far the largest autonomous state group aligned with the 15.8 million-member SBC, has added giving options that allow churches to bypass SBC ministries and announced plans to produce its own Sunday-school literature. Most recently it publicly disagreed with an SBC pronouncement calling for wifely submission and set a process in motion to open the door for membership by churches outside of Texas.

Texas conservatives reacted two years ago by forming a competing state group, the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, which pledges loyalty to the SBC. On a Web site, the new convention lists 296 affiliated churches and claims an annual budget of just under \$2 million.

-30-

Former SBC missionary leads relief effort in Turkey

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- A former Southern Baptist missionary fired in 1995 for charismatic worship practices is being hailed as a national hero in Singapore for relief efforts to earthquake victims in Turkey.

Charles Carroll, pastor of Community of Praise Baptist Church in Singapore, is credited with spearheading fund-raising efforts for victims of two major earthquakes last year that left 17,000 dead and 600,000 homeless.

Singapore's largest national newspaper, the Straits Times, sent a reporter and photographer with Carroll on his most recent monthly trip to Turkey to oversee rebuilding projects in two communities.

Born in America, Carroll has lived in Singapore 16 years. "Because of him, thousands of Turks now feel a deep gratitude to Singapore," the newspaper reported in an on-line version March 19.

The church's social-services arm, HighPoint Community Services Association, is building 50 homes for homeless, poor and displaced families in the Turkish town of Akyazi. Total cost for the homes is estimated at \$300,000.

One of the homes is being paid for by 50 residents of the association's halfway house for drug addicts, who pooled money from their \$15 weekend allowance and wages they earn from repair and painting work they do in Singapore. About 30 of the former addicts have worked in Turkey as volunteers.

The association also agreed March 7 to build two schools, costing \$650,000, in Akyazi and Duzce, another earthquake-ravaged town. Carroll also wants to build a community center on a 50-acre lot in front of the homes, which will cost \$150,000.

The effort began last August when Carroll wrote a letter to the Singapore newspaper asking for help to raise money for earthquake victims in Turkey. The appeal sparked a huge response. The Singapore-Turkey Friendship Association, for example, sent medical volunteer teams and \$1.1 million worth of medical supplies.

Carroll has solicited funds for the project in Argentina, the United States, Hong Kong, Indonesia and India, but about \$1.1 million of the \$2 million raised so far is from Singaporeans. He said he needs another \$300,000 to complete the project.

"Sometimes the burden of raising money keeps me up at night," he told the newspaper. "I'm not a fund raiser."

Carroll and his wife, Sharon, served 13 years as missionaries with the Foreign Mission Board [now called International Mission Board] of the Southern Baptist Convention before being fired in November 1995 for practices "not consistent with what [IMB] personnel should be encouraging and leading."

IMB President Jerry Rankin said at the time that the church's practice of "falling under the Spirit" -- in which worshippers fall to the floor in a spiritually induced fainting spell -- was causing "dissension and confusion" among Baptists in Singapore. Carroll denied the charge.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

END
