



Nashville, Tennessee
Associated
Baptist Press

Editor: **Bob Allen**
Executive editor: **Greg Warner**

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

October 17, 2000

(00-93)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Chapman and Wade differ over breakdown of last-minute talks**
- SBC year-end overage three times Texas cuts**
- Missouri governor was active Baptist**
- News briefs by Associated Baptist Press**

**Chapman and Wade differ over
breakdown of last-minute talks**

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) -- Plans for a behind-the-scenes dialogue between leaders of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and Southern Baptist Convention broke down at the last minute.

Baptist Press reported the abortive dialogue session Oct. 10 and blamed Texas Baptist leaders that the meeting did not materialize.

BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade, however, said the 11th-hour meeting couldn't be arranged because of scheduling conflicts so close to the state convention's impending annual meeting. He also charged that by going public through Baptist Press, SBC Executive Committee President Morris Chapman violated a "gentlemen's agreement" that neither side would talk to the media.

Chapman denies agreeing to any such provision and blames Wade for failing to do his part to bring the dialogue to fruition.

Both Wade and Chapman confirmed that they met privately in Dallas for more than four hours Sept. 28.

That meeting occurred one week after Chapman held a forum for Texas Baptist directors of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. Wade and other BGCT leaders were not informed about that meeting or invited to attend.

At that meeting, however, directors of missions asked Chapman and other SBC agency heads to try to reconcile with BGCT leaders before a proposal to defund several SBC agencies is presented to Texas Baptists at the BGCT annual session Oct. 30-31.

Both Wade and Chapman also confirmed that after their Sept. 28 meeting each agreed to enlist six other representatives to meet Oct. 19 in Dallas for further dialogue.

According to Wade, they agreed there would be "no publicity regarding our meeting and there would be no criticism if either of us could not meet before the convention."

"I am sad that SBC Executive Committee leadership and Baptist Press have chosen to take a private conversation and manipulatively use it as a propaganda ploy," Wade said.

"This episode illustrates one of the reasons why Texas Baptists feel the need to consider redirecting some BGCT funding away from the SBC Executive Committee."

BGCT president Clyde Glazener added his own criticism. "I'm very disappointed in Morris Chapman's willingness to go public with a confidential dialogue when he didn't get his way," said Glazener, pastor of Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth. "Anything that is said that suggests Charles Wade is less than impeccable in character and not above reproach in conduct and fairness is not the truth."

Chapman commented through Baptist Press after Wade notified him Oct. 5 that, after talking with the six individuals he hoped to invite to the next meeting, it did not appear possible to schedule such a meeting before the state convention.

"After review of an already overcrowded schedule, I determined it was not reasonable to put together a meeting before the convention in Corpus Christi," Wade told the Baptist Standard.

Further, Wade said, the other Texas Baptist leaders with whom he consulted felt it would be inappropriate to begin potentially complex discussions less than two weeks before a scheduled vote on funding changes that have already been approved by two key committees.

"Texas Baptists are at a crossroads," Wade explained. "The decisions that will be made at the BGCT meeting in Corpus Christi will have a profound and wide-ranging impact. The proposals to be considered are the products of long hours of prayerful study by various committees. They deserve to be discussed openly in our annual state convention.

"Once messengers have made their decisions and charted a course for our convention, then we can work with SBC leaders about how to implement those decisions and how to continue working together where we can."

Wade said he remains willing to meet with SBC leaders and wants to keep open lines of communication.

Chapman said the situation demonstrates that Texas Baptist leadership isn't interested in working with SBC leaders to find a solution to the impasse.

"I had hoped this meeting would be considered of such importance that everyone would have made it a top priority," he told Baptist Press. "Unfortunately, most of the BGCT leaders feel no urgency to talk with SBC leaders prior to their convention. To me, their unwillingness to meet with us signals their absolute resolve to press forward for the adoption of the Texas-preferred 2001 budget that dismantles the Cooperative Program in Texas and the unified cooperation that has existed with the Southern Baptist Convention."

The proposed Texas Baptist budget reduces funding to six SBC seminaries from \$5.3 million to no more than \$1 million and reallocates surplus funds to three BGCT-related theology schools. It also includes no money for the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and reduces to a token amount an allocation for the Executive Committee, redirecting another \$1 million to priority needs in Texas.

The proposal would not alter Texas funding of the SBC's two large mission boards, which together receive about 73 cents out of every dollar given at the national level through the Cooperative Program unified budget.

As recently as this summer, Chapman was saying he saw no need for further dialogue between SBC leadership and critics of changes made in the convention by conservatives since 1979.

He spoke against a motion at the SBC annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., to create a committee "to work toward reconciliation and restoration among Baptist groups."

Chapman told SBC messengers he saw no need for further dialogue because the majority of Southern Baptists are satisfied with the direction conservatives have taken the SBC. He cited seven years of increases in Cooperative Program giving as evidence.

SBC leaders also revised the "Baptist Faith and Message" without input from state convention leaders and rebuffed efforts by Wade and others to soften exclusionary language. Texas Baptist leaders have cited the

SBC's unilateral revision of the faith statement and the stated intent to use it as an "instrument of doctrinal accountability" as major areas of concern.

"Is anyone curious why these folks who haven't been interested in anything we have had to say for 20 years suddenly are interested in dialogue?" asked Glazener. "Have they suddenly become interested in what Texas Baptists feel about religious liberty and separation of church and state and priesthood of the believer, creedalism and forced terminations of those who disagree with their actions?"

The Baptist Press story said the failed attempt at dialogue before the Texas convention is the "second time in two months leaders of the Baptist General Convention of Texas have rejected an invitation to meet with leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention in an effort to reconcile differences."

The other incident cited by Baptist Press was a July 31 invitation from Chapman to Wade to hold a forum featuring BGCT and SBC leaders. Wade said he turned down the offer because the invitation did not disclose that the meeting was being held in conjunction with SBC leaders' meeting with directors of missions that excluded BGCT leaders and it would accomplish nothing to debate the "Baptist Faith and Message" after it had already passed.

This would have been a no-win situation, Glazener said. "Those who love conflict would have enjoyed it."

In the Baptist Press release, Chapman recalled that he and Wade in their private meeting "agreed to ask the two groups not to be critical publicly of each other while the talks were progressing."

"It now appears we both were too optimistic," Chapman said. "The fact of the matter is I am hopeful SBC leaders will refrain from caustic rhetoric."

Under Chapman's leadership, meanwhile, the SBC Executive Committee recently mailed out thousands of magazines to Texas Baptists urging defeat of the funding changes and charging BGCT leaders have not told the truth about the SBC. The Executive Committee during the same time period launched a Web site devoted to criticizing leaders of the BGCT and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"Morris Chapman is leading a full-court press to try to prove what he has long maintained -- Baptists in Texas must do what they are told by the SBC," Glazener said.

-30-

SBC year-end overage three times Texas cuts

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) -- The Southern Baptist Convention took in a surplus for the fiscal year just ended that is three times more than the amount Texas Baptists are being asked to withhold from the national convention next year.

When the books closed on the SBC's fiscal year Sept. 30, total gifts to the national Cooperative Program unified budget were \$178.3 million, which is \$18.72 million over budget.

Meanwhile, SBC leaders have harshly criticized a Baptist General Convention of Texas proposal to reduce funding for the SBC by \$5.3 million next year. The Texas proposal would reduce funding for the six SBC seminaries from \$5.3 million to a maximum of \$1 million and would eliminate another \$1 million in funding for the SBC Executive Committee and Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

According to SBC policy, the \$18.72 million surplus will be distributed to all SBC agencies on the same percentage basis as regular Cooperative Program funding. That means the SBC seminaries as a group will receive a windfall of \$4.01 million, almost the same amount threatened to be lost from Texas next year.

Despite this unanticipated funding boost, leaders of several SBC seminaries have said the proposed reductions from Texas will cause severe financial strains at the seminaries. Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California, for example, has begun a budget-cutting process that President Bill Crews said could involve staff layoffs.

Members of the BGCT Seminary Study Committee that recommended the reallocation of Texas money have called Golden Gate's action and others like it political grandstanding intended to sway votes of messengers at the BGCT annual session in Corpus Christi next week.

The SBC Executive Committee, which would lose \$696,291 in funding from Texas next year, gained nearly that same amount in the year-end windfall, \$621,342.

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, which would lose \$364,582 from Texas, gained \$278,855 from the year-end overage.

The proposed changes in Texas funding would not reduce allocations to the SBC's International Mission Board, North American Mission Board or Annuity Board.

Those agencies also received year-end bonuses from the SBC overage, with the largest shares of money going to the two mission boards. The IMB received \$9.36 million in extra money, and NAMB received \$4.27 million in extra money.

SBC agencies have received bonuses from Cooperative Program overages for the last several years. The SBC has experienced seven consecutive years of Cooperative Program increases, a fact Executive Committee President Morris Chapman has said indicates rank-and-file Southern Baptists approve of the convention's current leadership and direction.

-30-

Missouri governor was active Baptist

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan, who died Oct. 16 in a plane crash near St. Louis, was a lifelong Southern Baptist active in his church and denomination.

Carnahan, 66, who was running for the U.S. Senate, died while en route to a campaign stop. Also killed were his son, Randy, who was piloting the plane, and a longtime aide.

Both Carnahan and his son were active members of First Baptist Church in Rolla, Mo. The governor, a member of the congregation since 1959, had served as a deacon, Sunday-school teacher, church-training director and choir member.

He was a former member of the Missouri Baptist Convention Executive Board and a former trustee of Southwest Baptist University and the Southern Baptist Foundation.

Campaign adviser Chris Sifford, who also died in the accident, was also a Baptist. He was a member of Memorial Baptist Church in Jefferson City, Mo.

Carnahan's career in public service spanned more than 40 years.

He entered public life at 26 when he became a municipal judge in Rolla. Two years later, he was elected to the Missouri House of Representatives. While in the legislature, his colleagues voted him majority floor leader, and twice he was awarded the St. Louis Globe-Democrat's Meritorious Service Award.

He left the House after his second term, returning to private practice in Rolla and focusing on his family.

He became governor in 1993.

In a 1994 interview with Associated Baptist Press, Carnahan described public service as a "noble profession" and said that his Baptist faith influenced the way he governed. "A lot of the decisions that one makes are very delicate ones on matters of policy," he said. "I would hope that I inject some very basic beliefs in my decision process."

However, he refused to hide behind his faith as an excuse to avoid tough decisions like imposing the death penalty. "I have never been one ... to wear religion on my sleeve as an excuse to (avoid) thinking through problems," he said. "And I think sometimes religion is used as just a badge or a shield, which it really isn't suited for."

Carnahan is survived by his wife, Jean, and three children.

-30-

-- By Bob Allen and Stacey Hamby

News briefs by Associated Baptist Press

Fisher inaugurated Belmont president

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Robert Fisher was inaugurated Sept. 29 as fourth president of Belmont University, a Baptist-affiliated school in Nashville, Tenn.

Fisher, former vice president for academic affairs at Arkansas State University, was appointed to the post in April.

Belmont was established in 1951 by the Tennessee Baptist Convention. In his inauguration speech, Fisher said he envisions the school as a place "where God's name is spoken and God's nature is discovered."

Louisiana paper goes on-line

ALEXANDRIA, La. (ABP) -- The Baptist Message, 117-year-old news journal of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, has launched an on-line version of the weekly paper.

A new Web site, www.baptistmessage.com, is up and operating, Editor Lynn Clayton announced in the paper's Sept. 14 issue.

Clayton said publishing on the Internet would make the paper more useful to overseas missionaries and more appealing to younger readers.

"We realize younger readers are accustomed to finding their news and information on the Internet," Clayton said. "We want to put the paper in the form of choice for Internet-oriented people so we will continue to be a strong voice for Baptist concerns in the future."

Baylor interested in Bush library

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Baylor University is interested in securing a library that would be dedicated to Texas governor and presidential candidate George W. Bush.

The Baylor Lariat reported Sept. 28 that Baylor's administration shared the idea with the school's board of regents, but no action was taken. "It is premature for them to think about, but planning is not premature," Baylor President Robert Sloan told the student newspaper.

Officials said the university would be interested in hosting the library whether or not Bush is elected president. If he loses the race, the library would be devoted to his career as governor and would contain papers and memorabilia of the governor's repository.

It is not uncommon for universities to compete for presidential archives, which are seen as a way to capture national attention. Baylor would seek to capitalize on Bush's ties to central Texas. The library would be built with private funds and would be non-partisan, officials said.

"Presidential libraries are not party related," Sloan explained. "It's not an issue of who's your candidate."

'Mainstream' group starts in Alabama

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (ABP) -- A group in Alabama has formed a new chapter of "mainstream" Baptists.

Mainstream Alabama Baptists, one of several state organizations modeled loosely after the highly successful Texas Baptists Committed, intends to support the Alabama Baptist State Convention and defend it against "fundamentalism" that the group says in a press release "has ravaged the Southern Baptist Convention."

The organization grew out of a meeting in Birmingham in August. Killen pastor Gerald Lord and Huntsville layman Joseph Jones are leading the group on an interim basis. The group said it plans to emphasize lay involvement in state-convention life.

Internet site launches Texas Baptist forum

BILLINGS, Mont. (ABP) -- The Internet site BaptistLife.Com has opened a Texas Baptist Forum, the third on-line discussion forum on the Web site that started earlier this year.

The new forum, introduced as Texas Baptists prepare to vote on altering ties to the Southern Baptist Convention, is moderated by Ralph Storm, a longtime member of First Baptist Church in Corpus Christi, Texas.

BaptistLife.Com is owned by Bruce Gourley, a campus minister at Montana State University in Billings who owns several businesses. He is a 1998 graduate of Mercer University and a 1992 graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

-30-

END
