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**Two professors lose jobs
over new faith statement**

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Two professors at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will leave their jobs rather than sign the "Baptist Faith and Message" as revised by the Southern Baptist Convention last year.

According to a May 1 story in the Star-Telegram newspaper in Fort Worth, Texas, 49-year-old Old Testament professor Rick Johnson and 44-year-old ethics professor Jeph Holloway have been told they must leave within a year.

The newspaper quoted a leader of the seminary's board of trustees as saying the two men disagree with the faith statement's new prohibition on women pastors.

The seminary's policy is that all faculty must agree with the current "Baptist Faith and Message." That means that when the convention changes the SBC faith statement, as has happened twice in three years, faculty are asked to endorse the changes.

That happened once before, in 1998, when the "Baptist Faith and Message" received a new amendment on the family declaring, among other things, that wives should submit to their husbands. Three professors left rather than endorse that view.

Seminary President Ken Hemphill told the Texas newspaper that limiting employment to faculty who are willing to sign the new document is in the SBC's best interest. Of the 86 full-time faculty members, 84 have agreed to sign the most recent edition of the faith statement first adopted by the SBC in 1925.

"We feel that it would be inappropriate for someone to take Southern Baptist funding and advocate a position that is contrary to a statement of faith that Baptists endorse," Hemphill said.

Other Baptists, disagree, however, saying the latest version of the "Baptist Faith and Message" has crossed over from a voluntary confession of faith to a binding creed. While confessions of faith are a part of Baptist tradition, Baptists have historically opposed any creed but the Bible.

Accounting firm settles with Sunbeam stockholders

MIAMI (ABP) -- Associated Press is reporting that Andersen -- the accounting giant formerly known as Arthur Andersen -- has agreed to pay \$110 million in a settlement to stockholders of appliance maker Sunbeam Corp.

The 13,000 investors who lost money in the now-defunct Baptist Foundation of Arizona hope the settlement -- the second-largest paid by an accounting firm in a securities lawsuit -- foreshadows the outcome of another fraud case involving Andersen.

The state of Arizona is also suing Andersen for up to \$600 million on behalf of Foundation investors. That suit claims that Andersen ignored red flags and issued clean audits, making it possible for Foundation officers to defraud investors.

Legal documents claim that Foundation leaders used transfers between subsidiary corporations to hide losses while operating an illegal Ponzi scheme where money from new investors was used to pay old investors.

The Foundation declared about \$640 million in debts and \$240 million in assets when it filed for bankruptcy protection in November 1999. Investors expect to receive no more than 31 percent to 41 percent of their money over five years from a court-ordered restructuring.

Criminal charges were expected to follow.

In the Sunbeam settlement, Andersen denied any wrongdoing but agreed to compensate at least 10,000 shareholders who bought options between April 1997 and June 1998. After the firing of former chairman Al Dunlap, Sunbeam was forced to restate financial results for six quarters. That prompted both the shareholder suit and investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The record payment by an accounting firm in such a case is \$335 million by Ernst & Young to Cendant shareholders in 1999.

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-- By ABP staff

Impact of Texas seminary defunding not as bad as feared, president says

By Mark Wyatt

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (ABP) -- Last year's vote by the Baptist General Convention of Texas sharply reducing funding for Southern Baptist Convention seminaries is, so far, having less impact at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary than first expected.

So said President Bill Crews in a report to the seminary's trustees at their spring meeting, April 23-24 in Mill Valley, Calif.

Crews said the move was expected to cost Golden Gate about a half-million dollars a year. But while financial support from "BGCT is down 3 percent" during the first half of the current SBC fiscal year, Crews said Cooperative Program support for GGBTS has increased 5 percent during the same period.

"I think we ought to rejoice," Crews told seminary trustees. "There has been some loss from BGCT, but other state conventions have more than made up for it."

Last fall Crews predicted that if the new Texas budget passed, Golden Gate would likely have to resort to staff layoffs and other cost-cutting measures. A Texas Baptist leader at the time dismissed Crews' dire prediction as a politically motivated attempt by SBC leaders to influence the BGCT vote a month later.

In other business at the spring meeting, trustees voted to hire the institution's first chief financial officer, filled an unexpected vacancy at the seminary's Rocky Mountain Campus and voted to extend time for finalizing next year's budget as administrators continue the search for a new controller.

Gary Groat, a career corporate finance executive with a Fortune 100 company and eight-year veteran of service in Christian higher education, was named vice president for business affairs. In his new position, Groat will have the same title as Jim Stephenson, who resigned the post late last year. However, seminary officials said Groat would serve in an expanded role as CFO because of the seminary's increasing need for strategic financial planning.

Since 1993 Groat has served as vice president for administration and chief financial officer at Criswell College in Dallas. He previously served 20 years in financial positions at Kraft Food Ingredients in Memphis, Tenn.

In a related action, seminary trustees agreed to delay approval of a budget for the 2001-02 fiscal year. Typically, a new one-year spending plan is approved annually during the trustees' spring meeting. This year, however, budget planning has been hindered by vacancies in the seminary's top two financial positions.

Trustees approved a schedule authorizing their finance committee and executive committee to approve the 2001-2002 budget by July 15. The budget, which takes effect Aug. 1, then will be submitted to the full board for ratification at the trustees' October meeting.

Meanwhile, Crews said a search is continuing for a new controller for Golden Gate. Jamie Lawson resigned as controller in March to accept another job.

Trustees voted to fill a key staff vacancy at the seminary's Rocky Mountain Campus in Denver. The new director is Steve Veteto, a Colorado native and pastor of CrossPoint Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, La. He replaces Emerson Falls, who has resigned to become president of Cook College and Theological School, a Native American institution of higher learning in Tempe, Ariz.

Veteto received the M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis. He has served as an adjunct professor at Mid-America and at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition to his new duties as director of the Rocky Mountain campus, Veteto also was elected to the Golden Gate faculty as associate professor of New Testament studies.

Trustees also approved two other additions to the GGBTS faculty, Shera Melick and Bob Royall.

Melick, who is completing work on her doctorate in education at Florida's Nova Southeastern University, was named assistant professor of Christian education effective Aug. 1. Her husband, Rick Melick, is GGBTS provost.

Royall joins the seminary faculty as associate professor and associate director of the doctor of ministry program effective Aug. 1. He has served with the North American Mission Board since 1994 as the Portland area director of student ministries for the Northwest Baptist Convention. Royall received the D.Min. and M.Div. degrees from Golden Gate Seminary.

Trustees also received a report on progress toward establishing a dual degree program with Union University. An official of the Jackson, Tenn., school said the "model program" would give students "all the advantages of a strong seminary education and strong emphasis in sociological research."

Union Provost Carla Sanderson said, "Graduates of this global partnership will be prepared theologically and will have the base of the liberal arts education that will prepare them to live and work across the globe."

Sanderson commended Golden Gate Seminary for "its commitment to global ministry."

Trustee chairman John Funk, whose term expires in June, challenged board members to "do more" as trustees. "We have a stewardship of a vision," declared Funk, a Southern California business consultant. "As that develops, it becomes a kind of intellectual property. What are you going to do with that?"

Funk said trustees "have an accountability to God" to see that everything is done to fulfill the vision God gives for the institution.

Trustees approved two recommendations Funk said would help "accomplish what has to be accomplished to see this vision not fizzle but explode." First, they scheduled a retreat in October to learn about governance principles and methods used by many Christian institutions of higher learning.

Second, trustees voted to designate the board's vice chairman as chairman-elect to ensure stronger continuity of leadership.

Trustees elected David George, trustee from Arlington, Texas, and pastor of Lake Arlington Baptist Church, as chairman for the coming year. George said he wants to challenge and help his fellow board members be the best they can be.

"If you're not going to do that I would respectfully ask you to resign," George said.

Also elected as trustee officers were Gary Black, an insurance executive from Novato, Calif., vice chairman and chairman-elect; and Steve Cavanaugh, pastor of Reynoldsburg Baptist Church in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, secretary.

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-- Bob Allen contributed to this report.

SBC's Land warms up to charitable choice; summit participants react to bigotry charges

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission President Richard Land said he is more assured about "charitable choice" plans after attending a Republican "faith-based" summit to tout President George W. Bush's sweeping new faith initiative.

In an ERLC press release, Land said he attended the April 24-25 summit, which was spearheaded by GOP congressional backers of charitable choice. He said he left the meeting "more assured of the White House's commitment to protecting religious liberty in the program and with a heightened recognition the controversial proposal could dramatically change social services in the United States."

Land had previously been quoted saying that he would not touch the direct federal grants with a "10-foot pole."

But whereas in February, Land was quoted in ERLC press releases saying that the plan "must meet" certain guidelines, including sending the money through vouchers to beneficiaries, now Land's press releases calls for the "program to be 'voucherized' as much as possible."

Land had also listed some required "ground rules" for the plan to meet constitutional muster:

- There must be a viable secular alternative.
- No religious group should be restricted or discriminated against in the distribution of funds.
- Government aid must go only for the nonreligious aspects of the program.
- It should "voucherize" the intended beneficiaries of the funds, empowering individuals to determine which provider to choose.

If the government attempts to censor the message of a group, Land had said, then that ministry "should never, under any circumstances, accept the money."

Land is still not endorsing charitable choice, but he now says he is more assured after hearing White

House officials reiterate that "any direct grant money to faith-based ministries must have voluntary participation in the faith aspect of the help and must be separately funded, which is, of course, one of the things we think is necessary for it to pass constitutional muster."

Land called the summit a success. "As the day progressed, you could feel an almost palpable sense among the participants that they had the possibility of being empowered by their government through the faith-based initiatives program to provide real help to real people in the zip codes where they live without having to go to the liberal elites' social-welfare plantation to get the resources."

Robert Reccord, president of the North American Mission Board, also was present for the summit.

Last January, Reccord was also skeptical of the charitable-choice plan. In a written statement, Reccord said: "Faith-based ministries need to proceed with caution. There can be a tendency over time for the government to attempt to control that which it subsidizes. Great wisdom will be required on this journey."

Most of the meetings at the two-day summit were closed to the press, but Associated Baptist Press was able to get in to interview two controversial figures at the summit -- football star Reggie White and Traditional Values Coalition Founder Louis Sheldon.

White and Sheldon were among a group of summit participants who had been singled out by Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., as being "religious bigots." At a press conference April 24 to oppose charitable choice, Nadler said, "If you think the fears of discrimination and religious persecution are exaggerated or imagined, look at the guest lists of religious bigots who are included on the White House guest list."

Specifically mentioned was Bishop J. Delano Ellis, who was fired from serving as Cleveland's police chaplain after delivering a sermon critical of Jews. After pressure from civil liberties groups, Ellis backed out of participating in the summit.

Nadler also mentioned White and Sheldon for their past statements.

Nadler said, "White offended virtually every ethnic group in America" during a speech in 1998 in Wisconsin. In discussing the different gifts God had given groups of people, White told the state legislature that blacks "like to sing and dance," while whites "know how to tap into money." He also said Asians know how to "turn a television into a watch."

Nadler criticized Sheldon for writing monthly fund-raising letters "on imagined threats from gay people."

Sheldon and White spoke to Associated Baptist Press at the Library of Congress during a break from the summit.

Sheldon said his Orthodox Jewish mother once told him that "sticks and stones may break your bones, but names should never hurt you." He said he is "absolutely not" a religious bigot. "I don't believe homosexuality was given to them by God, and that's their problem with me."

Sheldon called the meeting "filet mignon," because there was a lot of "meat" discussed at the summit. Asked if questions about the separation of church and state were discussed at the summit, Sheldon replied: "There are no church-state problems."

Sheldon would not comment on anonymous donors that are giving as much as \$250,000 each to fund a media campaign in support of charitable choice. Sheldon, who has been named as one of many helping to secure the donations, said, "I'm not at liberty to discuss it."

White told ABP: "Always remember that people who call you names, never say it to your face. If they got a problem with me, I'm here in Washington."

White said he runs an urban faith-based nonprofit group that receives state funds to help entrepreneurs develop business plans and strategies. On church-state issues, White said, "If the contract is about benefiting the church, then yes it's a problem. But not if it's going to help people."

News briefs from Associated Baptist Press

Fellowship reports strong third-quarter receipts

ATLANTA -- After getting off to a slow start, gifts to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship rebounded during the third quarter, pushing ahead of totals last fiscal year.

Record contributions in February and March pushed totals above \$12.2 million for the first nine months of the budget year, an increase of nearly 2 percent over the same period in the 1999-2000 fiscal year.

Three months ago Fellowship officials reported receipts were running 4 percent behind last year. The new figures are particularly encouraging, said David Wilkinson, the Fellowship communications coordinator, because last year's figures were inflated by a one-time emphasis on relief ministries in Kosovo.

However, fewer churches have contributed to the CBF through March this year than last -- 1,684 compared to 1,729. (ABP)

Breakaway Atlanta association elects leader

TUCKER, Ga. -- A second association of Southern Baptist churches in metropolitan Atlanta took a step closer to reality by electing an interim moderator April 17.

Bill Jaggar, pastor of the 1,000-member North Peachtree Baptist Church in Doraville, Ga., was elected to lead the group, which is in the process of developing bylaws and qualifying for recognition by the Georgia Baptist Convention.

The proposed Metro-Atlanta Southern Baptist Association is forming in protest of the Atlanta Baptist Association's refusal to discipline two churches for tolerating homosexuality.

Following his election at the meeting at Rehoboth Baptist Church in Tucker, Ga., however, Jaggar said the new group is not "anti-anyone."

"We are pro-kingdom of God, pro-winning souls for Jesus, pro-Southern Baptist Convention," he said, according to The Christian Index. A draft bylaw document describes the association's articles of faith as the "Baptist Faith and Message" statement "as currently adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention." (ABP)

Divinity school offering Jewish-studies program

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. -- Wake Forest University Divinity School plans to establish a visiting professor position for Jewish studies, thanks to a \$100,000 foundation grant.

The grant by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation of Philadelphia will bring Jewish theologians and scholars to the divinity school to teach one semester for each of three academic years.

Bill Leonard, dean of the divinity school in Winston-Salem, N.C., said the program would "extend interfaith dialogue in the university" and demonstrate "the importance of pluralism and our commitment to hearing a number of voices."

"I see this new Jewish studies position as a benefit to the whole university and to our area," Leonard said. (ABP)

Pilot Southern Baptist church starting slow

LA VILLA, Ill. -- A pilot church in a new North American Mission Board strategy to partner with mega-churches to establish new Southern Baptist congregations outside the Bible Belt is finding the going slow.

LakePoint Church in the affluent Chicago suburb of Lake Villa, Ill., made its official launch Easter Sunday with about 115 worshippers. Forty were first-time visitors.

The launch follows several months of groundwork, including the mailing of about 70,000 pieces of promotional material and a weeklong blitz during which missions volunteers knocked on 16,000 doors.

Pastor Kevin Garber told the Illinois Baptist newspaper that a similar effort in the South would have packed out the school gym where the church is meeting temporarily. But northern Illinois, where about four of every five people are Catholic or Lutheran, is far from a Southern Baptist stronghold.

"I think we got a dose of reality when we saw the turnout," Garber said. "We know we've got a tall order to fill, yet at the same time I know the Lord is in this work."

Garber said the church, funded with matching grants of \$250,000 over two years by NAMB and Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., hopes to be self-sustaining, which would require between 350 and 400 people, before its funding ends in June 2002.

Four other church starts are being planned on the same model in other cities in the hope they will become flagship congregations in their region. (ABP)

Tennessee Baptists to oppose gambling

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. -- A Tennessee Baptist leader is calling on churches to fight recent action in the legislature that could open the door for a state lottery.

The Tennessee General Assembly recently voted for a referendum on whether to repeal a restriction in the state constitution on gambling. James Porch, executive director-treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, wrote in an open letter on the front page of the convention newspaper, Baptist & Reflector, that he has received numerous letters and phone calls about the issue.

"Tennessee Baptists, a people who place priority on missions, evangelism, Christian education and benevolence, now must add another crucial priority -- a statewide concentrated emphasis to prevent gambling in this state," Porch wrote.

He said a special committee of the state convention's Executive Board is developing a strategy to mobilize Tennessee Baptists to defeat the referendum. (ABP)

Evangelist launching cross into space

FORT MYERS, Fla. -- Cross-carrying evangelist Arthur Blessitt, having taken his famous crosswalk to every nation on earth, is preparing for the next logical step -- space.

The 60-year-old Blessitt has walked nearly 35,000 miles carrying a 12-foot cross as a witness to his Christian faith since 1969.

Now, working with One Stop Satellite Solutions in Ogden, Utah, he has inserted the cross into a satellite, along with a miniature Bible, for space launch in November. The cross will be launched 400 miles above the earth, according to a press release. It is expected to remain in orbit for about 200 years and will circle the globe every 90 minutes. (ABP)

Retreat to focus on spirituality and nature

MARS HILL, N.C. -- This year's Gathering of Baptists and Others Interested in Spirituality will focus on finding God in nature.

The eighth annual gathering, scheduled June 10-16 at Mars Hill College in North Carolina, will be themed, "The Other Sacred Book: Nature in Spiritual Formation." Richard Cartwright Austin, a Presbyterian minister, author, activist and organic farmer, will be a featured speaker.

Information about the retreat is available by calling Paula Clayton-Dempsey or Debra Huff at (828) 689-1128 or e-mailing dhuff@mhc.edu. (ABP)

Publisher names new book editor

MACON, Ga. -- Smyth & Helwys Publishing in Macon, Ga., has named North Carolina minister Keith Gammons as its new book editor.

Gammons, a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with additional degrees from Duke and Appalachian State universities, takes the job June 1. He currently is an associate pastor at First Baptist Church of Greensboro, N.C., and teaches composition courses at UNC-Greensboro.

In his new job he will work in title acquisitions and editing of new books, including future volumes of the Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary.

"We are excited about Keith's blend of theological study, English and literature expertise and his experience in a local-church setting," said Lex Horton, vice president of the company's editorial division. (ABP)

Baptist World Alliance moves offices

FALLS CHURCH, Va. -- The Baptist World Alliance has relocated from old offices in McLean, Va., to a new building in another Washington suburb, Falls Church, Va.

The new address for headquarters of the international organization of Baptist unions and conventions is 406 N. Washington Street, Falls Church, VA 22046. Phone and fax numbers, as well as e-mail addresses, are unchanged. (ABP)

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