



# Associated Baptist Press

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## Study links prayer with pregnancy

By Mark Wingfield

NEW YORK (ABP) -- Mounting research finding health benefits to prayer gave birth to new evidence this fall with publication of a study on prayer and pregnancy.

The study, reported in the September issue of the Journal of Reproductive Medicine, involved 219 women receiving fertility treatment in a South Korean hospital. The women were classified into two statistically similar groups. One was prayed over by Christian intercessors and one was not.

The women receiving prayer were nearly twice as likely to become pregnant through the treatment as those not receiving prayer. Women in the prayed-for group also became pregnant at rates higher than normal for treatment in the same program at the same hospital.

Results of the study were reported by Rogerio Lobo, chairman of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Columbia University in New York City.

Here's how the study worked:

-- The 219 women, ranging in age from 26 to 46, were treated between December 1998 and March 1999 at Cha General Hospital in Seoul. All were candidates for in-vitro fertilization.

-- Unknown to them throughout the period of study, they were assigned to one of two groups.

-- The two groups were divided and randomized by an independent set of researchers not affiliated with the rest of the study. One group of women served as the control group, and they were not the objects of prayer. The other group became the object of regular intercessory prayer, although they did not know they were being prayed for.

-- All patients were treated with the same medical protocol.

-- Intercessors were enlisted in the United States, Canada and Australia to pray specifically for the women in the assigned group, although the intercessors received only photographs of the women and did not know their names or any other personal information.

-- Groups of three to 13 intercessors were given photographs of five women undergoing treatment and asked to pray for their ability to conceive.

-- Other groups of intercessors were enlisted to pray for the patients in a general way and to pray for the effectiveness of the others offering prayers.

-- Results of the fertility treatments were not reported to those conducting the prayer study until after pregnancy results were available for the entire test group.

In the final analysis, the group of women who received the unknown prayer support had a 50 percent pregnancy rate, compared to 26 percent in the control group.

Further, after adjusting for three spontaneous losses in each group, the group of women receiving prayer ended the study with more than double the rate of term deliveries seen in the control group. Forty-six percent of women in the prayed-for group delivered at term, compared to 22 percent of women in the group not receiving prayer.

The study showed particular success among women over the age of 30, where more problems with pregnancy usually occur.

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## **Tennessee Baptists extend, expand presidential study**

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- An expanded committee studying whether to increase powers of the president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention will continue its work for a second year.

Outgoing TBC president Hollie Miller, who appointed the special committee to study the role and effectiveness of the state convention president, said the committee had found that Tennessee is the only Southern Baptist state convention not giving its president authority to make appointments to key leadership posts but needed more time to find out why.

In a setback to conservatives hoping the study would expedite their efforts to control state convention governing boards, however, an amendment passed expanding the current committee to include all former state convention presidents still living in Tennessee.

Some of those former presidents have publicly opposed increasing the office's power.

Joe Stacker of Belmont Heights Baptist Church in Nashville moved to expand the committee. While the group already included five former state convention presidents, he said, "We need the wisdom of others."

Doug Sager, pastor of First Baptist Church of Concord, host church for the Nov. 13-14 annual meeting, spoke against the amendment proposed by Stacker.

"The heart of our president was to assess the convention as it is now," Sager said. "Keep the committee as it is, let it work, and bring a report next year."

Marvin Cameron, pastor of First Baptist Church in Kingsport, said that during the three decades he has attended TBC annual meetings, men of wisdom and stature have been elected as president. "I see nothing that would hinder the committee's work by adding these men," Cameron said.

Bob Pitman, pastor of Kirby Woods Baptist Church in Memphis, spoke against adding the presidents because some of them had signed a letter that appeared in the Baptist and Reflector citing their opposition to giving the president appointive powers.

That would bring in an agenda unfair to the current committee, Pitman argued.

After further debate, the amendment passed on a ballot vote by a margin of 760-742.

In the election of a new president, Nashville pastor Kevin Shrum defeated retired Clarksville pastor Verlon Moore by a margin of 876 to 705.

In other business, Dan Ireland, executive director of the Alabama Citizen's Action Program, urged Tennessee Baptists to work to defeat a November ballot on establishing a state lottery.

"Stand up, sound off, and chill out," said Ireland, who helped lead a successful fight against an Alabama lottery a few years ago.

Acknowledging that defeating the lottery Nov. 5 would "be a battle," Ireland said, the referendum "is not a decision on gambling."

"It is a decision about the children of Tennessee," he said.

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-- Adapted from reporting by Lonnie Wilkey

## **Kentucky Baptists messengers adopt Bible as basis for 'faith, practice' (corrected)**

By Trennis Henderson and David Winfrey

MURRAY, Ky. (ABP) -- Avoiding an up-or-down vote on controversial doctrines in the most recent edition of the "Baptist Faith and Message," Kentucky Baptists adopted a report acknowledging "value" of faith statements while terming the Bible "the basis for all our faith and practice."

The report followed a yearlong study by a committee charged with recommending how the Kentucky Baptist Convention "can best relate" to the "Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000.

The document, which contains several revisions from an earlier edition in 1963, has divided some state conventions between conservatives, who believe tightened doctrinal parameters are needed, and moderates, who prefer the old version because it gives more latitude in how to read and interpret Scripture.

The nine-member "Baptist Faith and Message" study committee came up with a compromise recommendation to "acknowledge the value" of a series of historic Baptist confessions of faith including both the 1963 and 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message."

Messengers at the state convention's annual meeting Nov. 13-14 in Murray overwhelmingly approved the committee's report.

Some messengers, however, feared the action would be interpreted as an endorsement of the 2000 statement.

"We're endorsing something we shouldn't endorse," said Regina Morgan of Zions Cause Baptist Church in Paducah.

She noted that Southern Baptist entities and some state Baptist groups have based hiring and firing decisions on the narrower theology in the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message."

"I don't know how to clear up this dilemma that if some people don't support every line of the revision, they lose their positions," Morgan said.

But Charles Barnes, the former convention president who chaired the study committee, disagreed with Morgan's interpretation.

"There is nothing in this report that would cause anyone to lose their position, so that is not a proper interpretation," Barnes responded. "Many conventions have acted in somewhat different manners. We feel this is best for Kentucky Baptists."

Addressing the same question later with reporters, Barnes said: "As a committee we felt the wording was very plain. It refers to multiple statements and multiple years. We are talking about each individual document -- 1925, 1963 and 2000" as available resources for Kentucky Baptists.

The recommendation encourages Kentucky Baptist churches and associations to "use confessions of faith as resources to inform and edify Kentucky Baptists concerning the basic tenets of our faith." Specific faith statements cited in the report are "The Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742), The New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1833), and The Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1925, with revisions in 1963, 1998 and 2000."

In other action, messengers elected retired director of missions Harold Greenfield as state convention president, approved a record Cooperative Program budget goal for the 2002-2003 fiscal year of \$23.2 million and adopted a resolution urging prayer in the wake of terrorism and war. A total of 1,732 messengers registered for this year's annual meeting, a 19 percent decrease from the 2,139 messengers who registered a year ago.

In the KBC presidential election, Greenfield was elected by a vote of 909 to 651 over Tom Butler. Greenfield served 29 years as director of missions for Caldwell-Lyon Association before retiring last year. Butler, a longtime news anchor and vice president of WPSD-TV in Paducah, retired in 1997.

While both men are theologically conservative, Greenfield received an unsolicited endorsement from the moderate Mainstream Baptists of Kentucky. Butler was endorsed by the conservative Kentucky Baptist Laymen's Network, an organization in which he has been involved. Every candidate endorsed by the laymen's network was defeated for the second straight year.

Greenfield, who served the past year as KBC first vice president, pledged to seek ways to "unify Kentucky Baptists, not divide us."

"I want to be inclusive," he said. "I want people of all stripes who are Baptist to be heard."

A motion to deny state convention membership to churches that cut ties to the SBC was forwarded to the KBC constitution and bylaws committee for study.

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## **CBF begins search for administrator**

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has launched a search to fill a newly restructured coordinator for congregational life position.

A six-member search committee from the CBF Coordinating Council will nominate a candidate for the post, created in a restructuring in October to match leadership positions more closely to the Fellowship's strategic plan.

The coordinator for congregational life position combines the two initiatives of faith formation and building community. Priorities include evangelism and outreach, spiritual growth, congregational health, marriage and family, interfaith ecumenical dialogue and reconciliation and justice. Also included are responsibilities for Baptist identity.

In a related move, Terry Hamrick, who has worked since 1996 as the CBF's coordinator for congregational life and leadership, took a new position, coordinator for leadership development.

Hamrick's restructured position includes congregational leadership, theological education and collegiate student ministries.

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-- By ABP staff

-- EDITOR'S NOTE: Information about applying for the CBF coordinator for congregational life is available by contacting Michele Deriso at the CBF Resource Center in Atlanta at (770) 220-1626 or <[mderiso@cbfnet.org](mailto:mderiso@cbfnet.org)>.

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