



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 (02-15)
Nashville, Tennessee

February 20, 2002

MAR 01 2002

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Ashcroft says God sides with forces of freedom
- SBC, state convention leaders propose new spiritual emphasis
- SBC Executive Committee authorizes study of funding
- Embattled Andersen gives clean audit to SBC
- Mainstream Baptists induct 37 into 'Hall of Fame'

Ashcroft says God sides with forces of freedom

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- God is on America's side in the war on terrorism, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft told religious broadcasters Feb. 19 in Nashville, Tenn.

Ashcroft filled in for President George W. Bush, who had been invited to address the Feb. 16-19 National Religious Broadcasters convention at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel but was traveling in Asia.

Bush still addressed the meeting in a videotaped message, however, applauding religious broadcasters as players in his faith-based and community initiative announced last year.

Bush described his proposal as an effort to "rally the armies of compassion and help solve the problems in our country."

"I salute all of you for doing your part to make this a better nation," Bush said.

Echoing themes the president has used frequently since the September terrorist attacks, Ashcroft described America's war on terrorism as a battle between good and evil.

"As President Bush has reminded us, we know God is not neutral in the battle of good and evil," Ashcroft said.

Governments do not grant freedom, Ashcroft said; it comes from God. "The guarding of freedom that God grants is the noble cause of the Department of Justice," he said.

Ashcroft defined freedom as the ability to make choices, while realizing that choices carry consequences. "The purpose of government is not to crush that freedom or override that freedom but to respect it and nurture it," he said.

"Terrorists have a different understanding of choice," he continued. "They fear that those with freedom will reject their dogma. They seek to impose their dogma rather than inspire it."

"Our fight against terrorism is a defense of freedom in its most profound sense," he said.

That freedom includes the right to choose how or if to worship God, he said. "I would say it is against my religion to impose my religion. If God made us free, who would I be to supersede his judgment."

He added, however, that America's founders presumed that morality could not be maintained apart from religion.

"Our Constitution does not call for the establishment of religion in the public square," Ashcroft said. "Just as important, it does not call for the abolition of religion in the public square. Rather, our Constitution calls for the respect of religion in its indispensable role in shaping a just and moral citizenry."

That concept is now "under assault," Ashcroft said, from enemies who define the conflict as a war between Christianity and Islam and call the United States the aggressor. These are "lies designed to exploit differences between us," he said.

"For people of all faiths -- whether they be Christian, Jew or Muslim -- it is impossible not to see the stark difference between the way of God and the way of the terrorist," Ashcroft said.

It is "the difference between a culture of life and a culture of death," he said, between "those who would die to save the innocent and those who would die to destroy the innocent."

A total of 5,816 people registered for the meeting, the 59th annual gathering of the NRB. At the meeting, the group presented its highest honor, the Hall of Fame Award, to Campus Crusade for Christ founder Bill Bright.

Also inducted into the Hall of Fame was Brandt Gustavson, former president of the NRB, who died last year.

Prior to the convention, the NRB's board of directors voted unanimously to accept the resignation of Gustavson's successor, Wayne Pederson, after six months on the job.

Pederson came under fire after being quoted in a Minnesota newspaper as saying the organization should become less interested in politics and focus more on spreading the gospel.

"There are people who feel called of God to confront government, to confront society," Pederson said in an interview with the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. "There are others who ... feel called to preach the gospel. There's a balance that needs to be struck there."

He suggested the NRB's identification with a conservative political agenda had hindered its effectiveness. The comments created a controversy that eventually raised questions about Pederson's ability to lead members on both sides of the fray.

"Wayne is a proven broadcaster respected by his peers for his competency, integrity, professionalism and exceptional administrative skills," NRB chairman Glenn Plummer said. "The basic issue before us is his leadership ability for this specific position."

Plummer denied there has been any philosophical change about the association's public policy position. "Any anxiety about a change in direction of NRB is unfounded," Plummer told the NRB board. "Regardless of what you have heard or read in recent weeks, our mission remains the same."

He said the association's mission for nearly 60 years has been to protect access to the airways so members would have the right to preach the gospel and speak to moral, social or political issues of the day."

Plummer said the group is diverse politically but comes together "on the common ground of our absolute belief in the inerrancy of the Word of God and the absolute conviction that Christ is the hope of the world."

Based in Manassas, Va., the NRB is an association of nearly 1,500 Christian communicators that promotes spreading the gospel through electronic media. It also seeks to provide networking and fellowship for members and advance standards of excellence, integrity and accountability in religious broadcasting.

SBC, state convention leaders propose new spiritual emphasis

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The top executives of the various Southern Baptist Convention entities and affiliated state conventions have come together for an unprecedented joint proposal to focus and expand the witness of Southern Baptists.

Called Empowering Kingdom Growth, the emphasis calls for enlisting every Baptist entity from the local church to the SBC to focus attention on Jesus' prayer that the Kingdom of God be experienced on earth as it is in heaven.

Carlisle Driggers, secretary of an eight-member Cooperation Task Force -- formed two years ago after what is thought to be the first-ever meeting involving all the state executives and all SBC agency heads -- noted that while the nation's largest non-Catholic religious body is growing slower than in the past, it is not in decline or worried about survival.

"At this point in time, we have every reason to be planning for expansion and development," he said in an 18-page report delivered to state convention executive directors Feb. 14 and again to the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 18.

"We are inviting Southern Baptists to come together around a spiritual focus to be known as Empowering Kingdom Growth (EKG), which we pray will lead to the greatest spiritual movement for Christ on earth since he first voiced the Great Commission," Driggers said in the written report.

Both groups endorsed the concept unanimously. It will be presented again to the Executive Committee in a condensed form June 10 and then to the Southern Baptist Convention, scheduled June 11-12 in St. Louis.

Driggers, executive director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, is already using the emphasis in his state. He said the study commission concluded that the SBC's Great Commission Council -- a networking body of agency heads -- and the state executives are in the best position of anyone to lead Southern Baptists in a unifying spiritual direction.

The recommendation calls for continuation of the Cooperation Task Force, with Morris Chapman as chairman, to "work on issues of cooperation involving the states and the SBC."

It also expands that group by adding four pastors to form a new EKG Task Force "to devise specific directions for the months and years ahead."

Chapman, president of the Executive Committee, said that since the September terrorist attacks, the world is discussing whether Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. "It is a debate which we must be prepared to answer," he said.

Meanwhile, the secular world is seeking to marginalize and demonize evangelical Christians, Chapman continued. "We are being sorely tested, and the persecution is just beginning in America," he said. "There is more to come."

"Southern Baptists need to cast a new vision," Chapman said. "Southern Baptists need to hear new voices. Southern Baptists need to claim new victories."

If the concept wins approval from the SBC, Driggers will co-chair the new EKG Task force with James Merritt, who completes his term as SBC president in June. Other members being nominated for the council are state executives Bob White from Georgia, Wyndell Jones from Iowa and Anthony Jordan from Oklahoma; the presidents of the SBC International (Jerry Rankin) and North American Mission (Bob Reccord) boards and Golden Gate Seminary (Bill Crews); and pastors John Avant, John Hays and Don Beall.

"I believe our convention needs to pull the bag off our head," said Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga. "We need to learn there's more to spirituality than the Southern Baptist Convention. ... There really is this entity called the Kingdom of God."

Driggers said Jesus' central message in the Bible is the Kingdom of God. The term is used 93 times in the New Testament, he said, but has been largely overlooked by denominations in strategic planning.

"The question for Southern Baptists is: why can we not be Kingdom people?" Driggers wrote. "Why are we hesitant and given to distractions such as power concerns, money, doctrinal differences, gender issues, congregational size, worship styles and outdated organizational practices."

Executive Committee member Calvin Whitman, pastor of Applewood Baptist Church in Wheat Ridge, Colo., objected to that paragraph, saying doctrinal differences and gender issues were too important to be listed alongside secondary issues like worship style.

"We are not saying doctrine or gender issues are just distractions," Whitman said.

"We can take that out of there," Driggers replied. "Just don't get away from the point."

Since Southern Baptist churches, associations and state and national conventions are autonomous in their own spheres, Driggers said the Cooperation Task Force realizes that not everyone will embrace the focus, for a variety of reasons. "But hopefully a majority of our people [will move] together for Kingdom growth," he said.

Chapman offered a similar observation. "Some may choose not to go with us, but we harbor no hatred," he said.

The Cooperation Task Force emerged from a meeting in June 2000 where state executives and the Great Commission Council discussed "serious problems" requiring attention, Driggers wrote early in his report. They included "evolving funding streams in competition with the Cooperative Program, relating to para-church mission organizations and the need for improved communications between SBC entities and state convention leaders."

The report doesn't specifically address those issues in subsequent pages.

-30-

SBC Executive Committee authorizes study of funding

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Citing "financial challenges" to seminaries, the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee has authorized a committee to study funding issues.

On recommendation of a seminaries workgroup, the Executive Committee voted without discussion Feb. 19 to authorize chairman Bruce Coe of Chandler, Ariz., to appoint an SBC Funding Study Committee to report to the Executive Committee in September.

At its Feb. 18-19 meeting in Nashville, Tenn., the Executive Committee also voted to recommend changes in the method for introducing resolutions at the SBC annual meeting. If adopted, all resolutions would have to be introduced at least 15 days prior to the convention and could be initiated by any Southern Baptist, whether or not he or she is elected a messenger at the convention.

The proposed change would require the SBC president to appoint a resolutions committee 75 days in advance of the convention, rather than the 45 days now required. Baptists could submit proposed resolutions as early as April 15. Should the amendment be approved, however, messengers would no longer be able to introduce resolutions while the convention is in session.

An Executive Committee leader said the change is intended to provide more time for the resolutions committee to deliberate, to give Southern Baptists more time to submit resolutions and to allow church members that don't have the time or money to attend the annual meeting to have a voice.

The proposed bylaw change, which will be presented to the SBC June 11-12 in St. Louis, would also limit the number of resolutions that any one person may submit to three.

The 82-member Executive Committee, the central planning committee that functions as the SBC between annual conventions, also recommended a 2002-2003 fiscal-year Cooperative Program allocation budget of \$176.9 million for consideration and action in St. Louis.

In other business, the Executive Committee:

-- Heard a report from Tom Elliff, chairman of a standing Council on the Family, announcing a first-ever "convention-wide rally to save the family" in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting in Phoenix in 2003.

June 19, 2003, the Thursday following the convention, "We want you to invest a day in the life of your family," Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., said via videotape. "It's a day that could change your family for a lifetime."

-- Received as information a report that giving through the SBC's unified budget, the Cooperative Program, declined 0.75 percent, or about \$1.3 million, in 2000-2001. Designated giving, however -- excluding the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong mission offerings -- grew by \$6.8 million, netting an increase in total giving of about \$7.5 million.

-- Accepted a check of \$1.3 million from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention from overage and funds raised through a "Partners in the Harvest" plan to replace funding for SBC seminaries, Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and Executive Committee lost in a budget revision last year by the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Executive Director Jim Richards said the convention founded in November 1998 has grown rapidly, now numbering 1,030 churches and collecting \$11 million through the Cooperative Program unified budget last year. The breakaway convention affirms the inerrancy of Scripture, he said, and the "historic relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention through the Cooperative Program."

-- Approved a request by Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to borrow \$1.4 million to purchase 24 acres of property and buildings adjoining the seminary campus in Kansas City, Mo. C.J. Bordeaux, chairman of the Executive Committee's business and finance subcommittee, said the property is valued at \$3 million and the seminary has \$400,000 in hand for the purchase.

-- Recommended future convention sites for 2005 and 2006. Messengers to this year's SBC will vote on meeting in Nashville, Tenn., on June 21-22, 2005, and Greensboro, N.C., June 13-14, 2006.

-- Authorized a 1.6 percent increase in the staff salary structure, effective Oct. 1.

--Elected Marty Odom of Oklahoma City, Okla., as secretary of the Executive Committee over C.J. Bordeaux of suburban Charlotte, N.C.

-30-

Embattled Andersen gives clean audit to SBC

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Arthur Andersen, the accounting firm accused of irregularities in bankruptcies, including Enron and the Baptist Foundation of Arizona, has noted "no significant matters which require a report" in a routine audit of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

During a meeting of the SBC Executive Committee held Feb. 18-19 in Nashville, Tenn., Kevin Kerr, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Waterloo, Ill., questioned if Southern Baptists can be confident in the accounting firm's integrity in light of those scandals.

"I can't speak for the entire firm of Arthur Andersen," said Jack Wilkerson, vice president for business and finance. "I can speak for the Arthur Andersen that we have in Nashville."

Wilkerson said Andersen has audited the Executive Committee's books for several years and has exercised high standards to ensure the integrity of the SBC's handling of money from Southern Baptist churches.

"Our experience with them has been very good," Wilkerson said.

Even prior to the Enron scandal, however, the Executive Committee had already decided routinely to re-bid its auditing contract. Wilkerson said five to six firms would be involved in the bidding process, including Andersen.

He noted that Lifeway Christian Resources, the SBC's publishing arm, just recently voted to continue to use the Nashville office of Arthur Andersen as its auditor.

Earlier in the Executive Committee's closing session Feb. 19, Steve Bass, executive director of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, updated SBC leaders on the Baptist Foundation of Arizona collapse.

The Arizona Attorney General's office issued a cease-and-desist order to stop the Foundation from selling investments in 1999, he said. Soon after, the Foundation declared bankruptcy.

A criminal investigation against former Foundation officials is ongoing, and probably will be for a long time, Bass said. A civil suit against Andersen for its role as auditor in the bankruptcy is scheduled for trial March 4.

Bass expressed gratitude to Southern Baptists for their support of Arizona Baptists during the crisis. "There are nights and days when you can't sleep at night and you worry all day," he said.

"In Arizona," however, "our God shows up for work every day," he said. "We have seen his work in the lives of his people."

Bass said help from California Baptists and from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary have encouraged Arizona Baptists during the crisis. He said he is also proud of the Arizona Baptist State Convention for last fall voting the largest-ever increase in Cooperative Program gifts to the SBC despite the Foundation collapse.

-30-

Mainstream Baptists induct 37 into 'Hall of Fame'

By Robert O'Brien

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- The first-ever national gathering of "mainstream" Baptists featured the induction of 37 men and women into a new "hall of fame" to honor courage in standing for Baptist principles and heritage.

Individuals inducted by the Mainstream Baptist Network into its inaugural Hall of Fame Class of 2002 included 94-year-old Alma Hunt and 49-year-old David Currie.

Hunt, legendary former executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, moved participants as she rose to accept her plaque with the quiet determination and dignity that has marked her career.

Currie, a leader in the Mainstream movement in Texas and then nationally, was taken by surprise as the only one not informed in advance of his induction.

The full list, alphabetically, of the class of 2002, included:

-- Catherine Allen of Alabama, a long-time leader in Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and Baptist World Alliance.

- Jimmy Allen, a pastor in Georgia and former president of the SBC and its former Radio and Television Commission.
- John Baugh, Texas layman and business entrepreneur who founded the Mainstream Baptist movement.
- Vernon and Grace Beall, lay leaders from Louisiana and active in Mainstream Baptists.
- Michael Bell, pastor of the Greater St. Stephen Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas.
- Lavonn Brown of Oklahoma, retired long-time Oklahoma Baptist pastor and denominational leader.
- James Bruner of Georgia, vice president and senior assistant to the president at Mercer University.
- Jack Brymer of Alabama, former editor of the Florida Baptist Witness and now communications director for Samford University.
- Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler of Ohio, retired executive director of WMU and former moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.
- David Currie of Texas, executive director of Texas Baptists Committed and national consultant for the Mainstream Baptist Network.
- Russell Dilday of Texas, former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.
- James Dunn of Washington, retired executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.
- Edgar Hallock, Jr. of Oklahoma, deceased, emeritus foreign missionary.
- Alma Hunt of Virginia, retired executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.
- Jamie Jones of Arkansas, retired student director.
- Randall Lolley of North Carolina, former president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and pastor.
- Dan Martin of Texas, former editor of Baptist Press.
- Duke McCall, former president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Baptist World Alliance.
- Howard Olive of Tennessee, retired pastor and leader in CBF and Mainstream work.
- Keith Parks of Texas, who retired early as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign (now International) Mission Board and is and the now-retired first Global Missions Coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.
- Julian Pentecost of Virginia, editor emeritus of the Religious Herald, state news journal of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.
- Earl Potts of Alabama, retired executive secretary of Alabama Baptists.
- Herb Reynolds of Texas, retired president of Baylor University.
- Noah Rodriguez of Texas, church administrator of First Mexican Baptist Church, San Antonio, a former educator and chaplain.
- Doyle Sager of Missouri, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Mo.
- Al Shackelford of Tennessee, deceased; former editor of the Indiana and Tennessee state Baptist news journals and former director of Baptist Press.
- Bill Sherman of Tennessee, retired pastor.
- Cecil Sherman of Virginia, long-time pastor and retired first coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.
- Walter Shurden of Georgia, author; historian; denominational leader; current church history professor and director of the Center of Baptist Studies at Mercer University in Macon, Ga.
- Harlan Spurgeon of Missouri, long-time pastor and educator in Missouri and former missionary and vice president of the Foreign (now International) Mission Board and former associate global missions coordinator for Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.
- Bob Stephenson of Oklahoma, a founder of Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists and lay Baptist leader.

- Robert and Roxie Sykes; lay leaders and educators; active in Mainstream Louisiana Baptists.
- Foy Valentine of Texas, former executive director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission and the former SBC Christian Life Commission.
- Daniel Vestal of Georgia, current coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.
- Emil Williams of Arkansas; retired pastor.

-30-

END
