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Editor's note:

ABP has experienced some technical difficulties this week, which resulted in multiple transmissions of the same issue to many of our subscribers. Our service provider is working to correct the problem and to make every assurance that the problem does not occur again. Because of the nature of the technical problem we did not have a way of immediately notifying our subscribers. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused, and we thank you for your understanding.

ASBC files objection to BFA-Andersen settlement

By ASBC Staff

PHOENIX--Settlement of court cases related to Arthur Andersen's auditing of the Baptist Foundation of Arizona could leave the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention exposed to unjust liability, a convention attorney claims.

At a July 12 hearing on Andersen's \$217 million settlement with investors in the bankrupt foundation, the convention filed an objection to one aspect of the settlement.

"Simply stated, the settlement agreement would prevent the convention from bringing a claim against Arthur Andersen if someone sues the convention," said Jeff Schneck, legal counsel for the convention. The "someone" who might sue the convention is the BFA Liquidating Trust, the body charged with divesting the failed foundation's assets and recouping as much of the \$570 million in lost investor money as possible.

"The liquidation trust continues to threaten to sue the convention, contending the convention was responsible for the losses suffered by the investors," Schneck said.

Yet terms of the investors' settlement with Andersen could prevent the convention from pressing its own claim against Andersen in the future, he added. "The settlement seeks to prevent the convention from asking the court ... to require Arthur Andersen to pay its share of any judgment against the convention."

The convention contends it had no control over the Baptist Foundation of Arizona, even though the foundation's board of directors was elected by the convention.

The convention does not oppose the settlement between investors and Andersen but does oppose the one section that would remove any potential of the convention making claims against Andersen in the future, Schneck explained.

The convention has asked the presiding judge to remove from the settlement any language that would deny the convention's right to press charges against Andersen in the event the convention itself is sued.

The next hearing in the matter is scheduled for September.

The demise of the Baptist Foundation of Arizona is believed to be the largest bankruptcy of a non-profit entity in United States history. Foundation officers have been charged with running a Ponzi scheme, in which new investors continually had to be recruited in order for the foundation to keep paying high-yield returns to previous investors.

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Prayer involves listening to God, professor says

By Ken Camp

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Prayer, like conversation, involves both speaking and listening, says Deidre LaNoue, a professor of Christian spirituality. LaNoue, a Baptist who teaches at a Catholic-affiliated college, regards "contemplative" prayer as "the other side of the conversation."

LaNoue, who teaches spiritual disciplines at the College of Mount St. Joseph in Cincinnati, led a seminar on contemplative prayer during the Texas Leadership Conference, sponsored by Woman's Missionary Union of Texas. About 900 women attended the training event, held July 18-20 at Baylor University.

Baptists are well known for punctuating both their public worship services and private devotional lives with spoken prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. But many Baptists are less familiar with prayers popular in Catholic and some Protestant traditions that focus on listening to God as a means of spiritual transformation.

LaNoue cited the biblical story of Martha, who was busy serving, and her sister Mary, who took time to sit at the feet of Jesus. She challenged women to "nurture the Mary" side of their nature.

LaNoue defined contemplative prayer as "loving attentiveness to God." It is an act of worship that grows out of an intimate relationship with the Lord, she added. "God is God, and he deserves our worship," LaNoue said. "He is a God who loves us and invites us into his heart."

The practice of contemplative prayer leads both to personal transformation and empowerment for service, she said. "To serve God with all our heart, all our energy, comes from being in his presence, drawing sustenance from him."

Contemplative prayer involves quieting the mind, focusing on God, and "just being with the one you love," LaNoue said. "It means letting go of competing distractions and being present in the moment with Christ in prayer."

She said Christian contemplation shouldn't be confused with meditation as practiced by Eastern religions and New Age cults.

"Eastern meditation focuses on emptying the mind and altering the consciousness in order to become nothing and blend in with reality," she explained. "Christian contemplation is a quieting of the mind and heart so that we can be filled with Christ."

LaNoue noted six benefits of contemplative prayer:

- "You draw nearer to God."
- "You discover your true identity as God's beloved daughter."
- "Your soul is restored to joy and creativity."
- "You are empowered for fruitful living."

- "All other relationships are enhanced."
- "Corporate worship becomes more meaningful."

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