



# Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen  
Executive editor: Greg Warner

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

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## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Gardner-Webb trustees demote administrators in leadership dispute
- CBF, National Baptist leaders call for cross-cultural partnerships
- Expert says gambling ban would stimulate economy
- Husbands and wives serve as co-pastors
- Randy Travis' gospel CD urges Christians to 'Rise and Shine'

## Gardner-Webb trustees demote administrators in leadership dispute

By ABP staff

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. (ABP) -- Gardner-Webb University trustees have demoted two administrators who accused President Chris White of tampering with grades of a star athlete, saying their actions tarnished the school's image.

Following a 10-hour trustee meeting Sept. 27, board chairman Thomas Hardin issued a statement announcing reassignments of Gil Blackburn, vice president and dean of academic affairs, and Phil Williams, assistant vice president for academic affairs. Both will continue to teach at the Baptist-affiliated school in Boiling Springs, N.C.

Acknowledging that White used poor judgment in asking the school's registrar to recalculate the grade-point average of basketball star Carlos Webb, who otherwise would have been ineligible to play in the 2000-2001 season, trustees said the president "acted in accordance with his authority" and affirmed his leadership.

When a local newspaper reported the incident nearly two years later, faculty members reacted with a hastily called meeting Sept. 10, where White received a 63-39 vote of "no confidence," meaning a majority of faculty wanted him replaced.

But trustees primarily blamed "overzealous faculty" for a controversy that has "upset students, parents, faculty and alumni, causing them to question the value of a Gardner-Webb education."

"This turmoil could have been avoided if certain faculty members had been patient and waited until this board had properly investigated allegations against the president," Hardin said in his statement.

White maintains that he intervened because the student got bad advice from an adviser who incorrectly told him that a failing grade he received for cheating would be dropped if he retook the class and passed. He said he acted in the student's best interest, and not because he was an athlete.

"Dr. White did, as he admitted to the faculty, demonstrate a lapse of judgment in directing the registrar to use a different formula that increased the student's grade-point average, but he did not violate school policy," Hardin said in his statement. A law firm retained by trustee leaders, he said, could find no clearly

written policy for calculating a student's average when academic dishonesty is involved and cited confusion among the faculty about the procedure.

"Dr. White did not direct any change in any student's grade," Hardin said.

Trustees criticized Blackburn for knowing about the incident for two years but saying nothing before revealing a White memorandum from October 2000 to faculty this Sept. 10.

They also said he allowed a former student's confidential records to be revealed at the faculty meeting, which also included students, staff and a representative of the media. That, they said, violated the university's contract with students to keep such records confidential unless the student permits disclosure, and possibly federal law, which protects the privacy of student records.

Blackburn wasn't immediately available for comment. He "will return to his teaching duties as a tenured professor," according to the trustee statement. Trustees gave no reason for demoting Williams as assistant to the dean of academic affairs, but he has also criticized White for interfering in Webb's grading. He also will "continue his teaching duties," according to Hardin's statement.

Hardin said the Sept. 10 faculty meeting was held after a few hours notice, despite university policy requiring notice seven days in advance. Faculty canceled classes for the meeting, without authorization by the university. He also said the trustee investigation could find no written minutes of the faculty meeting, meaning there is no evidence that White's vote of no-confidence was properly administered. Some faculty members have said they were confused about the vote.

Since Sept. 10, he said, several news articles have questioned the university's integrity and some faculty members have campaigned among alumni and the media to call for White to resign.

Hardin said the board of trustees "recognizes the concern" regarding White's conduct. "However, the board also finds that actions by certain faculty, particularly in the past two weeks, were overzealous to the point that there have been serious ethical violations." Those include "breaching the trust concerning students' confidential records; spreading misleading and false information to the news media and others; attempting to undermine the authority and judgment of the board of trustees; and creating the potential for tremendous harm to the reputation of the university, the trustees, and staff ... ."

Hardin said some faculty members have justified their actions by claiming it was necessary to draw attention to the president's error in judgment. "However, the means do not justify the end, particularly when the means come through unethical conduct that rips apart the Christian principles of fairness and integrity for which the university is known."

White, who has been president for 16 years, issued a statement saying he supported the trustees' actions.

"Never have I acted in a manner that would purposefully hurt this institution," he said. "I am relieved and very pleased with the actions of the board of trustees and now look forward to focusing all my attention on our mission of educating our students."

Some university supporters, however, question the trustees' decision.

Erin Boyd, a senior who edits Gardner-Webb's student newspaper, told the Associated Press that Blackburn and Williams were being punished for standing up for what they believed was right.

"I don't think people who stand up for Christian values should be punished, especially at a Christian university," said Boyd, who called for White's resignation in a recent editorial.

The Shelby (N.C.) Star, which first reported the grade-tampering scandal Sept. 10, reported Sept. 17 that the NCAA was beginning its investigation into the incident.

Williams told the newspaper he believes NCAA sanctions "will be among the heaviest that have occurred in Division I."

"This issue is not about whether we support athletics," he said. "I am sickened by it."

He urged colleagues to consider the outcome of inaction. "If we wait for the NCAA, what's the message? People will say, 'Oh sure, these Christians act on NCAA sanctions but have no backbone otherwise.'"

We, the faculty, are responsible for the academic integrity of Gardner-Webb University. The public humiliation we are about to endure will not be pleasant for any of us, but we don't have to be pessimistic about our prospects for long-term success if we act immediately."

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-- Staff of the North Carolina Biblical Recorder contributed to this report.

## **CBF, National Baptist leaders call for cross-cultural partnerships**

By Jim Newton

JACKSON, Miss. (ABP) -- Black and white Baptists should work together in partnerships that cross cultural and racial barriers, said speakers at a fall meeting of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Mississippi.

Daniel Vestal, national coordinator of the Atlanta-based CBF, and Jerry Young, vice president of the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., were keynote speakers for the meeting, themed "Partnering: An Inclusive Way to be Baptist."

Young, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss., and president of the state convention of National Baptists, said he has "an affinity for people who know that the gospel of Jesus Christ knows no color -- that the gospel is for everyone."

"The problem with the church today is that the church has been contaminated by our culture," Young said. "If we are going to get involved in the ministry of justice and mercy, we must learn to see people and the world from the perspective of Jesus. If we see people with the eyes of Jesus, we will recognize their potential and worth."

A racially mixed crowd of about 250 CBF and National Baptists held hands and prayed together. "I'm so proud to be part of this," Young declared. "Would to God that Southern Baptists and National Baptists and Missionary Baptists had held hands earlier and learned to work in partnership with each other. There is no telling what God would have done if we had done this 40 years ago."

"Partnering is the operative word for CBF," Vestal said. "We are a partnering network of churches and Baptist Christians." Pointing out CBF works with more than 100 partner agencies, Vestal said he is especially excited about the latest partnerships announced this summer between CBF and World Vision and Habitat for Humanity.

Preaching on a text from Micah 6:8, Vestal said "prophetic" religion makes many people uncomfortable because it challenges prejudices and cultural experiences. He said hearts, minds and behaviors must change in order to translate the Bible's demand for justice and mercy into daily life.

The assembly held a commissioning service for Robert Pitts, who at the time was pastor of North Jackson Baptist Church, which hosted the assembly. On Oct. 1 Pitts became church-starter and pastor of Harvest Fellowship Church, a new CBF inter-racial church in Greenville, Miss.

The church will meet on property valued at \$750,000 given to Mississippi CBF by Greenfield Baptist Church in Greenville.

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## Expert says gambling ban would stimulate economy

By Ken Camp

ARLINGTON, Texas (ABP) -- If the government wants to stimulate the economy, it should outlaw gambling, an expert on legal policy told a national gathering of anti-gambling activists.

"Gambling is a catalyst for economic downturn," said John Kindt, professor of commerce and legal policy at the University of Illinois. "If you want your 401(k) to come back, recriminalize gambling."

Kindt, who holds four graduate degrees in business and law, said a ban on gambling would boost the economy by freeing up dollars for consumer spending that now go to the gaming industry. He spoke to the annual meeting of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling and National Coalition Against Gambling Expansion, Sept. 27-29 in Arlington, Texas.

"It's time to wipe the slate clean," Kindt said. "Recriminalize gambling, just like we did in this country 100 years ago."

Kindt cited a 1999 report of the U.S. Gambling Commission study linking the rise of legalized gambling in recent years with increased addiction, bankruptcies and crime. The commission called for a moratorium on gambling expansion and urged that "convenience gambling" -- such as video-gambling machines in stores -- be outlawed.

The study said gambling benefits the owners of gambling establishments at the expense of local economies.

Kindt said the United States is experiencing the "third wave" of gambling expansion. The first was the period of state lotteries in the original colonies, from the early days of the republic to the Jackson era. The second was the period of westward expansion following the Civil War. Each ended when citizens demanded laws against gambling.

Kindt said gambling drains the economy by taking money away from grocery stores and retail businesses and putting it in the hands of an industry that produces no product.

While advocates of legalized gambling say it brings in revenues needed for education and other uses, Kindt said it actually has led to higher taxes, loss of jobs, economic disruption of non-gambling businesses, increased crime and higher social-welfare costs.

"For every \$1 that gambling contributes in taxes, it costs taxpayers at least \$3," he said.

If gambling were banned, he said, those social costs would drop, tax revenues from consumer goods would increase, and money would be pumped into the productive economic sector.

Kindt acknowledged that a ban on gambling would leave some cities with huge, empty casinos, but he proposed positive uses for those facilities.

"Do what they do with the Olympic village after the Olympics leave town," he suggested. "Turn the casinos into universities and high tech parks -- institutions for helping people."

Tom Coates, executive director of the Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Des Moines, Iowa, said he sees a correlation between the expansion of gambling and the "explosion of personal debt."

Casinos, in particular, create a "fantasy world" that encourages personal irresponsibility, Coates said. Unlike "destination gambling" sites in Las Vegas, most local casinos in the U.S. "prey on the native population," he said.

"Casinos thrive in an atmosphere of 'no more delayed gratification,'" Coates said. "They encourage people to mortgage their future."

With its promises of revenues, gambling is a tempting lure to politicians seeking a way around making hard decisions about spending and taxation, a member of the Texas legislature told the gathering. "Gambling

allows legislators to abdicate their duty and their fiscal responsibility," said Rep. Talmadge Heflin, R-Houston.

In some cases, it can even lead to political corruption.

The day before the national coalition met, Linda Cloud resigned as executive director of the Texas Lottery after admitting that she had lied about information regarding a lottery commissioner. She was the third director to resign the agency amid controversy.

Weston Ware, past president of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling and longtime associate with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, said that is an example of the problems that can occur when government gets in the business of promoting gambling.

"I'm not surprised. When you have an agency that is built on smoke and mirrors, you have to expect that something like this can occur," said Ware, a spokesman for Texans Against Gambling.

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## **Husbands and wives serve as co-pastors**

By Derek Hodges

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- A lot of churches probably wish their pastor could be in two places at once. At Park Road Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., they can.

Russ and Amy Jacks Dean, the church's husband-and-wife co-pastors, are part of a trend called "shared pastoral ministry."

While some Baptist churches in the past have employed co-pastors, the idea of calling a married couple to share pastoral duties is relatively new.

The Deans serve a congregation that is more than 50 years old and is church home to about 375 families. Both are ordained Baptist ministers. They served in churches in Birmingham, Ala., Laurens, S.C., and Clemson, S.C., before coming to Park Road in October 2000.

They hadn't worked together as co-pastors before coming to Charlotte, but they had given it considerable thought. "It was during that time (in Clemson) that we began dreaming about maybe pastoring together," Russ said.

Marinn Bangle, who chaired the pastor-search committee that brought the Deans to Park Road, said the church was "very open" to trying something new when it came time to hire a new pastor. "We were open to doing what was called for, for the church," she said.

Bangle said having two pastors to serve the congregation has been good for the church. "Having them in worship is great," she said. "They are both so dynamic. They have given us all sides of life -- mother, father, son, daughter."

When it came time for duties to be divided, it was no problem for the Deans to decide who did what.

Bangle said the couple "have done a beautiful job" in balancing each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Mike Brooks is co-pastor of Brandt Oaks Baptist Church in Greensboro, N.C., with his wife, Cheryl. He said dividing up the duties is one of the easiest parts of the job. "The duties depend on the needs of the church," he said.

Brandt Oaks needed someone to work with their youth group, so Mike took the job. The church also needed someone to work with children, so Cheryl has filled in that role. They share the preaching duties.

Proponents of shared pastoral ministry say that the benefits far outnumber the risks.

Mike Brooks said a church gets the gifts of not one, but two people. This combination of gifts and abilities can allow a church to try ministries it hasn't had before.

Cheryl Brooks said she and her husband try to "set an example" as a ministry team. "We worship together. Part of our ministry is being family together."

Mike acknowledged that sharing the load between spouses has some downside. "You take more of it home with you this way." Both he and Cheryl have had to "guard that home life," he said.

Couples who minister as equals also can face resistance from other people. Many Baptists believe that only men should be pastors. The "Baptist Faith and Message" as amended in 2000 says that while men and women are both gifted for ministry, the office of senior pastor is reserved for males.

Tonya Vickery, who co-pastors Cullowhee Baptist Church of Cullowhee, N.C., with her husband, Jeffery, said that one of the most important things for a church to consider when thinking of hiring co-pastors is how the congregation will feel about having a female pastor.

"They have to be willing to have a woman as a co-pastor. That's one of the first things we talked to Cullowhee Baptist about," she said.

Because of their decision to call a female co-pastor, the Cullowhee church ran into opposition in its association. The church decided to pull out of the association rather than fight over the issue.

It's a given that it takes a certain kind of congregation to hire a couple as ministers.

"It takes a special church to be open to new things," said Cheryl Brooks.

"We have been real fortunate [to find a church that is open to that]," Mike added.

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-- Derek Hodges is an intern for the Biblical Recorder in Raleigh, N.C.

## **Randy Travis' gospel CD urges Christians to 'Rise and Shine'**

By Trennis Henderson

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Early in his career, country music superstar Randy Travis never would have imagined singing in a Baptist church.

After dropping out of school in the ninth grade -- "I had gotten so far out of hand, they were very happy to let me leave" -- Travis rushed headlong into a life of alcohol, drugs and brushes with the law.

At 16, when he won a local talent contest in Charlotte, N.C., Travis was facing possible jail time on charges of breaking-and-entering and automobile theft.

Lib Hatcher, who owned the club where he was playing, urged the judge to give the teen singer one more chance.

The judge said: "I'm going to let you go one more time. But you come before me again, bring your toothbrush because you're staying."

"That got to me," Travis recalled. "I heard that loud and clear."

Travis became a regular at Hatcher's club, spending the next five years performing there. He moved to Nashville in 1991 and Hatcher, his manager and future wife, began managing The Nashville Palace where Travis sang, cooked catfish and washed dishes.

After signing a record contract and being named the Academy of Country Music's 1985 Top New Male Vocalist, Travis racked up dozens of major music awards over the next few years. In the process, he

recorded more than 20 No. 1 country hits ranging from "Forever and Ever, Amen" to "Hard Rock Bottom of Your Heart."

Fast forward to 2002: Travis has recorded more than 15 albums, including his second gospel album "Rise and Shine" scheduled for release Oct. 15.

Travis, who became a born-again Christian a decade ago, shared several songs from his new album during a Sept. 24 concert at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky.

During an on-stage interview with Pastor Les Hollon, Travis told the capacity crowd of 1,700 people that his Christian conversion "was a very gradual thing."

"I went to a Baptist church a very short time as a kid," he recalled. "It didn't take, that's for sure."

"When I got into my early 20s, I started just reading the Bible to go to sleep at night," he explained. "I started reading and I was really surprised. It was just like a calming effect. It made me seem to mentally feel better."

"From that point till I was actually baptized, it took about 10 years, so you can see I was a little bit slow," Travis added. "Since then, knowing that even though I'm far from being perfect -- a work in progress and always will be -- there's a wonderful peace of mind knowing that those things I have done in the past, as bad as they were, they are forgotten and forgiven."

Describing his singing talent as "a God-given gift," Travis told the crowd: "I like what I do. I'm fortunate. I'm not a trained singer. ... Why [God] decided to give that to me, I don't know."

Recalling the impact of "Inspirational Journey," his first gospel album released two years ago, Travis said, "Things started happening with that CD that really got to me in a way that I'd never really expected."

He told about a woman whose son was using drugs and alcohol, but came to church to hear Travis because of his country music fame. After hearing Travis' gospel music and testimony, the young man became a Christian.

"When you hear that, you know you're doing the right thing," Travis added.

Reflecting on the change in Travis' life, Hollon said: "The gospel can happen in so many ways. This is a night to celebrate how Randy Travis has been impacted by the gospel. ... I think we leave with our own inspiration to be real in following Jesus."

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