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**CBF cuts budget for this year in response to giving drop  
By Greg Warner  
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ATLANTA (ABP) – The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, facing a shortfall in contributions, will reduce spending 10 percent this fiscal year and use up to \$1 million from reserves to stave off deeper cuts.

Members of the CBF Coordinating Council, meeting in Atlanta Feb. 20-22, dealt with those budget cuts and adopted a less ambitious budget for its next fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Philip Wise, chair of the group's finance committee, told the council \$1.8 million has been cut from the organization's \$18 million budget for 2002-03. Most of those reductions were from within the organization – including \$888,000 from its missions program – with another \$638,000 coming from CBF's ministry partners.

Wise, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas, blamed the slow economy and its effect on CBF's donors, primarily churches. "We can't control how the money comes in," he explained.

Wise detailed several measures to relieve the budget pressure and adjust to shifting giving patterns. "We can't continue to operate the way we've been operating and hope it all works out in the end," he said.

Two staff-led task forces are looking for ways to generate more revenue and reduce expenses. And spending, including funding for ministry partners, will be adjusted in line with actual monthly receipts and monitored closely.

At the request of the CBF staff, a task force of council members will advise the staff before other cuts are made in the CBF's 14 "priority" areas. "If we cut any more, we are going to change those priorities," explained Phill Martin of Dallas, CBF moderator and chair of the council.

The budget to be recommended for next fiscal year is \$17.9 million – 9 percent less than the original 2002-03 budget but still 7 percent more than the reduced budget.

Wise explained the finance committee felt comfortable projecting the increase for next year despite the recent experience. "We believe we can grow out of this. It's kind of a Republican strategy," he quipped.

The proposed budget must be approved by the CBF general assembly in June. It will retain many of the spending reductions imposed this year. Total funding for CBF's ministry partners, such as divinity schools, is projected to remain about the same – \$1,686,915 in 2002-03 and \$1,712,100 in 2003-04.

In other business, the council approved a national church-planting partnership between CBF and the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas and Hispanic Baptist Theological School in San Antonio. Among the project's goals are to start 400 Hispanic congregations and train 400 new Hispanic pastors by 2010.

Alumni from the Hispanic Baptist Theological School serve as pastors of about three-fourths of the 1,000 congregations in the Hispanic convention, which is affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Another new partnership with Buckner Baptist Benevolences, based in Dallas, will address the needs of at-risk children in the Rio Grande Valley. The project is part of the CBF's rural-poverty initiative.

Also during the council meeting, Bob Setzer, pastor of First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, Ga., was announced as the nominee for moderator-elect of the Fellowship. If elected by the general assembly, he will succeed Cynthia Holmes, a lawyer from Clayton, Mo., who will succeed Martin as moderator this summer.

Council members were told CBF has endorsed 295 chaplains since it began its chaplaincy program five years ago. The organization is on pace to endorse 100 to 150 new chaplains a year, with more than 600 currently in the process

of application. The Coordinating Council adopted a new policy for electing the eight-member Council on Endorsement, which handles applications.

The CBF has been surprised by the success of the program and the potential impact "is awesome," said Daniel Vestal, CBF coordinator. "We didn't put this in the strategic plan. We didn't think this up. ... God continues to surprise us."

In his address to the council, Vestal said he is coming to terms with the likelihood he "will live out the rest of my life as a moderate Baptist in a minority setting."

Many CBF members were accustomed to being part of the largest religious group in the South before their estrangement from with the Southern Baptist Convention. "We were the establishment. We are not now the establishment. And I don't think we ever will be again," Vestal said. Many moderate Baptists "are having a problem with that," he added.

Vestal also predicted moderates will "live a long time in the context of fundamentalism" and will continue to be "maligned." But the Bible says those falsely accused should rejoice, Vestal said. "So let's get over it."

"We need to learn what it means to be the presence of Christ when you are the minority and when you are a labeled - and sometimes libeled - group."



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**CBF mission workers take precautions as war talk rises****By Greg Warner****Associated Baptist Press - [www.abpnews.com](http://www.abpnews.com)****February 24, 2003****Volume: 03-20-3470**

ATLANTA (ABP) – Global mission leaders for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship are temporarily restricting the travel of their overseas personnel in light of impending war and the threat of terrorism.

Gary Baldrige, co-coordinator of global missions, told members of the CBF's Coordinating Council of the new policies Feb. 20.

According to Baldrige, all international travel by the group's 125 mission personnel now must be approved ahead of time. Travel within and into Muslim areas is limited. And all non-essential travel is being evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, all trips by mission volunteers have been suspended.

No mission workers are being recalled. However, Baldrige said one family stationed in the Middle East will return home to begin a stateside assignment early. The mission workers are assigned to a hospital that Baldrige said is "just as vulnerable as the one in Yemen" where three Southern Baptist mission workers were murdered by a terrorist in December. One CBF nurse practitioner will remain at the hospital to work with mission personnel from other agencies.

Baldrige said the decision to leave dangerous mission areas is always difficult. While staying in such situations can be "a good witness," it also can endanger local believers and friends.



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