

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is one organization rethinking the strategy. Gary Baldrige, co-coordinator of CBF global missions with his wife, Barbara, said recent concerns about the ethical and missiological implications justify a second look.

"We're in the middle of reflecting on the deployment of field personnel to restrictive-access countries," Baldrige told Baptists Today. "We're really struggling with it administratively."

Baldrige said he had hoped to invite a group of ethicists and missiologists to discuss the issue in a forum prior to the CBF General Assembly in June, but he thinks the date is approaching too quickly to pull it off then.

The issues, he said, are more about the long-term effectiveness of the "non-resident missionary" than about public relations, although it requires ongoing explanation about why some missionaries remain anonymous. Baldrige said CBF repeatedly tells those who support its mission efforts, "Please be aware that this [missionary] directory is incomplete."

"Many CBF missionaries live in areas of the world that are openly hostile to the gospel," he added. "Their identities are kept confidential in order to protect their lives and ministries and the lives and livelihoods of new Christians in these highly sensitive areas."

The Southern Baptist International Mission Board declined to comment for this story.

Keith Parks, now retired in Richardson, Texas, served both as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) and as the first CBF global missions coordinator. It was under his leadership that Southern Baptists began the efforts that developed into the non-resident missionary approach.

"It really started in the '80s when we were talking with people from China," Parks recalled. "They said: 'We can't receive missionaries, but we need help.'"

As a result, Parks said, the FMB created Cooperative Services International as a non-profit organization separate from the FMB. Parks served as CSI president as well, and the organization used the same address and phone number as the FMB.

"It wasn't some James Bond approach," said Parks. "Governments know what you're doing. If you play according to their rules, they'll let you do it."

Through hiring arrangements with universities and other institutions, Parks said personnel could gain access where otherwise missionaries would be rejected.

However, Parks said the original CSI effort evolved into a non-resident missions program that allowed access to other countries in the Middle East, Asia and Africa that were hostile to the Christian gospel.

"You can't live in a country, but you're assigned to find ways to serve," said Parks. "At the FMB, we would set up these entities [non-profit service organizations] and then the funding for the individual and their work would go through that organization."

"They could literally say their support came from Organization XYZ, but that support came to the organization from the FMB," he added.

Parks said he understands how some could pose ethical questions about a

strategy that does not use full disclosure of one's identity or intent. However, he asked: "Is it ethical to leave millions of people to suffer?"

Parks said he welcomes the discussion about this and other approaches to missions in difficult settings. However, he sees some increased risks as well. "I think it needs to be more fully aired," said Parks, "but you're alerting people all over the world to what you are doing."

"I don't agree with breaking the law or smuggling," said Parks. Yet he recognizes that "some of the greatest needs are in the poorest countries" where governments are hostile toward a Christian witness.

In those settings, said Parks, non-resident missionaries have been able to assist with water purification, agriculture, medical and educational needs - and were public about that assistance. These workers, said Parks, "did what they said they were doing -- just more. I don't have an ethical problem with that."

"Most American Christians are so insulated from the world and don't realize that day-to-day people are being slaughtered because they are Christians," said Parks. "You can lay that alongside, 'Gee, I can't call them missionaries,' and you see the concept."

Parks said he doesn't fault either the IMB or CBF for what they've done to try to serve people groups not reached with the gospel. But the "ideal got blurred along the way," he said.

Parks recommends focusing more heavily on "tentmakers" -- or "envoys" as CBF calls them -- who hold legitimate employment in mission settings that give opportunity for witness.

"The greater need is to have business organizations set up to find ways for local Christians to make a living and present the gospel," he added.

Bill O'Brien of Birmingham, Ala., is a former FMB vice president who worked closely with Parks in developing mission strategies like the non-resident approach. "You can live in a neutral city where it was legal to live and travel in and out [of a restricted access setting] as you can to find out if there are other Christians there and to share the gospel any way you can," said O'Brien. "The term used is 'find a platform.'"

However, O'Brien says he has "an opinion that borders on a conviction" now about what has evolved from this mission strategy.

O'Brien, who also served as founding director of the Global Center at Samford University's Besson Divinity School, said he began to "have real questions about this" when trying to establish a mission partnership for Samford in an undisclosed country. A Southern Baptist missionary there told O'Brien that when the missionary publicly identified himself as an "agricultural and humanitarian specialist," locals would often ask: "What do you really do?"

"Local people are not dumb," said O'Brien. "And we are kidding ourselves if we think governments don't know what we're doing."

O'Brien said he is especially concerned for the risk placed on local Christians. Missionaries can leave quickly if persecution arises, he said, "but I'm worried about locals who can't leave quickly."

O'Brien said the IMB missionary he visited returned to the United States and became an employee of a multi-national company. In doing so, he was able to "put people in difficult parts of the world, but in legitimate businesses."

"You are unashamedly creating a Christian witness," said O'Brien, "but

you don't have to remember what you told the last person."

O'Brien described the "marketplace" as a great mission field and urged strategists to focus on planting legitimate businesses that provide opportunities for witness.

O'Brien admits he is "still struggling" with the issue. He said he gets "a little turned off to coded language" used by mission personnel to conceal their identities and purposes, "but I'm sensitive to security."

Baldrige said he and other CBF leaders struggle as well. In China, however, CBF is completely "above board" by registering missionaries with the China Christian Council, said Baldrige. In other parts of world where that is not an option, he said CBF's focus might shift more to the tentmaker approach where workers can actually reside in the areas they serve.

If so, he added, it will be a slow and deliberate move.

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- Greg Warner contributed to this story

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All 6 targeted missionaries
refuse request to resign

By Trennis Henderson

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) - All six missionaries who were asked to resign by the International Mission Board have refused, and all six will now likely be fired by IMB trustees.

The three veteran missionary couples disagree with the IMB's new practice of requiring missionaries to sign the revised Baptist Faith and Message statement.

Jerry Rankin, IMB president, recently wrote 31 missionaries who have not signed the more conservative faith statement. They were told to affirm the statement by May 5, resign or face termination.

But six missionaries were given only two options -- resign or be fired. They are Ron Hankins and his wife, Lydia Barrow-Hankins, missionaries to Japan; Rick and Nancy Dill, missionaries to Germany; and Leon and Kathy Johnson, missionaries to Mozambique.

"We will not sign. We will not resign," Ron Hankins wrote in his response to Rankin.

The three couples are expected to be fired by IMB trustees at their May 6 board meeting. Rankin told the three couples they face dismissal "due to your unwillingness to be accountable to Southern Baptists who send and support you."

The couples, who have served overseas more than 20 years each, apparently were singled out for publicly differing with Rankin's directive in January 2002 to affirm the faith statement.

The Dills released a letter last fall emphasizing that "our authority is the Bible and no man-written document."

Leon Johnson noted in January that signing an affirmation of the revised faith statement "would place a man-made document in authority above the Bible and God's self-revelation in Jesus. For us to sign would be a sin in our minds."

The Hankinses took issue last summer with the faith statement's view of women in ministry. Leaders of the Japan Baptist Convention "are troubled over the historic relationship with Southern Baptists if missionaries sent out with the IMB are required to sign agreement with such a statement," said Barrow-Hankins, an ordained minister and chaplain.

In the latest flurry of letters, the Dills, Hankinses and Johnsons emphasized they have no reason to resign their IMB positions.

"We cannot resign," the Dills wrote. "We are guilty of no misconduct or false teaching and have been accused of none."

The IMB, which did not release the names of the six, has not commented on their refusals to sign.

In his response to Rankin, Leon Johnson said the IMB president's charge of the Johnsons failing to be accountable to Southern Baptists "is an untruth."

"We already stand accountable to Southern Baptists," Johnson wrote. "Signing a document will not make me more accountable." Johnson's letter then asked Rankin: "Are you acting in accountability to the trustees of the IMB and the churches of the SBC by imposing upon us a requirement that they have not mandated?"

Concerning Rankin's claim that the Johnsons "continue to advocate positions contrary to what Southern Baptists believe," Johnson responded, "This is also untrue. I challenge you to produce one piece of evidence to substantiate this statement."

Johnson said Rankin's "disregard of the truth in making false accusations and insinuations in public ... does more to undermine the integrity and credibility of the IMB than Kathy's and my refusal to violate our consciences by signing a document."

The Hankinses expressed concern over the faith statement's "blatant sexual discrimination." The 2000 version of the statement "rewrites the role of every missionary woman on the field," Hankins wrote. "Its marriage and ministry restrictions spell a setback of generations for the liberating power of Christ in the lives of women.

"Lydia and I cannot sign a document that would deny her call as a minister/preacher of the gospel," he added. "Neither of us could sign a document that requires that we not encourage young women to follow God's call in their lives, including the call to the pastorate."

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- With additional reporting by Mark Wingfield

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Southern Baptist mission board
faces \$10 million shortfall

By Greg Warner

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- The International Mission Board is facing a \$10 million budget shortfall this year and is looking for ways to cut expenses.

The shortfall, confirmed by IMB president Jerry Rankin in a memo to staff, would represent less than 3 percent of the agency's basic budget of \$269 million.

In January IMB officials blamed a drop in investment income and slower growth in contributions for tighter finances.

Rankin's April 22 memo called the staff to a special forum to be held the next day "to discuss the implications of our budget shortfall this year." The discussion was cancelled after news of the meeting leaked to the local newspaper, the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

"The trustees have asked us to present options for making up \$10 million of our anticipated budget deficit," Rankin said in the memo. "Administrative leadership has been working for several weeks to identify ways to do this without being deterred from accomplishing the strategic objectives of the organization."

Wendy Norvelle, IMB spokesperson, declined to answer questions about the shortfall. "We have some projections coming in," she told the Times-Dispatch. "We are looking at the projections. They are based on thinking rather than fact. It is premature to speak to them at this point."

The IMB trustees, who meet May 6-8 in Framingham, Mass., are expected to address the shortfall. However, no final action is expected until the end of May, when the agency closes the books on the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, it's primary source of funding.

At the trustees' January meeting, the IMB said record missionary appointments and slower resignation rates have caused the agency to spend more than planned for missionary support. The IMB employs about 5,500 missionaries.

Additionally, the IMB has spent \$50 million from operating reserves during the past two years to make up for reduced investment income.
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Southwestern president denies
he was told to resign post

By Lindsay Bergstrom

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- Ken Hemphill denies he was given an ultimatum by SBC leaders to resign as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as reported in the Baptist Standard April 21.

"I am appalled and dismayed that the Standard would print speculation that borders on libel," said Hemphill in a statement released April 23. "No group of SBC leaders has ever met with me about a deal to remain at or leave Southwestern."

However, the Baptist Standard, the newsjournal of Texas Baptists, released its own statement in support of the story.

The story, which also was carried in Associated Baptist Press, reported a former Southwestern professor told the Standard sources closely related to the seminary confirmed Hemphill had been to a meeting in North Carolina a few years ago in which he was given several ultimatums -- find another post, fire David Crutchley as dean of the school of theology, and hire Craig Blaising as provost and executive vice president.

But Hemphill denies such a meeting took place. "The only meeting in North Carolina was held at my request over the Christmas holidays two years ago at Calvary Baptist Church with my three mentors, Mark Corts, Jimmy Draper and Charles Fuller," he said. "I asked them to pray with me concerning my desire to move back to pastoral ministry."

Hemphill also denies he was told to remove David Crutchley as dean. "Anyone with knowledge of Baptist polity would know that no outside group has any authority to hold such a meeting or make such a suggestion

apart from the trustees of an institution," said Hemphill.

"The decision to reassign [Crutchley] was mine based on my understanding of his gifts and passion," he said. "I believed then and believe now that it was a decision that was in his best interest and that of the seminary."

"The Baptist Standard stands by its story as reported in the April 21 issue," the newspaper said in response. "Every assertion in the article that was not directly attributed to a specific source was confirmed by a minimum of three knowledgeable sources."

"Unfortunately, seminary faculty, staff, students and even retirees currently live under such a fear of reprisal from seminary trustees and administration that few are willing to be quoted on the record by name," it continued. "In such situations, the Standard's policy is to require confirmation by multiple sources."

"Hemphill correctly asserts that in Baptist polity, 'no outside group has any authority' to force its will on another Baptist body," the statement said. "That statement, however, belies the well-documented pattern of action within the Southern Baptist Convention over the past 23 years."

Hemphill will leave the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary at the end of the current academic year for Nashville, Tenn., where he will be jointly employed by the SBC Executive Committee and LifeWay Christian Resources as national strategist for the SBC's Empowering Kingdom Growth initiative. However, seminary trustee chairman David Allen confirmed April 16 that Hemphill's salary will be paid by Southwestern for a year after he leaves the seminary.

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BWA moves council meeting
from Seoul because of SARS

By ABP staff

McLEAN, Va. (ABP) -- In response to increasing concerns about SARS in Asia, the Baptist World Alliance has moved its July General Council meeting from Seoul, South Korea, to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The General Council sessions, scheduled for July 7-12 in Seoul, were planned in conjunction with the Baptist Youth World Conference in Hong Kong July 16-20. But SARS -- severe acute respiratory syndrome -- has spread rapidly throughout Southeast Asia, with Hong Kong hit particularly hard, and the World Health Organization has issued travel warnings for several Asian countries.

Concerned BWA leaders recently postponed the Hong Kong youth meeting until August 2004 rather than risk exposing thousands. The site for the council meeting was moved to Rio de Janeiro, which was to host the 2004 council meeting. Instead, the council plans to hold that meeting in Seoul.

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