

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Nashville, Tennessee**

June 26, 2003 Volume: 03-59

JUL 07 2003

In this issue:

- Supreme Court overturns state sodomy laws
- Women's ministry group celebrates 20 years, evaluates uncertain future
- FamilyNet head named president of Palm Beach Atlantic University
- Texas Hispanic convention approves alliance with CBF

**Supreme Court overturns
state sodomy laws**

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- In an unexpectedly sweeping decision, the Supreme Court June 26 effectively invalidated state laws banning certain kinds of private, consensual sexual intercourse between adults.

The decision means that the court, for the first time, recognizes a broad right to sexual privacy in the Constitution. It may prove to be a watershed for America's burgeoning gay-rights movement, and was greeted with cheers by gay-rights supporters and severe disdain by gay-rights opponents.

In the case, *Lawrence and Garner vs. Texas*, the justices voted 6-3 to overturn a Texas law that banned homosexual sex acts. Five of the six justices in the majority claimed the law violated the 14th Amendment's guarantees of due process and privacy, and implied that the law also violated that amendment's Equal Protection Clause.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, one of the court's moderate "swing justices," concurred with the majority in their decision. But, in a concurring opinion, she limited her justification for overturning the law to equal-protection grounds.

However, the majority's decision means all so-called "sodomy" laws -- for gays and heterosexuals -- violate the right to privacy they believe exists in the 14th Amendment.

Most states have in recent years repealed their laws banning sodomy, but 13 still have them on the books. "Sodomy" is an archaic term for forms of sexual contact other than vaginal intercourse between a man and a woman.

Of the 13 states that had sodomy bans before the court's decision, four -- Texas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma -- applied the prohibition only to same-sex couples.

In the case, two Houston men were arrested, convicted and fined under the law in 1998. Police entered the unlocked home of John Lawrence on a neighbor's false domestic-violence tip and

7/1/03

discovered him engaged in anal sex with Tyron Garner. The men appealed, claiming the statute under which they were convicted violated their rights to privacy and equal protection under the 14th Amendment.

A state court upheld their convictions, citing the Supreme Court's 1986 *Bowers vs. Hardwick* decision. In that case, the Supreme Court upheld a Georgia law banning sodomy. It used language that gay-rights activists considered demeaning and archaic, as well as a historical analysis of legal treatment of homosexuality that many legal scholars have criticized as incomplete.

Today's decision explicitly overturns *Bowers vs. Hardwick*. In the majority opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote, "The petitioners [Lawrence and Garner] are entitled to respect for their private lives. The State cannot demean their existence or control their destiny by making their private sexual conduct a crime."

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, Justice Antonin Scalia and Justice Clarence Thomas -- who are generally considered the court's most conservative members -- dissented from the decision. In a rare move indicative of deep disagreement, Scalia read a summary of his dissenting opinion from the bench after Kennedy gave his speech. "It is clear from this that the court has taken sides in the culture war," Scalia said. "This effectively decrees the end of all morals legislation."

-30-

Women's ministry group celebrates 20 years, evaluates uncertain future

By John Pierce

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (ABP) -- Baptist Women In Ministry, a 20-year-old organization formed "to provide support for the woman whose call from God defines her vocation as that of minister," is coming to an end in its current form.

President Karen Massey announced an evaluation plan at the group's annual business meeting June 26 in Charlotte. The BWIM board voted in April to investigate whether the national organization with offices in Kansas City, Kan., is the best approach for assisting the growing number of Baptist women serving in ministry positions.

"For the next year, the members of the board and the officers have been frozen," said Massey, a faculty member at Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta. "No new appointments will be made to the board."

Instead of a new board, a transition team will address possible changes in the mission of the organization.

"We put together a transition team because that is where we feel the organization is right now," Massey said. "We just feel times are changing. Ministers that are coming along have a very different perspective than 20 years ago."

Massey said the new committee will address three main aspects of the organization: mission, current needs of the constituents and finances.

"We don't feel like we've done anything wrong at all," Massey said. "We began to think our mission must be different than 20 years ago. Everything is possible at this point. We're not going to exclude any possibilities for the future."

Task group members include Susan Miller, Raye Nell Dyer, Kerri Oertli, Sarah Withers, David Olive, Eileen Campbell Reed, Linda Hicks, Rachel Gunter Shapard and Suzanah Raffield.

Privately, some BWIM leaders said they expect the national organization to fold in favor of state or regional peer-learning groups to provide more localized support to women ministers. Various models are being considered.

Currently Executive Director Susan Miller and Office Manager Kim Snyder staff the BWIM office located at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. However, funding to the independent organization has been below budget in recent months and has not fully supported their salaries.

Reba Cobb, now resource center coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, said it is the right time to consider the best organizational approach to providing support for women. She noted numerous Baptist theology schools happily train women for ministry now and churches are increasingly open to women in roles previously closed.

Even though the organization's future is uncertain, leaders said there are plenty of reasons to celebrate the past, including the growth in the number of Baptist women ministers, the many accomplishments of BWIM and the new sources of support for women that have arisen over the past two decades.

Organizers of the 20th anniversary celebration, held just prior to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly, held a banquet, a concert by singer-songwriter Kate Campbell, a business meeting and a closing worship service. Retired missionary Ida Mae Hays prepared a video presentation to mark the occasion of BWIM's 20 years of service.

Conversations and convocations related to women in ministry provided the groundwork for the formation of BWIM, recalled Cobb. Woman's Missionary Union, under the leadership of Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, first sponsored a convocation for Southern Baptist "women in church-related vocations" in 1978 with the assistance of other SBC agencies.

"WMU was cheering us on," said Cobb. "They were very influential — and that was Carolyn Weatherford."

Organizationally, BWIM -- then known as Women in Ministry, SBC -- took shape quickly in 1983. It began with a conversation between Cobb and Nancy Sehested.

Sehested, then associate pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., was visiting Louisville, Ky., where Cobb was on staff at Crescent Hill Baptist Church. Cobb described Sehested as "the first catalyst" for the organization.

"We decided we would meet in conjunction with the [SBC] Christian Life Commission in March 1983," said Cobb, noting that Sehested mailed invitations to 40 women and 33 came to

Louisville.

"We first met at my house and told our stories," Cobb recalled. "It was a powerful meeting."

The group met the following day at Crescent Hill and decided to plan a larger meeting in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Pittsburgh the following month.

"WMU gave us space for that meeting," said Cobb. "We had maybe 80 people at the dinner."

Cobb and Betty Pearce prepared a newsletter for that event that has continued to serve the organization under the name Folio. Office space for the upstart group was provided by Crescent Hill Church for the first 10 years.

"Strong, vivid calls to ministry" and "pain about what to do about these calls" are what Cobb remembers hearing at the informal gathering of 33 women in her home in March 1983. Pat Ayres of Austin, Texas, then a lay leader in Sweetwater, Tenn., helped facilitate that Louisville meeting. She described it as "spiritually very powerful."

"The people who came seemed to be so grateful to be in a context where they could share," said Ayres. "Many were in real isolation ... Today there isn't that sense of isolation that there was then."

Ayres said the meeting — primarily attended by ministers — was also affirming for her as a laywoman who has assumed many church and denominational leadership roles. Cobb said a common confession from those in attendance was that "the cultural and theological context I'm in is not supporting what I'm feeling,"

"What we hope to begin is not a union, but a movement, one empowered by no other spirit than the Holy One," Sehested said following the 1983 Louisville meeting.

During the 20-year tenure of BWIM, the denomination out of which they came has taken actions that limit theological training and mission service for women and has adopted a revised faith statement that contends women should "graciously submit" to their husband's authority and cannot rightly serve as pastors.

As a result of this denominational shift, the independent BWIM group has related more closely to the CBF, the Alliance of Baptists and others who are supportive of women in ministry.

Cobb credits BWIM with accomplishing three important tasks over the past two decades. The first, she said, is bringing together women ministers to feel a sense of community and to affirm their ministerial callings.

Second, said Cobb, BWIM "raised the visibility of women as leaders in Baptist life." The third contribution she identified is providing new avenues of leadership for women in Baptist life.

"Sociologically, we were behind the times in 1983," said Cobb, noting that women were entering law, medicine and other professions at a higher rate than Baptist ministry. The wider openness to women in leadership roles, she said, was inevitably going to reach the church.

"It was needed because it was just and right," said Cobb of the formation of BWIM. "We were

home to each other (and) we validated each other."

While acknowledging the challenges that remain, Cobb said the number of Baptist women responding to ministry calls has "mushroomed" in recent years and they are finding supportive places to connect.

Women can go to CBF-related seminaries where they are treated equally and then enter a variety of ministry roles, said Cobb.

"We've changed the way we educate people [so that] women are fully integrated," Cobb added. "They have opportunities like men, almost."

With these many changes over the past 20 years, Cobb said BWIM will carefully look at the best options for serving women ministers in this new climate.

"Now women want a more local support system and networking," said Cobb. The fact that financial support for BWIM has fallen off, she added, suggests a need to move to the local level as well.

"So we're celebrating 20 years and saying that was a good thing," said Cobb. "Now it's time to do something else."

- This article includes reporting by Hannah Lodwick

-30-

FamilyNet head named president of Palm Beach Atlantic University

By ABP staff

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- David Clark, president of the Southern Baptist-related FamilyNet TV network, was elected president of Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Clark, who begins his new job July 14, took the helm of FamilyNet in 1997. Formerly the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, FamilyNet is a commercial television network located in Fort Worth, Texas. It provides family-oriented entertainment and inspirational programs to more than 30 million homes nationwide. In addition, five radio programs -- Country Crossroads, MasterControl, PowerLine, Strength for Living and On Track -- are aired on more than 2,000 radio stations weekly.

"David Clark is a visionary with a national reputation who brings a solid academic background and business expertise to Palm Beach Atlantic," said Donald Warren, trustee chairman for Palm Beach Atlantic. "He possesses a rare combination of experience in academia and in business with a heart for ministry."

"I did not anticipate a change at this stage of my career but sometimes an opportunity comes along that you know you must accept," Clark said. "For me, Palm Beach Atlantic is one of

7/1/03

those opportunities. Although I will miss the exceptional people at FamilyNet, I am confident the network is positioned for unlimited success in the future."

Clark succeeds former Palm Beach Atlantic President Paul Cortis, who left the university after 11 years for an appointment as U.S. Assistant Attorney General for Administration.

Prior to joining NAMB, Clark was president of KMC Media, a media strategy, production and placement company that worked with many national ministries. He was dean of the college of communications at Regent University in Virginia from 1988 to 1991 and vice president of marketing for the Christian Broadcasting Network from 1982 to 87.

-30-

Texas Hispanic convention approves alliance with CBF

By Ken Camp

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (ABP) --The Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas at its annual meeting approved a strategic missions alliance with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to help start at least 400 new Hispanic churches in the United States by 2010.

To achieve the goal of baptizing 10,000 new Hispanic Christians in less than eight years, the CBF and the convention also agreed to help establish *compañerismos* -- regional fellowships -- throughout the nation to train, equip and encourage church leaders.

The CBF Coordinating Council already had approved the "covenant" agreement and it is to be considered by messengers to the CBF General Assembly, June 26-28 in Charlotte, N.C.

More than 2,100 people, including 945 registered messengers, attended the 93rd annual meeting of the Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas, June 22-24 in San Antonio. Antonio Estrada, who completed his term as president of the convention, told messengers that their officers and strategic planning committee had endorsed the cooperative agreement with the CBF.

"I believe this is God's will," Estrada told the convention, adding that the presidents of the *compañerismos* across Texas also had expressed support for the proposal. However, some messengers maintained that the missions alliance had not been adequately communicated to rank and file church members around the state.

Roland Lopez, pastor of Northwest Hispanic Baptist Church of San Antonio, made a motion that the matter be tabled for study until the 2004 convention. While Lopez expressed his support for church planting, he said, "I sincerely believe we need more time to know without a doubt what we're getting into."

Rudy Camacho from Iglesia Bautista Genesis in Fort Worth, past president of the convention, challenged messengers to consider the national challenge of reaching Hispanics with the gospel. "This is an opportunity to reach out. We must not let this opportunity pass," he said.

At least one messenger also raised questions about the role of Hispanic Baptist Theological School of San Antonio in the agreement. As originally proposed, the covenant was to be a three-way agreement between the Hispanic Convention, CBF and the Hispanic Baptist Theological School, with a goal of enlisting and training 400 Hispanic Baptist pastors by 2010.

After the convention, Albert Reyes, president of the school, clarified that the covenant approved by messengers to the Hispanic Baptist Convention was strictly between the convention and CBF. At this point, the school's trustees have not approved any covenant.

"We are interested in pursuing a cooperative agreement with the CBF in the future, and I certainly hope the details of that agreement will be worked out," Reyes said.

Messengers defeated the motion to table by about a two-to-one margin and then passed the original proposal regarding the alliance with CBF.

"This will be my legacy," said Estrada, pastor of the South Main Hispanic Baptist Church of Houston, immediately following the vote. "I challenge you in the name of Jesus to establish 400 new churches all over the United States."

CBF Executive Director Daniel Vestal, who publicly signed the "covenant" with the Hispanic Baptist Convention, commended the convention for its open exchange of different views and for the amicable spirit of the discussion.

"We at the CBF came to the Hispanic Baptist Convention because we needed your help," he said. "We wanted a partnership to reach people for Christ. We pledge to you that we will be good partners, worthy partners, in this great and bold enterprise."

In other business, the Hispanic Baptist Convention elected Alcides Guajardo, a former home missionary and retired pastor, as its new president. Messenger chose Guajardo from among a field of four nominees that also included Baldemar Borrego of Iglesia Bautista Nueva Esperanza of Wichita Falls, Angel Vela of Iglesia Bautista Westway of El Paso and David Tamez of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Tyler. In a runoff race, Guajardo drew 239 votes, compared to 188 for Borrego.

Messengers also approved a resolution calling on members of the United States Congress to approve legislation correcting a "broken" immigration system. Roland Lopez of San Antonio noted that the current system often leads to abuse, exploitation, discrimination and even death, noting the recent instances of undocumented aliens who died of heat exhaustion in crowded 18-wheelers.

Lopez, who is pastor of a church that includes people of nine Latin American nationalities, emphasized the biblical basis for churches to minister to "aliens" and "strangers" who come seeking freedom and prosperity. "It is not a violation of federal or state law to provide ministry to undocumented immigrants," he noted.