

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

Associated Baptist Press

August 12, 2003 Volume: 03-75

AUG 18 2003

In this issue:

- Does the gay-marriage debate raise church-state concerns?
- Christian Coalition divided over Alabama tax reform
- Oppression of women is 'greatest sin' in the world, conference panelist says
- Conference affirms women as equal church leaders
- Four couples recognized for opposing Southern Baptist position on women
- CBF officers name panel to study partner funding
- Baptist sociologist Ammerman moves to Boston University
- Baylor coach, athletic director resign after violations surface

**Does the gay-marriage debate
raise church-state concerns?**

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Is the raging debate over legalizing same-sex marriage at heart a church-state issue?

Recent court developments in the United States and Canada, as well as religious debates in the Episcopal Church, have raised the specter of same-sex marriage being legalized in the United States at some point in the not-too-distant future. In response, socially conservative politicians have clamored to propose laws - and even a constitutional amendment -- that would ban marriage benefits from being extended to homosexual couples.

But President Bush and the other leaders who have proposed those laws have often used religious terminology in explaining why the state must defend heterosexual-only marriage laws. Bush recently referred to the "sanctity of marriage." Republican Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee described marriage as a "sacrament." White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan called it a "sacred institution."

And a recent Vatican pronouncement instructs Catholic politicians that voting in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage would be "gravely immoral."

But under a Constitution that bans government establishment of religion and requires any law to have a secular purpose behind it, some supporters of strict church-state separation say there is little reason for the government to give legal recognition to heterosexual marriage but not to homosexual unions.

Because of the separation of church and state, wrote Los Angeles Times columnist Robert Scheer recently, "marriage is a civic institution not in any way requiring the participation of religious organizations. Government policies favor the family unit. If the state is offering special rights and benefits for those couples who marry, then to exclude gays is simply unconstitutional."

8/13/03

Echoing Scheer was Dierdre Bourdet of the National Center for Lesbian Rights in San Francisco. In an Aug. 5 San Francisco Chronicle column, she wrote: "Our government's role is to guarantee the freedom and equality of every citizen under the law.... A church's teachings regarding the definition and 'sanctity' of marriage have no place in federal law."

And Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), a presidential candidate and a Catholic, lambasted the Vatican on church-state grounds for its pronouncement about Catholic politicians and gay marriage. "It is important not to have the church instructing politicians. That is an inappropriate crossing of the line in this country," Kerry said in remarks Aug. 1, according to the Boston Globe. "Our founding fathers separated church and state in America. It is an important separation," he added. "It is part of what makes America different and special, and we need to honor that as we go forward."

Kerry has said he opposes legalizing gay marriage but supports the legalization of same-sex "civil unions," which would accord many of the same legal benefits as marriage.

But according to some legal experts who study the issue, the question is more complicated than a simple establishment-of-religion issue.

Some politicians who have proposed laws banning same-sex marriage "have offered reasons that are not totally religious for this, so whether that is enough to invalidate a gay marriage ban is not clear," said Elliot Minberg, chief legal counsel for People for the American Way. Minberg's organization supports legalization of gay marriage.

Pamela Karlan, Stanford University Law School professor and First Amendment expert, agreed. "Of course, you could have a secular interest that is based on moral judgments -- for instance, laws against cruelty to animals," she said in a telephone interview. "So it's not that all moral judgments are inherently religious."

Peter Sprigg of the Family Research Council said there are plenty of non-religious reasons to oppose gay marriage in civil society. "I don't think there's any establishment-clause violation in limiting the definition of marriage to a man and a woman," said Sprigg, director of the Center for Marriage and Family Studies at the Washington-based FRC.

"The reason is that this has been the definition of marriage across religions and across human societies for all of human history," he said. "I think defining marriage as between a man and a woman is not a religious perspective, but rather an anthropological one."

The Family Research Council has been a strong opponent of offering any legal recognition or approval to homosexual relationships.

Sprigg said that legally privileging heterosexual marriage over homosexual unions is no more of a First Amendment problem than banning bigamy. "If anything, imposing monogamy would be more likely to be considered a religious viewpoint, because there are other cultural and religious precedents for polygamy," he said. "But there is no religion or culture that has ever treated same-sex relationships [as equal with heterosexual relationships]."

Sprigg noted that heterosexual marriage offers society natural benefits that same-sex unions naturally do not, such as children. He also said society has a legitimate public-health interest in opposing homosexuality.

If presented with the question in the future, though, U.S. Supreme Court justices may view Sprigg's arguments as incomplete.

In its June decision in *Lawrence and Garner vs. Texas*, a majority on the court overturned state bans of private, consensual same-sex acts. In doing so, justices rejected Texas' argument that the state had a compelling interest to promote public morality by banning gay sex, as well as a state attorney's argument that homosexual practice was inherently detrimental to public health.

Gay couples can have children through adoption or artificial insemination, gay-rights groups argue, and legalizing marriage would actually promote public health by encouraging long-term, monogamous relationships.

Meanwhile, added Karlan, politicians who use sacramental language to defend marriage as an institution only for heterosexuals are not helping their cause. "The more they say that the reason they want to ban same-sex marriage is because it's a violation of a sacrament," the law professor said, "then the harder it is to say that there is a secular purpose [behind the law]."

Sprigg acknowledged that heterosexuals have done plenty to violate the sanctity of marriage themselves. But redefining the institution to include same-sex couples would be a death-blow to marriage, he said.

"Why would we want to do more to damage an already damaged and fragile institution?" he asked. "If you redefine marriage and you take out the necessity of a male and a female as part of the fundamental definition, essentially you've destroyed marriage. You've taken it out of existence. I think the people who think that same-sex marriage would not harm society are gravely mistaken."

-30-

Christian Coalition divided over Alabama tax reform

By Bob Allen

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (ABP) -- In a surprise move, the Christian Coalition of America is supporting Alabama Gov. Bob Riley's plan to restructure the state's taxes, breaking ranks with the organization's state chapter, which is leading opposition against the measure.

Roberta Combs, national Christian Coalition president, made unannounced visits in cities across Alabama Aug. 6 to tout the Republican governor's tax plan, according to a story by *EthicsDaily.com*. The governor's plan is up for vote in a statewide referendum in September.

The \$1.2 billion tax package, aimed at erasing budget deficits and reforming an antiquated tax structure that advocates say overburdens the poor, includes the largest tax increase in the state's history.

Some observers believe the tax plan's failure or success depends in large part on response from the state's churches. Religious leaders led opposition to the previous governor's plan to raise funds for education through a statewide lottery. This time Baptist, Methodist and Episcopal organizations have issued statements supporting reform of Alabama's tax system.

Riley, a Southern Baptist, is appealing to Christian voters in the Bible Belt to support the proposal as a matter of conscience. "According to our Christian ethics, we're supposed to love God, love each other and help take care of the poor," he told *USA Today*. "It is immoral to charge somebody making \$5,000 an income tax."

8/13/03

The Christian Coalition of Alabama passed a resolution in May opposing the raising of taxes and blaming the state's budget woes on "years of poor stewardship and fiscal irresponsibility."

"The Christian Coalition is unable to support any new permanent tax proposals to cure historical systemic failures and poor public policy of reckless and unmerited spending habits," the state group said in the statement.

In an unprecedented split between the national Christian Coalition and a state chapter, however, Combs traveled to Alabama to urge the organization's members and other people of faith to support what she called a "bold and courageous initiative."

"The Christian Coalition of America supports Gov. Riley's plan for tax reform, because it is clearly and unquestionably designed to help the least among us and asks those who are most able to pay their share," Combs said in a statement. "At the same time, the governor's proposal ensures the protection of important family programs and services that face imminent risk of significant funding cuts. We believe the governor's proposal is both visionary and courageous."

John Giles, head of Alabama's Christian Coalition, said he was caught off guard by Combs' announcement. According to the Mobile Register, Giles said it violates tenets of the Christian Coalition and hinted that political chicanery might have been a factor.

Riley's press secretary, David Azbell, denied there were any backroom deals. He said Combs' endorsement means that in opposing the tax proposal "John Giles is speaking for John Giles and not for the Christian Coalition."

Combs downplayed the split, calling it a difference of opinion. But she acknowledged that she is unaware of another instance of a state chapter and the national organization offering conflicting opinions on an issue. State and national leaders normally work together on statements, she said, but Alabama coalition leaders did not discuss the tax plan with national leaders before issuing a statement.

Giles told the Mobile newspaper that Christian Coalition policies don't require state chapters to consult with the national organization before issuing statements. "We're separate," he said. "We do not answer to each other."

Like other Religious Right organizations, the Christian Coalition usually opposes tax increases. The coalition was founded in 1989 by televangelist Pat Robertson after his unsuccessful campaign for president in 1988. Combs, former head of the Christian Coalition's South Carolina chapter and an executive vice president under Robertson, succeeded the founder as national president in 2001.

Giles, a former aid to Alabama Gov. Fob James and Gov. Guy Hunt, was hired in 1999 as head of the Christian Coalition of Alabama.

The Christian Coalition of America gave Riley 100 percent approval of his voting record during six years in Congress prior to his election as governor.

Riley, who took office in January, is a member of First Baptist Church in Ashland, Ala., where he taught a men's Sunday school class for several years and chaired the church's board of trustees.

While Alabama religious groups share a conviction that the existing tax structure ought to be changed, there's less consensus about details of Riley's specific plan. While some religious leaders have spoken out in favor of the proposal, others are opting to leave the decision up to people in the pew.

Leaders of the Alabama Baptist State Convention have designated Sept. 7 a "day of prayer" about the tax-reform package, which is scheduled for referendum Sept. 9.

The Baptist state convention passed a resolution in 2000 urging reform of Alabama's regressive tax system. But convention officers issuing a statement July 25 said "diverse opinions" exist on the particular plan approved by the legislature and backed by the governor.

"Because no one person can speak for all Baptists, we are encouraging Baptists to seek God's will in this matter through prayer," Joe Godfrey, president of the state's Baptists, told the Alabama Baptist newspaper.

Henry Cox, the state convention's first vice president, added that if Alabama Baptists will "seek the Lord's guidance and study the proposal carefully ... the right thing will happen ... even if we don't know what the right thing is."

- Bob Allen is managing editor of EthicsDaily.com.

-30-

Oppression of women is 'greatest sin' in the world, conference panelist says

By Hannah Lodwick

ORLANDO (ABP) -- The "greatest sin" in the world is the oppression and inequality of women, said Brian Peterson, a media specialist for the Christian relief organization World Vision.

Gender oppression causes health and social problems, Peterson told a gathering of Christians for Biblical Equality. Developing nations like India and those in Africa face some of the worst problems, he said, including domestic abuse, poverty and disease.

"Gender inequality is the driving force behind AIDS in this world," said Peterson, a media liaison for World Vision's U.S. branch. "We have 42 million people who are HIV-positive, and if it were not for gender inequality, we wouldn't be talking about this today."

Peterson said gender inequality in Africa has made HIV/AIDS the continent's most devastating plague.

Men in Africa typically contract the virus from promiscuous sex, then transmit it to their wives, who have scant access to contraceptives and little control over their own bodies. As thousands of Africans contract the virus each year, the increase in the number of orphans and disabled people leads to more poverty, crime and oppression.

Peterson said the AIDS crisis has undone much of the relief and development work accomplished by World Vision in the last 53 years.

Gender oppression in India causes social problems there as well, said Peterson, current president of the Evangelical Press Association and founding editor of New Man magazine. In a recent survey of 10,000 Indian women, he said, 40 percent said they have been victims of domestic abuse. Twenty percent said the abuse occurred during pregnancy, he noted.

8/13/03

One way World Vision helps elevate the status and freedom of women is through "microenterprise" projects, Peterson said. World Vision loans women small amounts of money to start businesses. Then after the businesses are established, the women pay the money back and the organization loans it out again.

In the world's developed nations, such as the United States, Christians must become sensitive to the pain of others, said Peterson. "There is a desensitization of this whole thing. That has to be a matter of prayer. You can't just read statistics and be sensitized."

Peterson spoke as part of an international panel on gender issues during the biannual convention of Christians for Biblical Equality Aug. 7-10 in Orlando. The Minnesota-based evangelical organization, with about 2,000 members from 97 denominations, exists to "affirm the biblical truth of equality," regardless of race, gender and class.

Funmi Josephine Para-Mallam, a panelist from Nigeria, said her personal search in the scriptures lead to her self-identity as a Christian woman. Even though African women don't enjoy the same rights as men, Para-Mallam said they can offer a significant contribution to worldwide Christianity.

"I think developing countries are very much shut out," said Para-Mallam, who is studying gender and development issues at the University of Leeds, in England, as a Ford Foundation Fellow. "We have a different perspective to offer. African women are really strong. I wish their voice could be heard."

During her comments, Para-Mallam encouraged the audience to be patient and "wait for God's timing" in their efforts to elevate the place of women in the church. She said many people in Nigeria still view the biblical-equality movement as Western feminism, not biblical teaching.

Although Christians for Biblical Equality identifies with the evangelical movement in the United States, many evangelicals disagree with the organization's interpretation of biblical equality, particularly on the issue of women in ministry.

All the panelists - including Anglican vicar Kevin Giles of Australia, Japanese pastor Naoko Okamura and Venezuelan church planter Nora Mendez de Mora - said most Christian women worldwide have not been permitted to develop their spiritual gifts and talents.

Mendez de Mora a former children's pastor who serves with her husband as a church planter and counselor in the city of San Antonio de Los Altos, suggested a hierarchical church structure in Venezuela keeps women out of leadership. "It's a challenge to really serve the Lord," the female minister said. But trust can overcome gender inequality within the church, she said, and make Christians more useful to the outside world. "The church has to understand we are here for the sake of the world," she said.

-30-

Conference affirms women as equal church leaders

By Hannah Lodwick

ORLANDO (ABP) -- Members of Christians for Biblical Equality say every Christian can function as an equal part of the body of Christ, regardless of gender. But surprisingly to some, they don't consider themselves

8/13/03

feminists -- just part of a reform movement.

"The spirit is calling us to read the [biblical] text anew," said Mimi Haddad, president of Christians for Biblical Equality. "It's the Spirit of God who is drawing people all over the world to the same conclusion [about women leaders in the church]. Sometimes he uses CBE and sometimes he doesn't."

On Aug. 7-10, CBE held its biannual conference to promote ministry that is "rooted in God's gifting, rather than gender, class or race." Roughly 350 people attended the 8th international conference, which focused on women ministering all over the world.

Haddad said leadership by Christian women differs from that of secular feminists. "The church is too easily frightened by what appears to be feminist culture because we have seen some of the devastation from secular feminism," she said. "There are problems with secular feminism, but don't let it stop you [from affirming women]."

In a keynote address Aug. 8, author and speaker Lee Grady gave several biblical examples of women God used as tools to kill the enemies of God's people. Grady said present-day women have the same ability to be used of God for a greater good.

"We've got to have a whole paradigm shift of courage in this day and age," he said. "Women are not excused anymore. The Bible says the righteous are as bold as a lion."

The conference featured workshop leaders and speakers from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and South America to promote a theme of Christians working together as an international community.

Lydia Barrow-Hankins taught one workshop about her life in Japan working with her husband as Southern Baptist missionaries.

"I stand with many women colleagues in Japan who are serving as pastors," said Barrow-Hankins, who has lived in Japan for more than 20 years. "The church is 70 percent women, and there's a real shortage of pastors, so when women come forward [to serve] everyone is thrilled."

The Hankinses recently were fired because they would not sign an affirmation of the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message," the revised faith statement of the Southern Baptist Convention. Now Japanese officials at the university where Barrow-Hankins works have hired her as a regular staff member.

"The tables have turned, and now my Japanese colleagues are taking care of me," Barrow-Hankins said. "I have been awed and humbled by their willingness to take us on. As a woman in ministry this is a wonderful thing."

While Christians for Biblical Equality draws its membership mostly from evangelical Christians, many evangelicals hold a different view of the role of women. Some critics question CBE's "egalitarian" stance, saying instead that men and women have "complementary" roles in the church.

The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, for instance, argues that men and women have equal but different roles in life. "Our organization agrees [with CBE] that, according to Genesis 1, men and women are equal in the site of God," said Randy Stinson, executive director for the council. "Prior to the [biblical] fall, there were clear role differences between Adam and Eve, and this involved authority and submission. The fall distorted that"

The fact that Eve came from Adam's side demonstrates her equality, Stinson said, but the fact that Adam named

her demonstrates his authority. He said if you take the overall teachings of the Bible, it's difficult to find a place without the clearly defined relationship between men and women.

Groups like Christians for Biblical Equality cite Galatians 3:28 as an important verse proving no distinction between male and female roles. Stinson, however, said the passage demonstrates "the inheritance received in Christ is the same between men and women," not the roles.

Haddad disagreed. "When you have subjection [of women to men], you no longer have equality," she said. "You can't have it both ways." Hierarchical language undermines the call of love, she said.

The conference included an international panel discussion on men and women in "global community" and an awards banquet honoring those who work toward gender equality in their field.

-30-

Four couples recognized for opposing Southern Baptist position on women

By Hannah Lodwick

ORLANDO (ABP) -- Christians for Biblical Equality sent a strong statement to the Southern Baptist Convention Aug. 9 as they presented four former SBC-affiliated couples with awards for championing equal status for women.

Carolyn and Patrick Anderson, Carolyn and Joe Crumpler, Ron Hankins and Lydia Barrow-Hankins, and Diana and David Garland each received Priscilla and Aquila Awards during a banquet at the organization's biannual conference in Orlando.

The Priscilla and Aquila Award is named for a biblical husband-and-wife ministry team.

Mimi Haddad, president of the Minnesota-based organization, said the purpose of the award is to recognize people who have "risked their necks" in furthering the message of gender equality. She said the presentation proved the most moving part of the conference for some participants.

Each of the four couples was commended for opposing the SBC's position on gender roles.

Catherine Allen, who presented the awards, said the SBC's "Baptist Faith and Message," adopted in 2000, represents the first time "in 400 years of organized Baptist life in Europe and America" that a major Baptist convention has adopted a doctrinal statement that mentions gender or gender roles. All SBC missionaries, professors, employees and leaders "are required to agree with the new gender doctrines," which teach subordination of women, Allen said.

"In the face of this enormous organized campaign to use Scripture to shackle women and distort the marriage relationship, who will speak out for a more excellent way of living the Bible?" asked Allen, a former SBC women's leader and a founder of Global Women, an international Christian women's advocacy group based in Birmingham, Ala.

"These four couples illumine the way for others to live lives of biblical integrity," Allen said in introducing the

8/13/03

honorees.

As some of the first volunteers who began organizing the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Carolyn and Patrick Anderson first saw the need in 1989 to "raise a protective and celebrative umbrella for Baptists who would not conform to the SBC," Allen said. Since then, both of the Andersons have worked as head of the Florida CBF chapter.

Carolyn and Joe Crumpler also contributed to the formation of CBF. Carolyn Crumpler resigned as chief executive of the SBC Woman's Missionary Union and married Joe Crumpler, pastor at Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. She later spoke and wrote as a women's advocate -- something that caused her rejection by many SBC members. The Crumplers continue to work as marriage counselors.

Lydia Barrow-Hankins and Ron Hankins faced SBC rejection as well, Allen said. For 22 years they started churches in Japan as ordained ministers supported by the SBC and Japan Baptists. When they refused to sign the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message" statement, which prohibited women pastors, they lost their support from the SBC. Japanese Baptists since have hired Lydia to continue in her chaplain position, and Ron Hankins will work as a marriage counselor and theologian.

Now employed by Baylor University, David and Diana Garland previously worked at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In 1995, however, Diana Garland lost her job as dean of social work in a controversy over women in pastoral roles. At Baylor, Diana Garland is now dean of the School of Social Work and David Garland is associate dean of Truett Theological Seminary. The Garlands could not attend the ceremony.

-30-

CBF officers name panel to study partner funding

By Lance Wallace

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has announced the appointment of a seven-member committee to study the group's relationship with the partner ministries it funds.

The partner funding study committee, to be chaired by Charles Cantrell of Mountain View, Mo., will include Matt Cook of Rosebud, Texas; Elizabeth Denham Thompson of Littleton, Colo.; Jerry Mantooth of Maryville, Tenn.; Michael Duncan of Eminence, Ky.; Carolyn Busby of Ada, Okla.; and Candace McKibben of Tallahassee, Fla.

Request for the committee came from a budget priorities task force appointed in February by then-CBF moderator Phill Martin. Members asked Martin and current moderator Cynthia Holmes to appoint the new committee to continue discussions of how the CBF's partners should be funded and evaluated.

Among the areas to be studied include how an organization becomes a partner, how new partners are selected, how funding levels for partners are determined and how often the partnerships are evaluated.

The committee will meet in conjunction with the CBF's Coordinating Council, scheduled for Oct. 16-18 in Atlanta, and will seek input from current partners and the larger CBF constituency.

8/13/03

-30-

Baptist sociologist Ammerman moves to Boston University

By Robert Marus

BOSTON (ABP) -- One of the nation's foremost Christian sociologists is switching seminaries. Nancy Ammerman will join the faculty of the Boston University School of Theology in September.

Since 1995 Ammerman has been professor of sociology of religion at Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Conn. Widely regarded as an expert in the study of sociological factors affecting congregational life, as well as the sociology of fundamentalism in the United States, Ammerman is perhaps best known for two major sociological and historical studies of Southern Baptists.

In 1990, at the peak of the conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention, Ammerman wrote *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention*. She also edited a 1993 work by a group of scholars called *Southern Baptists Observed*.

A native of Missouri, Ammerman is a graduate of Southwest Baptist University, the University of Louisville and Yale University. She also has taught at Yale, Emory, Princeton and Columbia universities.

Boston University is a school of United Methodist heritage. Ammerman will serve on both the theology and sociology faculties.

Ammerman's husband, Jack, also has been named librarian at the Boston University School of Theology. He previously was Hartford Seminary's librarian. Also a Missourian and Southwest Baptist alumnus, Jack Ammerman earned graduate degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary, Emory University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Previously, he has worked in the theology library at Emory as well as serving as pastor of churches in Connecticut and New Jersey and as a director of campus ministries at Mercer University.

-30-

Baylor coach, athletic director resign after violations surface

By Hannah Lodwick

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Baylor University head basketball coach Dave Bliss and athletic director Tom Stanton resigned Aug. 8 after an internal investigation found Bliss knew of "major infractions" in NCAA rules.

The resignations came less than 24 hours after a memorial service for Patrick Dennehy, whose July disappearance and murder sparked the investigation.

"I am the head coach, and I am accountable for everything that goes on with my program," Bliss said at an Aug. 8 news conference. "I intend to cooperate fully as the inquiry continues. I'll do whatever I can to make things

8/13/03

right."

President Robert Sloan Jr. said investigators found coaches arranged for third-party tuition payments for two players, a major NCAA infraction.

One of those players was Dennehy, according to ESPN. Bliss reportedly knew about the payments but did not provide the money.

Sloan said Stanton, the athletic director, did not know of the violations.

As a result of the infractions, Sloan put the basketball program on probation for at least two years, which will keep the team out of the 2004 postseason conference tournament. He said Baylor will allow any player to transfer to another school without sitting out a season.

"This has been a very difficult time for us," Sloan said in the Dallas Morning News. "But we have an obligation to pursue an aggressive and thorough investigation."

Athletic department officials also failed to respond properly after learning players had used banned substances, Sloan said.

The investigation began when several of Dennehy's friends said a Baylor assistant coach asked Dennehy to forego his scholarship that season with the understanding that his tuition and expenses "would be taken care of," the Kansas City Star reported. Dennehy's father also reported that his son received more than \$1,000 from a Baylor coach to pay for a car loan.

Larry Brumley, Baylor associate vice president for external relations, said the school's internal investigation will continue indefinitely. "The president has said it will go on as long as necessary to thoroughly investigate every allegation and every aspect to make sure we are ... able to do the right thing," Brumley told Associated Baptist Press.

Brumley said he was surprised and disturbed by Bliss' resignation. It saddened him to see such a "sterling" record tainted by the allegations, he said.

Bliss, 59, defended his basketball program in a July 28 press conference, saying his players were as involved in drugs as "the man in the moon," the AP reported.

He was hired by Baylor in 1999 after working for Oklahoma University, Southern Methodist University and the University of New Mexico. Bliss left SMU after six months because of alleged rules violations involving booster payments to a player, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported.

Stanton, who hired Bliss, came to Baylor in 1995. During his tenure he presided over the construction of a new tennis complex and new baseball, soccer and softball stadiums. Stanton, a Baylor alum who lettered in basketball and baseball, will remain interim athletic director until a new director is found.