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**2000 Baptist Faith and Message rejected  
as only faith statement for Illinois Baptists**

By Michael Leathers

MARYVILLE, Ill. (ABP) -- Messengers to the Illinois Baptist State Association's annual meeting soundly rejected a last-minute attempt to make the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message its official faith statement.

Instead, they adopted the recommendation of a state association's committee to affirm six faith statements - including four versions of the Baptist Faith and Message -- as a consensus of what most Baptists believe.

The IBSA's 97th annual meeting was held Nov. 5-6 in Maryville, a St. Louis suburb. Messengers voted on the six faith statements -- the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message; its revisions in 1963, 1998 and 2000; the Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1742); and the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1833) -- on the meeting's opening day.

The IBSA is now one of a handful of state Baptist conventions that have gone on record to reject the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message, which was approved at the national Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting as its official statement of faith. Three years ago, Illinois rejected by a four-vote margin amending the IBSA constitution to add an amendment on the family, which was added to the Baptist Faith and Message by the SBC in 1998.

Patrick Stewart, pastor of First Baptist Church of St. Charles, made the motion to insert into the committee's recommendation a sentence giving official status to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. It's good to affirm multiple faith statements, he said, but "we need to have a single standard."

Stewart is a trustee of the International Mission Board, a national Southern Baptist agency that oversees missionaries serving in foreign countries. That agency recently required its missionaries to affirm the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message as a condition of continued employment.

By selecting an official faith statement, the state association would not violate the long-held Baptist beliefs in soul competency and local-church autonomy, Stewart said, but it would give direction to whom the association hired and how its committees worked. Having an official statement of beliefs is also important, he said, because it's not enough to "say the Bible alone is going to be our standard." Episcopalians are being torn apart over the issue of homosexuality, he said, and both sides say the Bible represents their views.

Just because some misinterpret the Bible, countered Keith Stanford of Springfield, that should not prevent Baptists

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from making the Bible their sole standard. "We're not going to all agree," said Stanford, an associate pastor of Western Oaks Baptist and former IBSA president, adding it was time to settle the issue and move on.

By affirming all six faith statements, the IBSA will build consensus among its member churches, said Lanny Faulkner, director of missions of Central Baptist Association. Faulkner was one of two messengers who presented a motion at the IBSA's 2001 annual meeting to affirm the six faith statements.

Speaking the next day, outgoing IBSA president Larry Richmond observed that "the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message may be an issue to some, but it is not an issue over which we should divide."

In other annual-meeting developments, Don Sharp, pastor of Faith Tabernacle Baptist Church of Chicago and IBSA vice president, was elected president with no opposition. Sharp is the first African-American elected IBSA president since Eugene Gibson Sr. served in 1997. Fred Winters, pastor of First Baptist of Maryville, was elected vice president.

Sharp's election as vice president two years ago attracted criticism from some pastors, who had supported another candidate. They complained that Sharp's church contributed little to the Cooperative Program, a voluntary financial partnership by which Southern Baptist churches support their state conventions and the national denomination, and that messengers had been unduly pressured to elect a minority to office.

In an apparent move to quell criticism, Jim Donahue, pastor of Meadow Heights Baptist of Collinsville, in his nomination speech said Sharp's church was increasing its Cooperative Program support by 47 percent and that Sharp was taking a \$100 weekly cut in salary to make it happen.

Messengers also approved a measure that allows the IBSA board of directors to elect its own officers: chairman, vice chairman and recording secretary. Messengers will continue to elect the four officers -- president, vice president, recording secretary and assistant recording secretary -- to preside over the annual meeting. They will no longer lead the twice-annual meetings of the board of directors but will continue to serve as ex-officio members with a vote.

A first reading was given to a proposal to reduce the board of directors to 33 members from 72. The issue will be up for a vote at next November's annual meeting and will need a two-thirds majority to pass. The plan has already been opposed by Union Baptist Association in southern Illinois. While the regional association agrees that the IBSA board needs to be smaller, they questioned whether the six proposed regions created throughout the state reflect equal representation.

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### **New study conflicts with claims on 'charitable-choice' success**

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A new study suggests that one of the main arguments for government funding of religious social-service providers may be based on false assumptions.

Researchers at Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis concluded a three-year study of the effectiveness of faith-based social-service providers Nov. 5. The project, by researchers from the university's Center for Urban Policy, is the most comprehensive study of the issue since 1996, when Congress enabled government funding of social services through churches and other religious organizations.

President Bush has attempted to further expand the number of government programs that can provide funding to religious charities.

Although advocates of the so-called "charitable-choice" programs have often argued that religiously motivated charities are more effective at providing social services than their governmental or secular counterparts, the study's researchers concluded otherwise.

Among other results, the Charitable Choice Research Project found:

- Religious organizations operating job-training programs placed 31 percent of their clients in full-time employment, while secular job-training organizations placed 53 percent of their clients;
- Those placed in jobs from secular job-training programs were more likely to have health benefits and to work more hours than were graduates of religious programs; and
- "Relatively few" new religious groups in the states studied have begun accepting government money to perform social services.

Many opponents of charitable choice argue providing government grants to pervasively religious groups is a violation of the Constitution's ban on government endorsement of religion.

Federal courts have made it clear that direct government funds cannot go to fund worship, devotional activity or other inherently religious acts. However, the White House and other charitable-choice advocates have argued that religious groups can use public funds for the secular aspects of their work while maintaining their religious character in other parts of their work.

The study's authors conclude that may be impossible to enforce. "We found that states did not monitor constitutional violations and did little to educate [religious] contractors about constitutional compliance," said Sheila Suess Kennedy, the project's lead researcher and a law professor at the university. "We also found that congregational leaders had little familiarity with applicable constitutional constraints."

In one part of the survey, 67 percent of congregational leaders who took what researchers described as "a simple questionnaire" on constitutional issues were unaware that government money cannot pay for devotional activities, such as prayer and Bible study.

The project studied religious and secular social-service providers in three states -- Indiana, Massachusetts, and North Carolina.