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Alabama court votes unanimously to remove Roy Moore from office

By Robert Marus

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (ABP) -- Halfway through his term, the "Ten Commandments judge" has been ousted as the head of Alabama's judicial system.

The Alabama Court of the Judiciary voted unanimously Nov. 13 to remove Roy Moore from his office as chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court. Their vote followed a dramatic one-day trial that featured a former Moore ally, Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor (R), now prosecuting the judge.

Moore was removed for violating judicial ethics by openly flouting a higher court's order. The judge, long an outspoken advocate for displaying the Ten Commandments on government property, had been suspended since August, when he defied a federal judge's order to remove a massive monument to the Ten Commandments that he had placed in the building that houses the state Supreme Court.

The 5,280-lb. granite monument -- engraved with the Protestant King James translation of the biblical commandments -- ultimately was removed from its central spot in the rotunda of the Alabama state judicial building. Moore's fellow justices on the Alabama Supreme Court overruled his decision to keep the monument in place.

Shortly after the judiciary court's decision Nov. 13, Moore told a group of supporters and journalists that he had "absolutely no regrets. I have done what I was sworn to do."

During his trial, he told the judiciary court he would return the monument to public view if he were reinstated as chief justice.

William Thompson, presiding judge of the Court of the Judiciary, said Moore had given him and his colleagues no other choice. "The chief justice placed himself above the law," he said. He also said the court's decision was made

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easier because Moore "showed no signs of contrition" for his action.

The president of a Washington-based group whose attorneys helped argue the original case against Moore's monument said the court's decision was the final vindication of their lawsuit.

"The Court of the Judiciary has served the cause of justice," said Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State in a press release. "Moore flagrantly announced his intention to violate a federal court order, made a mockery of the legal system and created an unseemly media circus."

Religious Right leader James Kennedy of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., called the judge's removal a "deplorable" example of judicial "tyranny."

"Moore is being punished for upholding the rule of law, for following the will of the voters, for faithfully upholding his oath of office, and for refusing to bow to tyranny," Kennedy said. "... For too long, too many elected officials have bowed in submission to lawless federal court edicts that set aside life and liberty. They have stood by as, case by case, God and biblical morality have been removed from public life. At some point, the representatives of the people must defend the rule of law and oppose tyranny."

Although most legal observers had believed the court would issue some sort of ruling against Moore, the panel had several options from which it could have chosen. Removal required a unanimous vote, but other options for punishment -- such as further suspension or censure -- would have required only a majority.

Moore was elected chief justice of the state Supreme Court in 2000, campaigning as the "Ten Commandments judge" after a highly publicized battle over a similar display in his courtroom when he was a county magistrate. Alabama is one of the few states that elects its Supreme Court justices.

After his election to the Supreme Court, Moore had the monument crafted and placed in the courthouse in the middle of the night on July 31, 2001. A group of Alabama attorneys and three national civil-rights organizations then sued Moore, saying the monument was a violation of the Constitution's ban on government establishment of religion.

Last year, U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson agreed, and ordered the monument removed. However, he delayed implementation of his own order pending review by a higher court.

In July, a panel of the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously upheld Thompson's ruling. Thompson then issued the August deadline for the monument's removal. Moore claimed that removing it would violate his oath of office, because he believed the Alabama Constitution required him to "acknowledge God."

Moore had continued to receive his \$170,000 annual salary during his suspension. That will now end. Republican Gov. Bob Riley will appoint a judge to take Moore's place on the state's high court.

The Court of the Judiciary is an ad hoc panel that meets only to consider such cases of ethics charges against a sitting judge. It is made up of nine members who are a mix of judges, lawyers and laypeople elected by their peers or appointed by state officeholders.

Moore may appeal to have the case re-heard by his colleagues on the Alabama Supreme Court. They could choose to recuse themselves from the case, in which case a special court would be either appointed by Gov. Bob Riley (R) or chosen by the justices themselves.

Moore also will face a battle to retain his credentials as a lawyer. Richard Cohen of the Southern Poverty Law Center, another one of the group's involved in the original lawsuit, reportedly said his organization will file a petition with the Alabama Bar Association to have Moore disbarred.

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Wanda Allen dies in Georgia; wife of former SBC president

By ABP staff

BIG CANOE, Ga. (ABP) -- Wanda Ruth Massey Allen, 74, wife of former Southern Baptist Convention president Jimmy Allen, died at her home in Big Canoe, Ga., Nov. 13 after a long illness.

Born in Duncan, Okla., she graduated from Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, in 1949. She taught speech arts and second grade for 23 years in public schools in Dallas and San Antonio, choosing to work in racially changing communities and in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

A significant part of Allen's life experience was reflected in her role as grandmother of two children who died of HIV-AIDS. In the early 1980s, the two boys, Bryan and Matt, were infected by contaminated blood transfusions. Bryan's House, the first pediatric agency for AIDS children in the nation, was named for her grandson, who was the first baby of record to die of HIV-AIDS in Dallas. Her family's struggle with AIDS is documented in the book "Burden of a Secret" by Jimmy Allen.

Widely known for her sense of humor, Allen worked as an entertainer and after-dinner speaker. Active among Texas Baptists, she led Young Woman's Auxiliary, a missions organization for young women.

Jimmy Allen, a longtime Texas Baptist pastor, was president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and, for the past decade, chaplain at Big Canoe Chapel.

Survivors, in addition to her husband of 54 years, include three sons, Michael Wayne Allen of San Antonio, Stephen Ray Allen of Dallas, and Kenneth Scott Allen of Sydney, Australia; one grandchild, Diana Allen of Laredo; a sister, Wilma Durtschi, Brownwood, Texas; and a nephew, Charles Durtschi of Grand Prairie, Texas.

Memorial Services will be Monday, Nov. 17, at 10:30 a.m. at Big Canoe Chapel. Burial will be that afternoon in the Chapel Cemetery in the Jimmy R. Allen Meditation Park.

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CBF's Stan Parks accepts position with Texas Baptists' mission network

By Lance Wallace

LUBBOCK, Texas (ABP) -- Stan Parks, a mission worker in Southeast Asia for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, was named associate at WorldconneX, a new missions agency created by the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Beginning in January, Parks will serve as associate to Bill Tinsley, recently named director of WorldconneX. Tinsley has served as associate executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Stan Parks is the son of Keith Parks, former coordinator of CBF global missions and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board. Parks and his wife, Kay, were appointed as Fellowship field personnel in

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September 1993 as strategy coordinators for an unnamed people group in Southeast Asia.

Prior to serving with the Fellowship, Parks was pastor of Cross Point Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas. The Parkses have three children, Noel, 10; Kaleb, 8; and Seth, 7.

Tinsley said Parks brings experience and insights from international missions work which complement Tinsley's experience in local, national and short-term partnership missions.

"We do not intend to duplicate traditional mission-sending agencies or to compete with anyone," Tinsley said in explaining the work of WorldconneX. "Whatever shape that may take, WorldconneX's task will be to remain true to the 'dreams and visions' God sends and to prayers for his leadership," he explained.

Barbara Baldrige, CBF global missions co-coordinator, said Parks' hiring would benefit the missions partnership between the BGCT and the Fellowship.

"Stan's passion and expertise for 21st-century missions in general and World A in particular are assets that will continue to benefit the larger missions community through Texas Baptists the way they have through CBF Global Missions," she said. "We look forward to a good partnership with BGCT's WorldconneX." "CBF is truly cooperative," Parks said. "Our goal with WorldconneX is broader and deeper cooperation as servants of Christ's mission. Kay and I are very grateful to those who have given and served to allow us to be on mission as a part of CBF. And we look forward to many more years of serving God together."

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Kentucky Baptist messengers elect layman as president

By Trennis Henderson

LEXINGTON, Ky. (ABP) -- Federal judge Eugene Siler was elected president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention Nov. 11. He is only the fourth layman elected to that post in the past 50 years.

Siler, who serves on the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, was elected by a vote of 532-436 over Bill Henard, pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington.

Siler, who describes himself as a "traditional" Baptist, was endorsed by the moderate Mainstream Baptists of Kentucky. A member of First Baptist Church of Williamsburg, he served the past year as KBC first vice president. He is chairman of the Baptist Healthcare System board of directors and a trustee of Baptist Seminary of Kentucky.

Henard, who served this year as president of the Kentucky Baptist Pastors' Conference, described himself as "pro-SBC." He served on the Southern Baptist Convention's 2001-2002 Committee on Nominations and is a trustee of LifeWay Christian Resources.

In other elections, Paul Chitwood, pastor of First Baptist Church of Somerset, was elected first vice president and Skip Alexander, pastor of Campbellsville Baptist Church, was elected second vice president.

Messengers, meeting Nov. 11-12 at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, adopted five resolutions, including statements affirming covenant marriage and opposing expanded gambling and alcohol sales.

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They also explored the theme "Missions Beyond the Edge." The missions focus included affirming a missions partnership with the Piaui Baptist Convention in Brazil that officially will begin in 2005.

Messengers also took part in an International Mission Board appointment service Nov. 11. The mission board's trustees appointed 69 missionaries, including two who were not publicly recognized because of the sensitive nature of their overseas assignment.

Tubby Smith, head basketball coach of the University of Kentucky Wildcats, welcomed a crowd of approximately 3,500 people to Rupp Arena for the commissioning service. Affirming the missionaries' efforts to "bring the gospel to all parts of the world," Smith reminded the crowd, "You've got to have someone support you in everything you do."

During convention business sessions, KBC messengers adopted a reduced Cooperative Program budget and declined a proposed constitutional amendment on messenger representation.

The 2004-05 budget of \$22.5 million is a 3 percent reduction from the current budget. Next year's budget maintains the allocations of 64 percent for KBC causes and 36 percent for Southern Baptist Convention causes.

A proposed constitutional amendment introduced last year sought to expand guidelines for the number of messengers to include financial gifts to any convention cause. The current guidelines specify that churches can name additional messengers based on contributions to the Cooperative Program.

The committee on constitution and bylaws declined to recommend passage of the proposed amendment. Bob Fox, who offered the original motion, asked to have it considered on the floor of the convention.

"I believe that adding the term 'convention work' to the constitution will broaden participation in Kentucky Baptist life," said Fox, pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Georgetown. "I think a fairer system would recognize all gifts to the KBC as gifts that allow for additional messengers and additional representation." His proposal was defeated 526-190.

Next year's KBC annual meeting will be Nov. 16-17 at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville.

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Tennessee Baptists turn back changes proposed by conservatives

By ABP staff

JACKSON, Tenn. (ABP) – Several attempts to place more conservatives in leadership of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and its institutions failed during the convention's annual meeting Nov. 11-12.

The convention's 1,905 messengers also adopted resolutions supporting the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment and the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. A 2003-04 budget of \$35.55 million was adopted, which is 4.4 percent below the current budget. The Southern Baptist Convention will receive 37.5 percent of the funds, while 62.5 percent will fund the state convention's ministries.

Led by a group called Concerned Tennessee Baptists, conservatives in the state offered seven substitute nominees to those presented for election by convention committees. All seven nominations from the floor failed.

Some conservatives are concerned that too many members of the committee on committees and the committee on

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boards -- which nominate leaders -- are associated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate group that differs from the more conservative Southern Baptist Convention. A motion to consider changing the qualifications for those serving on the two committees was narrowly defeated.

The defeats caused some conservatives to question their financial support of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. "It's going to cause many of us to rethink the way we support state mission giving," said Glenn Denton, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Lebanon, according to the Tennessean of Nashville.

Former Nashville pastor Bill Sherman of Fairview said screening committee members for support of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is at odds with the traditional Baptist belief of soul liberty. "It will be a can of worms we will regret from now on," Sherman said.

In other business, messengers elected Mike Boyd, pastor of Wallace Memorial Baptist Church in Knoxville, as president over Randy Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church in Sevierville, 53 percent to 47 percent.

Davis, described as an inerrantist in his nomination speech, was endorsed by Concerned Tennessee Baptists in a "2003 Conservative Voters Guide" distributed to messengers.

Robert Tyson, a director of missions from Springfield, was elected first vice president with no opposition.

Millington pastor Steve Flockhart, who was endorsed by the conservative group, was elected second vice president over Michael Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, 57 percent to 43 percent. Flockhart, pastor of Crosspointe Baptist Church in Millington, was nominated by prominent conservative pastor Jerry Sutton of Nashville.

The pro-marriage resolution states "the Bible clearly condemns all sexual behavior outside the bounds of marriage as immoral and sinful" and that "such un-Christian lifestyles are a matter of choice" and are not genetic in origin. The resolution endorses the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would limit marriage and its legal benefits to one man and one woman.

Citing a recent court case in Texas which declared a law against sodomy unconstitutional, the resolution noted, "The only effective means in which Christians can stop this judicial movement to destroy the moral foundation of the family and the moral fabric of our society is a constitutional amendment."

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Conservatives win again in N.C. as moderates ponder future role (updated)

By Greg Warner

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (ABP) -- Conservative candidates swept all three key offices of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina Nov. 11-12 in what was anticipated as a make-or-break election for moderate Baptists in the state.

David Horton, 43, pastor of Gate City Baptist Church in Greensboro, was elected president Nov. 11 over moderate David Hughes, 51, pastor of First Baptist Church in the host city of Winston-Salem.

Horton received 59.5 percent of the 3,840 votes cast, the largest winning margin for a non-incumbent since 1987 and the largest since 1996 for a presidential candidate facing opposition. Hughes garnered 40.5 percent, a weaker showing

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than either candidate anticipated.

"I was surprised, because the elections are always so close," said Horton, whose election is the ninth in a row won by conservative presidential candidates. He succeeds conservative Jerry Pereira, 49, pastor of First Baptist Church of Swannanoa, who would have completed his second term as president but died four days before the convention, following a six-month battle with cancer. In an unusual move earlier this year, Pereira endorsed Horton and the other conservative candidates.

Phyllis Foy, a laywoman from Mooresville, was elected Nov. 12 to replace her husband, Bob Foy, as first vice president. She received 57 percent of the vote over Raymond Earp, a layman from Beaufort, who received 44 percent. Brian Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church in East Flat Rock, was elected second vice president over Ken Massey, pastor of First Baptist Church in Greensboro. The margin was 59 percent to 41 percent.

Even before the elections, there was speculation among messengers that moderate Baptists would disengage from the state convention if they lost another election, perhaps forming a new convention as has been attempted in a few other states.

After the election, Horton told reporters he hopes moderates will continue to accept the place open to them in the convention. "There has been a place at the table for moderates, and conservatives, and there will continue to be a place at the table for moderates." He added moderates and conservatives still agree on more issues than they disagree.

Hughes, however, suggested many moderates no longer feel "a sense of place and belonging." The sound defeat gave moderates "a clear-cut answer" for the future, he said. "While I'm disappointed with the choice that was made, I'm glad there is more clarity than there was before."

"Today the convention spoke for the ninth year in a row. That's very definitive," Hughes told reporters in an unusual joint press conference with Horton. "This convention is lining up squarely behind the Southern Baptist Convention, and I think that it's good to get out on the table where things stand."

Hughes said there is "a sense of discouragement and resignation among moderates. I've been trying to get them to stay involved." But he admitted that encouragement has been met with mixed reviews.

He predicted moderates will take some time to assess the situation, then gather to determine their course. "Not all moderates will do the same thing," he said. "These folks are like herding cats, they are very independent thinkers. It will be well into next year before it's clear who might be doing what."

Jim Royston, executive director-treasurer of the convention, said the staff will continue to work with all 3,803 churches in the convention, regardless of their alignment. "We work with every church, and we don't even ask that kind of question." He credited both Horton and Hughes for "rolling up their sleeves" and working within the convention.

"I wish this was an example of shared leadership," Royston said, a reference to the aborted proposal to alternate the presidential position between conservatives and moderates. Horton and Hughes became friends when both worked to pass the "shared leadership" plan, which was defeated by convention messengers in 1999.

"I think the convention has to decide to do shared leadership," Horton responded. He said the plan failed "because the convention didn't want to be given parameters" for convention officers. He said the current system "is a good process."

By most accounts, the presidential election was in part a referendum on the conservative shift in the Southern Baptist Convention, now in its third decade. Horton's support for the SBC was mentioned at least four times in the three-minute nomination speech from retired Winston-Salem pastor Mark Cortis.

And while Hughes suggested in recent weeks that the North Carolina convention should consider reducing its funding of the SBC to address its own budget shortfall, Horton said after the vote, "I think my election signals strong support for continued giving to the Southern Baptist Convention."

Horton said the SBC is "really worthy of our support" and he encouraged Baptists in the state "to do everything we can to give more to the Southern Baptist Convention" and the North Carolina convention.

During discussion of the proposed budget, messengers defeated a motion to delete \$200,000 in funding for the Biblical Recorder, the convention's newspaper. "The biweekly reading of the Biblical Recorder does not bring to my heart a spirit of unity but a spirit of division," said Cameron McGill, a pastor from Dublin. "I do not see the evangelistic purpose," he said, adding he did "not appreciate the way I was handled" when he questioned the newspaper's editor about his concerns.

"Stop it, stop it," countered John Butler, a pastor from Matthews, who argued against the defunding. "We are tired of the constant bickering which is destroying the unity we have left."

Tony Cartledge, editor of the Biblical Recorder, later told Associated Baptist Press he was "most concerned" about McGill's charge he had mistreated the pastor. "I don't recall the specific correspondence, but it is not in my nature to attack people. I always try to respond as graciously as I can."

The defunding motion, which would have deleted almost half of the convention's allocation to the Recorder, failed in a show-of-hands vote. A motion to cut a smaller amount from the newspaper failed last year. Conservatives in North Carolina support their own newspaper, the Conservative Record. Messengers later adopted the budget unchanged. The \$35.18 million total is 6.3 percent below the original 2003 budget and approximately the same as reduced income expectations for 2003. The state convention recently cut \$1.4 million from the 2003 budget in response to slumping contributions from churches. The cuts eliminated 24 staff positions, 15 of which were filled.

Messengers also adopted a preliminary 2005 budget of \$35.68 million but that spending plan can be amended next year.

Only two resolutions were adopted -- one expressing concern for North Carolinians who have lost their jobs recently and another voicing appreciation to the host city.