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**Some Churches of Christ re-examine  
tradition of instrument-free worship**

By Craig Bird

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (ABP) -- The raging debate over worship music has surfaced in a most unlikely place - within the Churches of Christ, which bear the historical distinction of shunning all musical instruments in worship.

Over the past two years, at least five major congregations associated with the Churches of Christ have added instruments to some worship services, according to the Christian Chronicle, a 60-year-old Church of Christ newspaper.

The highest-profile case involves Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas, a 3,800-member congregation led by pastor and best-selling author Max Lucado.

It is not yet known if those breaks from tradition signal the start of a sweeping change or "isolated tragedies" -- the description favored by Hardin University professor Flavil Yeakley.

But they do illustrate the ages-old tension between making the gospel message "user friendly" and defending the purity of "the truth once delivered to the saints."

More than a century ago, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians fought the issue of instrumental worship to a resolution, remodeling their sanctuaries to accommodate organs and pianos. Since the Jesus Revolution of the 1960s, guitars, drums and amplifiers likewise have gained acceptance in many Protestant churches, as Christians adapted musical styles to the marketplace.

The Churches of Christ, claiming about 2 million adherents, is by far the largest fellowship prohibiting man-made instruments. But other smaller groups, such as Primitive Baptists, have resisted as well.

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The doctrine is based on the conviction that all congregational practices and structures should meticulously emulate the patterns of the New Testament, which reports nothing of musical instruments in worship. For the same reason, Churches of Christ shun denominational labels. There is no formal structure or authority to the Churches of Christ beyond the local congregation, and even the capitalized "C" is avoided in the name -- Churches of Christ -- assigned by religious demographers.

Because of the decentralized nature of the Churches of Christ, there is no way to measure the extent of the pro-instrumental trend. But the discussion is widespread enough that the issue is being re-examined with an intensity not seen in more than 100 years.

The website for Lucado's Oak Hills Church deals openly with the topic. A cappella singing is still "our primary source" of music at worship assemblies, the website notes, but there are "ample opportunities for instrumental worship as well, such as at our Peak of the Week prayer services."

"The use of instrumental accompaniment is not a doctrinal issue at Oak Hills, but it is part of our religious heritage that we have chosen to preserve," the site notes.

Oak Hills and the Body of Christ at Amarillo South, in Amarillo, Texas, no longer identify themselves as Churches of Christ, according to the Christian Chronicle,

Other Churches of Christ that have added instruments, according to the newspaper, are the Northwest Church of Christ, in Seattle, which added a Saturday evening instrumental service; Southlake Church of Christ, north of Dallas, which added a Sunday morning instrumental service; and Farmers Branch Church of Christ, also near Dallas, which added a Saturday night instrumental service.

All five report substantial growth in attendance and say the change was driven by the need for evangelism. Indeed, the desire to reach out to a music-saturated culture is at the heart of the debate.

One new Church of Christ, still in its formative stages, recently asked a Baptist music professor to lead the congregation in a Bible study on instrumental worship. Paul Richardson, professor of music at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., declined to name the church. But the professor said "at least part of" the congregation "was open to examining its traditions in light of biblical and historical scholarship."

Since the New Testament gives little instruction in worship, Richardson said in an e-mail interview, the basic theological issue is: "How do we handle what we don't know?"

One extreme position is to do only what is explicitly allowed by Scripture. At the other end is the view that whatever isn't specifically forbidden in the New Testament is permitted - though always with the limitation imposed by other doctrines.

Richardson said most Christians "find our lives, our ethics and our worship in the category of 'adiaphora' - [the Greek term for] things neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture, about which we must make decisions according to 'the best light given us.'"

That absence of instruments in the early church may have been influenced, ironically, by Greek philosophy. The Greeks argued that emotions stirred by music could be dangerous.

In later centuries, Richardson said, instruments became part of the Roman Catholic Church "about the same time as instruments became widely accepted by society at large."

During the Reformation, clear divisions began to emerge. Some groups influenced by Martin Luther retained the

instruments. Those influenced by John Calvin placed strict limits on music in worship. Still others, influenced by Ulrich Zwingli, disallowed music of any sort.

Calvin's influence was greatest among Baptists and the Churches of Christ. He placed three restrictions on music in worship: scriptural songs only (mostly the Psalms), human voices only, and unison singing only.

"Most Churches of Christ and Primitive Baptists long ago gave up the restrictions on text and part-singing but cling to the one against instruments," Richardson pointed out.

Different Baptist groups traveled differing routes. For example, Seventh-day Baptists, strict sabbatarians who know a thing or two about defending a minority position against steep odds, were early promoters of hymn singing, despite criticism from other Baptists.

At various times in Baptist history, instrumental worship was rejected because it was practiced by the Church of England, which persecuted the free-church followers like the Baptists. Organs were often rejected - and later violins - because they were used to provide worldly entertainment.

All those historical precedents support one of Richardson's theories: "We are all Amish!"

"We all have some idealized culture that we find more faithful to the living of the gospel as we understand it," he elaborated. "That culture is typically one in which we never lived, though we have sought to preserve it in some way to 'protect' the faith."

Yet, he argued, Christian discipleship includes the need "to present the gospel faithfully in the culture in which we live without binding it to the culture."

In every area of Christian living, Richardson suggested, there is a need to look at any issue from three approaches -- theology, aesthetics and pragmatics. But they should be addressed in that order, he advised, giving theology first priority.

"Much of the debate in the 'worship wars' is the result of starting the discussion with aesthetics or pragmatics instead of theology," he explained. "If the New Testament shows us anything it is that the church organizes itself and carries out its mission in a variety of ways, more or less appropriate to its culture. About the only unity that can be found in the churches of the New Testament is the confession 'Jesus is Lord.' And that was plenty to bring them into conflict with their surrounding cultures."

"The New Testament tells us very little about worship," Richardson added, "and what is there is descriptive rather than prescriptive, in my reading."

"However, it tells us a great deal about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the destination of all things, the Christian life and how we should treat others, both in and out of the faith. This should be the way in which the New Testament shapes our practice of worship."

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### **Three disparate schools claim legacy of enigmatic B. H. Carroll**

By Ken Camp

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DALLAS (ABP) -- Three drastically different ministerial schools in Texas claim to be in the tradition of B. H. Carroll, a towering figure in Baptist life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Ironically, all three are right to some degree, according to Carroll biographer Alan Lefever, but none has taken on all of the enigmatic leader's characteristics.

Each school represents one aspect of Carroll's vision for educating ministers, according to Lefever, director of the Texas Baptist Historical Collection. "The problem is that Carroll never articulated a single vision for theological education. It was a progression in his thought."

Founders of the new B. H. Carroll Institute say they want to create a theological education model involving "teaching churches" and mentors. That resonates with Carroll's desire to see theological education centered in the ministry of the local church, Lefever explained. From the early 1870s until the turn of the century, Carroll trained ministers at First Baptist Church of Waco, where he was pastor.

George W. Truett Theological Seminary is part of Baylor University. The last time Baylor was home to a seminary, Carroll was its dean. Truett Seminary is reminiscent of Carroll's commitment to a theological school that had access to the broad resources of a liberal arts university, Lefever noted.

Carroll led Baylor Seminary to pull away from the university and relocate from Waco to Fort Worth primarily due to a struggle over financial resources. "He liked to be able to call the shots and be his own man," asserted Lefever, author of "Fighting the Good Fight," the definitive Carroll biography.

When Baylor's seminary became a freestanding institution and moved 90 miles to the north, Carroll became founding president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, a Southern Baptist Convention school that claims Carroll as its godfather.

When he was inaugurated in October as Southwestern's eighth president, Paige Patterson pledged to lead that institution toward "a full and thorough reaffirmation of the doctrine of B. H. Carroll and the founders" of the school.

In his inaugural address, Patterson particularly singled out the missionary and evangelistic zeal of Carroll and other early leaders of the seminary. He mentioned 15 key doctrines of the founders, including the incarnation and atoning work of Christ, commitment to expository preaching, and emphasis on the sanctity of marriage and the family.

In his charge to the new president, SBC Annuity Board President O.S. Hawkins challenged Patterson to follow the example of Carroll as a man of courage, conviction and consistency.

Founders of the new Carroll Institute, on the other hand, picked up on another aspect of the Carroll legacy at a press conference announcing the school's inaugural faculty.

Jim Denison, pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, pledged that his church would be one of the first of what organizers hope will be 100 "teaching churches" affiliated with the institute. Describing Carroll's approach to educating ministerial students in the context of a local church, Denison said, "We are returning to his vision and advancing his vision."

Without a doubt, it is a return to one aspect of Carroll's vision, but it's not necessary "advancing" the vision, according to Lefever. In fact, it may be "a step back," he said.

While Carroll used the mentoring approach and taught ministers in a local church for a number of years, the influence of a single instructor produced "Carroll clones," said Lefever, who teaches part time at Truett Seminary.

The Carroll Institute will avoid the trap of students "emulating a single style pastor or teacher" by offering a "blended learning approach" that combines personal, face-to-face classroom and mentoring experience with Internet-based

distance learning, according to Bruce Corley, president of the institute. The distance-learning component will grant students exposure to "a broad range of experience," he added.

"We're not going to replicate old models," Corley said. "We intend to take up the vision of B. H. Carroll by making post-baccalaureate education affordable and accessible for any person and relate it to congregational experience."

Lefever noted his respect for the people involved in forming the Carroll Institute. He went on to say he applauded the Carroll Institute or any other theological institution that could help "train ministers in historic Baptist principles," regardless of the chosen delivery system.

Even so, Lefever observed, "I think the ideal model is a theological school tied to a university setting, like Truett or Logsdon, where students have the chance to gain a more well-rounded education."

In a statement released after four senior professors left Southwestern Seminary to join the Carroll Institute, the president of the Fort Worth seminary questioned whether the new school was aptly named. "People are, of course, free to employ whatever name they wish," Patterson said. "Whether this is done with integrity depends on whether the principles of the one whose name is thereby invoked are honored and espoused."

"While one may question the justice of using the name of the founder of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in a competing effort against that seminary, the real test will be whether they have honored Carroll's name or just used it," Patterson said.

Lefever asked which "principles" of Southwestern's founder the school's current president wants to see honored and espoused. Carroll unquestionably was theologically conservative. But the only prescribed guide for faculty at Southwestern under his tenure was the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, a relatively broad statement compared to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message, he observed.

When Patterson was asked to elaborate on what he meant regarding steering Southwestern toward a return to the doctrine of Carroll, he declined any comment beyond a listing of the 15 points in his inaugural address.

The problem with predicting how Carroll would respond to any of the institutions claiming his legacy is that he was such an independent thinker and complex personality, Lefever asserted.

"No one could speak for B. H. Carroll but B. H. Carroll. He's one of the most difficult people in Baptist life to pigeonhole," he said. "I don't have a problem with any of the schools claiming 'a legacy' of Carroll. But I don't think any of them can claim 'the legacy' of Carroll."

Many are quick to latch onto favored aspects of Carroll's personality, but few are willing to embrace every part of the hot-tempered, cigar-smoking, post-millennialist's life, Lefever asserted.

"Would someone who struggled with alcoholism as a young man, who was divorced early in life, and who had women deacons serve in his church in the 1870s fit in at Southwestern Seminary today, not just as a student but as an instructor and even as the president?" Lefever asked. "If the presidency of Southwestern Seminary were open, would Carroll be considered?"

"If you're going to be a B. H. Carroll fan, take all of him."

Who was B.H. Carroll?

-- Born Dec. 27, 1843 in Mississippi.

- Died Nov. 11, 1914 in Fort Worth.
- Enlisted as a Texas Ranger at the start of the Civil War to guard the Texas frontier. Later served with the regular army.
- When the war interrupted his college studies, Baylor University granted him a BA degree. He later received honorary doctorates from the University of Tennessee and Keatchie College.
- Became a born-again Christian in 1865 following a period of skepticism. Joined a Baptist church in Caldwell, Texas.
- Ordained to the gospel ministry in 1866. Served as pastor of rural churches and taught school for three years.
- Pastor of First Baptist Church in Waco from 1870 to 1899.
- Taught theology and Bible at Baylor University from 1872 to 1905.
- Organized Baylor Theological Seminary in 1905.
- Led in the founding of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, chartered in 1908. Served as president of Southwestern until his death in 1914.
- Authored "An Interpretation of the English Bible," a 13-volume commentary, as well as a number of sermon collections.

(Source: Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, Volume One)

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### **Texas missions network hires Frank Dang, Carol Childress**

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) - WorldconneX, the new Texas Baptist missions network, added two part-time staff members, adopted a preliminary budget for 2004 and rented office space near downtown Dallas.

Meeting in Dallas on Dec. 9, the network's administrative committee selected Frank Dang of Keller to become part-time ethnic and emerging-church associate.

Dang is a first-generation Vietnamese-American who has been an associate pastor at NorthWood Church in Keller for three years. In January, he will begin serving as bivocational pastor of the Vietnamese Church of Fort Worth, a mission of Travis Avenue Baptist Church.

Carol Childress of Rockwall will join the WorldconneX staff as part-time information and evangelical networking associate. Childress will resign from the WorldconneX board to assume the staff position. She will continue to work part time with Leadership Network, a Dallas-based organization that works with innovative large-church leaders.

Dang and Childress will join Bill Tinsley, network leader, and his associate, former missionary Stan Parks, on the WorldconneX staff.

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The network recently signed a lease for office space at 1409 South Lamar in Dallas.

The committee adopted a basic operating budget of \$594,450 and agreed to recommend as a new board member missions strategist Bill O'Brien of Frisco, Texas. Pending confirmation by the board of trustees, he will replace Keith Parks, who resigned from the WorldconneX board after his son joined the network's staff.

O'Brien served with Parks as a vice president at the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board. He also was director of the global missions center at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University.

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### **Moscow seminary president sees school influencing Eastern Europe**

By Marv Knox

ABILENE, Texas (ABP) -- With a ministry field spanning 11 time zones, the task facing Alexander Kozyenko and his Russian Baptist seminary is enormous. So he is looking for help from Baptist brethren in the United States.

Russia is home to 147 million people but only 1,400 Baptist churches. That's a ratio of only one Baptist congregation for every 105,000 people.

The tiny Moscow Theological Seminary of Evangelical Christians-Baptists has produced only 72 graduates in its 10-year history, but that number is expected to increase rapidly. The school's location limited enrollment for most of its first decade, the president said. Housed in the Russian Baptist headquarters building, the seminary couldn't accept more than 25 students, limiting the number of graduates.

Now a newly renovated building provides room for about 200 students, enabling the seminary to increase enrollment and produce many more pastors and teachers who will spread the gospel across Russia and Eastern Europe.

"Our goal is to train many more students for the ministry, not only for the Russian Baptist churches," Kozyenko explained. "We train many ministers from Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia and some from Kazakhstan."

Creation of the school fulfilled an 88-year dream for Russian Baptists. "The first prayer for this school was said in 1905, at the first Baptist World Alliance meeting in London," Kozyenko reported.

The first seminary class in 1993 consisted of 17 students. Now the enrollment has grown to 57 students, and 29 of them will graduate next spring. The seminary offers three academic programs -- the two-year master of divinity and three-year bachelor of theology degrees, plus a certificate for youth leadership.

"For Eastern Europe, our seminary is pretty important. Some of the smaller [Baptist] unions don't have a seminary. They have Bible institutes. Some of their students can be trained at this seminary."

The biggest obstacle for most students is the cost -- \$3,000 a year per student for tuition, books, room and board. That figure is beyond the grasp of many Russian and Eastern European ministers and the churches that want to help them get an education, Kozyenko reported.

"We require the students to pay tuition," he said. "But the churches who are recommending them, they really are not

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able to provide scholarships. ... We still look forward to increasing the number of students if we can get enough churches to provide financial and prayer support."

That's why Kozynko has been visiting the United States, seeking churches that will commit to "adopt a student for three or five years and also support them as they begin ministry," he explained. "I am really glad to extend our contacts to several places in the United States," he said.

Kozynko's proposition -- adopt a Moscow Seminary student and help launch a lifetime ministry -- provides churches with a chance to impact Russia and Eastern Europe with the gospel, said Ronnie Prevost of Abilene, Texas, a member of the Moscow Seminary board of trustees.

"It's going to prove to be the mother seminary of Baptist work for the foreseeable and long-range future of Russia," said Prevost, professor of church ministry at Logsdon School of Theology at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene.

The impact of that reality is more far-ranging than Baptists familiar with U.S. schools might imagine, he added. "Not only is the seminary producing ministers -- pastors and youth ministers -- for the churches, but graduates are going out and starting Bible schools, Bible colleges and seminaries in their home regions."

For example, one graduate who went back home to Minsk, in Belarus, to become a pastor, but he also started a Belarusian Baptist seminary.

"They are expected to start schools that will be doing the training of ministers," Prevost said. "It's almost an accelerated paradigm of what we've seen as Baptists in the United States. ... The ideal for any country is for the ministers to be trained within the context of their culture. They know their people best."

When the young ministers land in their fields of service, they find unimaginable need but also incredible openness, Kozynko said. "In this way, we can affect society in a positive way," he said. "Drug use and alcohol are destroying our society. ... They are empty in their souls.

"But the Slavic people -- Russians as well as Ukrainians and others -- are open to the good news. .. Many people are after the truth in their lives."

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## **Another federal appeals court upholds religious freedom law**

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A federal appeals court has affirmed the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, only a month after one of its sister courts declared the law unconstitutional.

A three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unanimously Dec. 8 that RLUIPA's provisions protecting the religious rights of prisoners do not violate the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion.

In the case, inmate Ira Madison sued Virginia prison officials after his request to receive kosher meals was denied. Madison belongs to the Suffolk, Va.-based Church of God and Saints of Christ, which requires its followers to observe Old Testament dietary laws.

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A lower-court judge in Roanoke, Va., had ruled against Madison, saying RLUIPA impermissibly favored protection of prisoners' religious rights over other rights.

In November, the Cincinnati-based 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals relied heavily on that decision in issuing a unanimous opinion throwing out RLUIPA with respect to prisoners' rights.

But the 4th Circuit's decision overruled the lower court.

In his opinion for the Richmond, Va.-based court, Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III said: "To hold otherwise and find an establishment-clause violation would severely undermine the ability of our society to accommodate the most basic rights of conscience and belief in neutral yet constructive ways."

Wilkinson said that RLUIPA was not a government endorsement of religion, but merely a government protection for religious exercise. "RLUIPA is not designed to advance a particular religious viewpoint or even religion in general, but rather to facilitate opportunities for inmates to engage in the free exercise of religion," Wilkinson wrote.

Congress passed RLUIPA in 2000 as a response to the Supreme Court, which in 1997 overturned a similar 1993 law as it applied to state and local governments.

Both RLUIPA and the earlier Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) were designed to restore a high legal standard of protection for free exercise of religion. The Supreme Court had lowered that standard with its 1990 Employment Division vs. Smith decision.

In that case, the court threw out a legal test that required a government entity to prove it had a "compelling state interest" before it burdened an individual's or group's religious freedom. RFRA restored that standard, putting the burden of proof on the government in such cases.

The Supreme Court struck down RFRA as it applied to state governments on the grounds that it violated states' rights. However, it still applies to federal entities.

The 4th Circuit's latest ruling becomes the third decision in federal appeals courts upholding RLUIPA's constitutionality. The Chicago-based 7th Circuit and San Francisco-based 9th Circuit have both affirmed the law. The conflict between those decisions and the 6th Circuit's on the issue means the Supreme Court may be forced to address RLUIPA in the next couple of years.

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### **Louisiana College won't review book policy, trustee chair says**

By ABP staff

PINEVILLE, La. (ABP) -- Trustees of Louisiana College don't plan to revise the new policy that requires textbooks to be approved by administrators, says chairperson Joe Nesom, despite student and faculty protests and threats from alumni to withdraw financial support.

"Why would we?" Nesom asked. "I know academic freedom is not being violated here."

The new policy requires faculty to submit all class materials to their department chairs and the dean of academic affairs

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for approval. Previously, faculty members were given sole responsibility to choose their class materials.

Most of the faculty opposes the new policy, calling it "censorship." But Nesom said he is unaware of any other school that has an academic freedom policy that gives faculty absolute power over their materials. He said other schools "would probably be amazed LC had such a policy."

Trustee Ed Tarpley said he doesn't fear many alumni will withdraw support to protest the new policies. "I think it's a very small minority of alumni that opposes this," he said. "I think once they understand the actions we've taken and why, they will support."

Some faculty members worry the new policy may be used to remove liberal teachers. The board of trustees has become significantly more conservative in recent years due to the conservative swing of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, which owns the school.

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### **Chowan College trustees put search on hold, extend interim president**

By Steve DeVane

MURFREESBORO, N.C. (ABP) -- The trustees of Chowan College have dissolved the committee searching for a new president and authorized Interim President Chris White to use the title of president for now, according to trustee chairperson Bynum Brown.

Trustees said they will re-evaluate the search process next fall, Brown added. They commended White's service as interim since June, Brown said. "He's provided outstanding leadership for our institution."

Stan Lott retired as Chowan's president May 31. Chowan has been through some financial difficulty but is now operating in the black, according to Brown. White resigned as president of Gardner-Webb University in October 2002 amid criticism for altering a star basketball player's grade point average.

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### **News briefs from ABP's Washington Bureau**

By Robert Marus

#### **Judge Moore appeals dismissal to colleagues**

MONTGOMERY, Ala. -- Deposed Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore has asked his former colleagues to reverse his removal from office.

Moore filed a notice of appeal Dec. 10 with the Alabama Supreme Court. In the appeal, he said he was merely complying with his oath to uphold the state and federal constitutions earlier this year when he defied a federal judge's order to remove a Ten Commandments monument he had erected in the rotunda of the state judicial building.

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Moore was removed from office in November by the state Court of the Judiciary, which said his refusal to abide by the state Supreme Court's order was a clear violation of the Alabama judicial ethics code.

Moore's action and the publicity surrounding it sparked a nationwide debate on government displays of religious documents.

Moore also asked the court's acting chief justice, Gorman Houston, to recuse himself from the case. Moore's attorneys said Houston's actions since Moore was removed from office have shown he is biased against his former colleague. (ABP)

Canadian Muslims move toward Sharia law WASHINGTON -- Canadian Muslims will soon have access to religious courts whose decisions the government will honor as legal and binding in some cases.

In October, leaders from various Islamic communities in Canada elected a 30-member commission that will work toward establishing a judicial tribunal, known as a Darul-Quda. The panel will eventually resolve disputes between Muslims using an ancient and complex code of Islamic law known as Sharia.

Recent changes in Canadian law will give the Sharia courts the authority to settle disputes with the force of civil law. For many years, Canadian Jews have been allowed to settle some interpersonal or commercial disputes in religious courts.

Although Islam requires its adherents to abide by the civil laws of the nation in which they live, it also requires Muslims to settle disputes with other Muslims according to the dictates of Sharia. (ABP)

Judge: School violated student's rights

DETROIT -- A federal judge said Dec. 5 that a Michigan public school violated the U.S. Constitution in several ways by conducting an assembly on religious views of homosexuality.

In a strongly worded 70-page opinion, U.S. District Judge Gerald Rosen said school officials in Ann Arbor violated student Elizabeth Hansen's freedom of speech and denied her equal protection of the laws by barring her from sharing her Catholic views on homosexuality during a March 2002 school assembly.

The assembly featured four Protestant ministers, a Jewish rabbi and a Presbyterian layperson speaking on religious views of homosexuality. All the speakers reportedly expressed positive views of homosexuality. Hansen wanted to express her view that homosexuality was wrong based on Catholic teaching.

The judge also ruled that the school violated the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion by offering a school assembly where only one religious viewpoint on homosexuality was offered. (ABP)

Islamic role-playing not illegal, judge says

SAN FRANCISCO -- A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit against a California school where 7th-grade teachers require students to participate in Islamic role-playing games.

U.S. District Judge Phyllis Hamilton in San Francisco granted the Byron, Calif., Unified School District's request to dismiss a lawsuit from the parents of two former 7th graders at Excelsior Middle School.

In a class unit on Islam and the Muslim world, the children's teachers required them to participate in role-playing games that included selecting a Muslim name and reciting a Muslim prayer.

Jonas and Tiffany Eklund, the children's parents, sued the school district, saying the activities forced the children to practice Islam, thus making it a violation of the First Amendment's ban on government promotion of religion.

But attorneys for the school district said the role-playing games reflected an accepted educational technique and did not amount to actual practice of Islam. Hamilton agreed, writing, "Objectively, the students at Excelsior cannot be considered to have performed any actual religious activities in their 7th-grade world history class." (ABP)

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### **Southeastern to recommend Daniel Akin as sixth president**

By ABP staff

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) - Daniel Akin, academic dean at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, will be recommended as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary next month, according to a search committee.

A special meeting of Southeastern's trustees has been set for Jan. 15, when the recommendation will be presented, said Timothy Lewis, trustee chair and chair of the search committee. If elected, Akin will succeed Paige Patterson, who left to become president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in his native Texas. All three seminaries are owned by the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Dr. Akin is a man with great vision, keen insight and spiritual understanding," said Lewis in a news release. "His enthusiasm is contagious and genuine. We do not feel any other man in Southern Baptist life could better follow Dr. Patterson than Dr. Daniel Akin."

Akin, 46, is vice president for academic administration and dean of the School of Theology at Southern in Louisville, Ky. He was professor of theology, dean of students and vice president for student services at Southeastern from 1992 to 1996.

Akin holds a bachelor's degree from Criswell College, a master of divinity degree from Southwestern, and a doctor of philosophy from the University of Texas at Arlington. He has been a pastor in Florida, Alabama and Virginia. He was New Testament editor of The Believers Study Bible by Thomas Nelson Publishers and he has written the volume on the epistles of John for the New American Commentary series.

In 1996, Christianity Today magazine named Akin as one of 50 emerging Christian leaders under the age of 40. He is a member of several professional organizations, including the Southern Baptist Historical Society, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and the Evangelical Theological Society.

Akin and his wife, Charlotte, have been married for 25 years and have four children: twins Daniel and Jonathan, 22; Paul, 20; and Timothy, 18.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, with its main campus in Wake Forest, N.C., was founded in 1951. In 1987 it was the first of the six SBC seminaries to come under the control of conservatives, who rose to power in 1979.

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