



REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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Clinton, Moyers, others pay tribute to Dunn

"If anything further was needed to confirm James [Dunn's] apostate status with the [Southern] Baptists, my presence here ought to do the job," President Bill Clinton quipped at an Oct. 4 banquet honoring the recently retired head of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Clinton dropped in for brief remarks during a three-hour event at the Key Bridge Marriott in Arlington, Va. Clinton said he wanted to come by and pay tribute to the colorful Baptist minister whose efforts defending religious liberty "have been a constant source of inspiration for me."

"Our country's a better place because of you," Clinton told Dunn at the banquet in his honor attended by 275 friends and colleagues. "Our religious liberties are more secure because of you. And even those with whom we disagree on politics and religion are better off because you rather than they were more likely to carry the day over the last two decades," Clinton said.

Clinton, a Southern Baptist whose policies have been criticized in Southern Baptist Convention resolutions, turned tables with a joke about a recent controversy involving the denomination. Spotting Rep. Martin Frost of

Texas in the audience, who is Jewish, Clinton said to Dunn, "I don't know if you have fulfilled the admonition of your convention and converted Representative Frost yet."

Jewish leaders harshly criticized a prayer guide urging Southern Baptists to pray that Jewish people might accept Christ during recent Jewish holidays.

Dunn's longtime friend Bill Moyers compared Dunn's rhetorical battles against conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention with Baptists in colonial America who were jailed or whipped for defending their faith.

"Not all stripes of conscience are physical; not all wounds inflicted for liberty are visible," the veteran



President Clinton greets Dunn at tribute dinner.

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J. Brent Walker

BJC elects Walker new executive director

The Baptist Joint Committee unanimously elected J. Brent Walker as executive director of the 63-year old religious liberty agency during its Oct. 4-5 board meeting.

Walker, 49, becomes the agency's fifth chief executive, succeeding James M. Dunn. He has worked for the BJC since 1989, first as associate general counsel and more recently as general counsel and associate executive director. An 11-member search committee interviewed several candidates before recommending Walker.

Board chairman Aidsand Wright-Riggins III, executive director of National

Ministries of American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., told the board that Walker brings the ability both to "stand upon the broad shoulders of James Dunn and the wonderful work he has done" and to lead the organization "in his own right." He predicted Walker would both relate well to current constituents and "reach out to a whole new generation of people."

Walker told the board he was "humbled and honored" by his election. He said religious freedom is challenged today by some on the right who seek to "privilege

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broadcast journalist said.

Calling soul freedom the "bedrock" of Baptist belief, Moyers credited Dunn for opposing the conservative takeover of the SBC, which he charged was part of a larger political effort to promote an agenda of state-sanctioned religion.

"Exploiting an unsuspecting laity's" reverence for the Bible, Moyers said, the takeover group replaced priesthood of the believer with pastors who preached only the interpretation sanctioned by a "cabal" calling the shots.

"The laity would be subjugated to the preacher, who would serve the denominational politburo, who would decide who was and wasn't a Baptist," Moyers said. "The entire apparatus could then be aligned with political operatives."

"It was a brilliant, if heretical strategy, and it worked," Moyers said. "James Dunn saw the implications immediately."

"When he spoke out, they tried to silence him," Moyers said. "When he would not be silenced, they tried to fire him."

When Dunn's board, which included representatives from eight other Baptist denominations in addition to the SBC, refused to abandon the executive, "the theological Stalinists cut his budget," Moyers said.

While the SBC leaders succeeded in defunding the agency, Dunn's perseverance and courage allowed the BJC to survive by raising funds from other sources, Moyers said. "He and the BJC lived to fight another day."

Moyers said Dunn's tireless effort and political savvy have made him one of the most influential Baptist voices of the last quarter century. "A lesser man would have been blindsided" by stealth tactics of Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed, he added.

With his instincts and ability, Dunn could have become wealthy as a lobbyist, said Moyers, who was President Lyndon Johnson's press secretary. But "James chose a different path," Moyers said. "He was, rather, chosen."

Moyers said he decided only a week earlier how to frame his remarks for Dunn's retirement, after visiting a worship service at Austin Heights Baptist Church in Nacogdoches, Texas, a 100-member church that, among other things, supports women in ministry. Moved by the service, Moyers observed: "This is what the fight has been about. This is what Dunn and so many others have sacrificed to defend, the right of these people to take the church where it would go as conscience inspires." Moyers wrote on his worship bulletin, "Dunn would be at home here."

After the service, Moyers described his thoughts to the church's pastor, Kyle Childress. Childress told Moyers that Dunn had preached the church's first revival 20 years ago. He told Moyers, "We were a new suburban church poised for greatness, and James Dunn came down to preach and put us straight and we've been a little bitty church ever since."

As laughter died down, Moyers observed: "This is how

the kingdom grows. God works in the wedges, through the cracks, across the fault lines of schism until conformity and orthodoxy no longer hold the mind hostage to habit or the spirit captive. You see, the fight had to happen for the kingdom to spread in a little-bitty church that witnesses to a great and mighty faith."

Also at the ceremony, Gary Parker of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship announced the establishment of a scholarship fund in Dunn's name for internships at the Baptist Joint Committee. An initial \$20,000 gift will be managed by the CBF Foundation, Parker said, and additional gifts will be accepted.

Marvin Griffin, a member of the BJC board, presented Dunn and his wife, Marilyn, with a \$5,000 travel voucher. A portrait of Dunn by



Dunn and longtime friend Bill Moyers

New York artist Dan Adel that will hang at the BJC offices was also unveiled. Dunn's pastor, Lynn Bergfalk, presented him a book of letters written by friends across the nation. Smyth & Helwys Publisher Cecil Staton announced official publication of a new book, *James Dunn: Champion for Religious Liberty*. Another longtime friend, former SBC president and agency head Jimmy Allen, was master of ceremonies.

In his response, Dunn noted that friends had jokingly referred to the celebration as his "funeral" and that some of the remarks reminded him of a eulogy.

"I am Dunn, but I'm not yet finished," he reminded the crowd. His new task, he added, is to work on raising money for the agency's \$1 million endowment goal. He also is teaching in a new divinity school at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C.

"I've never experienced anything like this," Dunn said. "I don't know how to tell you how moved I am and how important this is. We'll remember it a long time. It's so indelible." Δ

— Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

WALKER Continued from Page 1

their religion to the exclusion of others" and some on the left who "have lost sight of the pre-eminence of their religious freedom" in their willingness to "negotiate some of the free-exercise rights away."

Walker pledged to "always keep in mind that this is a Christian, Baptist ministry" but added that in the age of post-denominationalism, structures must change. "We must at all costs defend the principles upon which we stand — soul freedom and religious liberty and the autonomy of the church and the priesthood of the believer."

Walker commended Dunn's tenure, saying that "but for the dynamic, tough leadership of James Dunn over the last 18 years, this body would not exist today." (ABP) Δ



"I will miss him enormously when he's not so frequently a fly in the ointment. His exuberance and his passion and his conviction have been a constant source of inspiration for me and for many who have worked with us in our administration. And I know I speak for Hillary and the vice president and all of our official family in saying that our country's a better place because of you. Our religious liberties are more secure because of you. And even those with whom we disagree on politics and religion are better off because you rather than they were more likely to carry the day over the last two decades.

"I don't know if you have fulfilled the admonition of your convention and converted Representative [Martin] Frost, [D-Texas], yet. As a lawyer I can say maybe we can count his presence here as a constructive conversion, certainly to our commonly held beliefs.

"I love you and I thank you. God bless you. Thank you."

— President Bill Clinton

Remarks at tribute to James M. Dunn

"I'm not sure where James goes next. I'd be concerned if I were some of those members of Congress in North Carolina, however. I will tell you that in the 21 years that I've been in Congress ... he has been my moral compass whenever I have had a question about the relationship between church and state. Any particular piece of legislation, the first person I'd talk to — even before members of my own faith — the very first that I'd talk to often was James Dunn. And I know that that is true of many members of Congress. He will be deeply, deeply missed in this town. And I hope he'll come back and visit. And I look forward to seeing you for many, many more years. James, maybe I'll come sit in on one of those classes down in Wake Forest. I think I still have some things to learn. It's been my pleasure to be a friend of James Dunn for all these years."

— U.S. Rep Martin Frost

D-Texas





"The poet wrote, 'Oh for some gift, some gift to give us to see ourselves as others see us.' Well, to see ourselves as others see us, you need a mirror. So I looked at the mirror on the wall of the Baptist Joint Committee. And this is what the mirror had to say: That James is a pleader, a bleeder and a leader all wrapped in one compact package. He passionately pleads the cause of the Baptist Joint Committee. He bleeds people for their last ounce of devotion to that cause. And he leads in an outstanding way causing others to have deeper commitment and understanding of the balance of church and state."

— Marvin Griffin

Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Austin, Texas

"Watching him in action, I am reminded that God sends his messengers in odd shapes and sizes and from unexpected places. Who would have predicted that one of the most effective advocates of religious freedom in our time would grow up on the east side of a Texas cow town, talk like a horse-trader and dress like a trail driver? Who would ever imagine that a quaint little fellow would become one of the most tireless champions of social justice and Christian ethics in the last quarter of the 20th century?

"Sometimes in my mind's eye I see him climbing the Capitol steps totting a Bible in one hand and a voting tally in another. From one he draws his principles and from the other his prowess. 'I don't want a man up there who can't count votes,' Lyndon Johnson once told us as he marched his staff up to Congress on the day a key bill hung in the balance. James can count. He can also sniff, and sniffing is the art of the bloodhound.

"Baptists have never had a more savvy master of the legislative process, where the most offensive infringement of religious liberty can be inflicted in fine print no one else bothers to read until it's too late. A lesser man, a lesser man would have been blindsided by the likes of Pat Robertson and his Robespierre, Ralph Reed, who once boasted that the religious right had 'learned how to move under the radar in the cover of night with shrubbery strapped to our helmets.' True. But just when they were about to make off with the First Amendment, James Dunn hove into sight, like a man with radar implants in the cornea of his eye. The back room boys learned long ago that they couldn't blow smoke in those eyes; he earned their respect for his shrewdness, integrity and utter lack of self-aggrandizement. With his instincts and his talents he could have become an influential lobbyist, raking in huge fees for powerful interests. But James chose a different course. He was, rather, chosen."



— Bill Moyers

Public Affairs Television



President Clinton addresses guests at tribute dinner for James M. Dunn in Arlington, Va.



Marilyn Dunn and musician Carolyn Staley



Judith and Bill Moyers (from left), tribute coordinator Margie Wheedleton, Brent and Nancy Walker, BJC staffer Karen McGuire and master of ceremonies Jimmy Allen



Gary Parker announces a \$20,000 gift from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to establish a Baptist Joint Committee internship in honor of James M. Dunn.



BJC Transition Committee chairman Kevin Butler of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference presents Dunn a travel bag adorned with a bow tie.



Phil Strickland, director of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, roasts and toasts Dunn at an Oct. 3 reception.

GOP lawmakers introduce new voucher bill

GOP leaders in the House of Representatives introduced a voucher bill that would pay tuition at private and parochial schools for an estimated 27,000 students in public schools that are declared to be in a state of emergency.

Modeled after a governor's authority to declare natural disaster areas after destructive weather, the Academic Emergency Act — a five-year \$200 million pilot program — would let governors declare "chronically failing" schools as "academic emergencies," and thus make students eligible to apply for a voucher of up to \$3,500. It would also provide \$3,500 to a public school for each child who leaves the school.

House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, said that when communities are devastated by natural disasters areas "they become eligible for financial assistance from the federal government. Yet when schools fail our children, our children remain trapped."

But critics say the plan is unconstitutional and would hurt public schools.

Jimmy Williamson, Fred Hale professor of education at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, said the proposal is "old wine in new wineskins." He said tax funds would wrongly be provided to support religious and other private schools. **Δ**

High court rejects appeals in two church-state cases

On the first day of its new term Oct. 4, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected two appeals concerning religion. In one case, justices refused to allow Newark, N.J., authorities to prevent two Muslim policemen from wearing beards.

Acting without comment, the court rejected the city's appeal and left rulings intact that said a prohibition would violate the officers' freedom of religion. "This decision sends a message to employers worldwide that workplace religious accommodations are compatible with professionalism and public service," said Omar Ahmad, board chairman of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

In the other case, the high court rejected arguments of a New York public school teacher who said he was wrongly prevented from honoring students' requests to join them in prayer outside the classroom. Dan Marchi, a teacher of emotionally disturbed and mentally disabled children in Albany-area schools, also believes he was wrongly barred from referring to God in letters to parents.

The court, without comment, chose not to hear arguments that his freedoms of religion and speech are being violated by the Board of Cooperative Educational Services of Albany, Schoharie, Schenectady and Saratoga counties, the Associated Press reported.

The court's new term also was marked by the annual Red Mass at the Cathedral of St. Matthew in Washington on Oct. 3.

Bishop Raymond J. Boland of Kansas City, Mo., urged six justices from the court who attended the service and other judges to maintain their religious beliefs inside the courthouse doors.

"When they enter statehouses and courtrooms, they cannot leave their consciences along with their coats in the cloakroom," the bishop told an audience of 1,200. Boland also questioned whether religious expression is treated equally to secular expression in the courts, *The Washington Times* reported.

The Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, criticized the sermon as an inappropriate attempt to influence the court, which will hear cases dealing with religious and moral issues this term. "The judges are lured in, and then they are lobbied on the church's view of the Constitution," Lynn said, *USA Today* reported.

Among cases the court will consider is one determining whether the government can provide instructional equipment such as computers to religious schools without violating the separation of church and state. **Δ**

Bill would boost protections for workers' faith practices

Backed by a broad coalition of religious groups, a bipartisan group of senators reintroduced legislation that would require employers to accommodate workers' religious practices unless doing so would impose a clear burden on the business.

U.S. Sens. John Kerry, D-Mass., and Sam Brownback, R-Kan., told reporters they were reintroducing the Workplace Religious Freedom Act because American workers should not have to choose between their religion and their job.

The senators said the measure is needed because the Supreme Court has watered down civil rights protections Congress previously passed to protect workers.

In 1972, Congress amended the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to require companies with more than 15 employees to accommodate the religious practices of workers unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship on the employer.

But five years later, the Supreme Court made it easy for employers to get around the requirement by ruling that even the most minimal burdens constitute an undue hardship.

Kerry said the legislation is simply an attempt to write into law the intent of Congress' previous efforts to protect religion in the workplace.

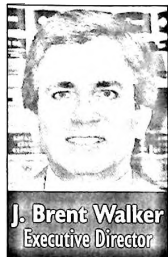
Brownback said, "This legislation is carefully crafted and strikes an appropriate balance between religious accommodation, while ensuring that an undue burden is not forced upon American businesses."

It is supported by the Coalition for Religious Freedom in the Workplace, which includes 37 Jewish, Protestant, Sikh, Muslim and evangelical organizations, including the Baptist Joint Committee.

The measure's chances are uncertain, but Kerry expressed some optimism that Congress could be convinced to pass a law that simply restored the intent of its 1972 legislation.

Richard T. Foltin of the American Jewish Committee applauded Kerry's optimism, but said supporters "have a lot of work ahead of us in addressing concerns of business owners who are always concerned about more regulation." **Δ**

Celebrating the past, dreaming about the future



Change is never easy. But it is a natural part of the inevitable ebb and flow of life. Grief over the passing of the familiar past and anxiety over the unknown future are lessened by taking time to celebrate the past, give

gifts of love and dream about future possibilities.

That is what we did Oct. 3-4. Our gifts and expressions of love were lavished on James and Marilyn Dunn on the occasion of James' "non-retirement" from the Baptist Joint Committee. James and Marilyn were transported across the Potomac River to a tribute dinner in the lap of luxury — a 1949 Rolls Royce. Can you imagine the always parsimonious James Dunn sitting still for that? President Clinton showed up, Bill Moyers spoke, a reproduction of Remington's "Bronco Buster" was given and a wonderful portrait of James by artist Dan Adel was unveiled. Indeed, the past was celebrated in rare form.

Earlier that day the Baptist Joint Committee selected me as the fifth executive director to serve during its 63-year history. As I write this column, I am still reeling from the magnitude of that honor. At the same time, I am sobered by the significant challenges ahead, but excited about the opportunity to make a difference — to defend and extend religious liberty in this country and around the world.

The bridge from celebrating the past to dreaming about the future is not something to be crossed and then blown up like some tactical military maneuver. We need to stay connected to the past. We must always remember that whatever we accomplish, we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us — J. M. Dawson, C. Emanuel Carlson, James E. Wood Jr. and James M. Dunn. Thank God for

their work — no, their ministries — and the example and inspiration which they lend us. "Surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses," how can we not succeed fabulously?

Over the next several months, in this column I plan to outline my dreams for the future and my vision for the Baptist Joint Committee during the upcoming years. For now let me reiterate, in writing, the commitments that I made orally to the Baptist Joint Committee board earlier this week:

1. I will always do my very best to advance the mission of the Baptist Joint Committee, putting its interest above my own. I will always strive to do good, do well and do right.

2. I will always be myself. I cannot replace, replicate or imitate James Dunn. Who can? The Lord broke the mold after he created James.

3. I will always keep in sight the fact that our work here is not just a job but a Christian ministry. The means we employ, no less than the ends we seek, should serve as a Christian witness.

4. I will always be true to our Baptist heritage and the principles that we champion — soul freedom, church-state separation, believers' priesthood, and the autonomy of the local church. At the same time, I will be open to new ways of expressing and teaching that heritage and those principles in the 21st century.

With God's blessing, your prayers, a talented staff and a committed board, I am both confident and excited about the future. I can't wait to get started. Δ

Executive Directors of the Baptist Joint Committee



J.M. Dawson

1946-1953



C. Emanuel Carlson

1954-1971



James E. Wood Jr.

1972-1980



James M. Dunn

1981-1999



J. Brent Walker

1999-present

Baptist Joint Committee

Supporting Bodies

- ◆ Alliance of Baptists
- ◆ American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
- ◆ Baptist General Conference
- ◆ Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- ◆ National Baptist Convention of America
- ◆ National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc.
- ◆ National Missionary Baptist Convention
- ◆ North American Baptist Conference
- ◆ Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.
- ◆ Religious Liberty Council
- ◆ Seventh Day Baptist General Conference
- ◆ Southern Baptist state conventions/churches

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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BJC directors elect new slate of officers

The Baptist Joint Committee marked its last board meeting of the millennium with a change in leadership of the 63-year-old religious-liberty coalition.

The Oct. 4-5 meeting in Arlington, Va., marked both the official farewell for James M. Dunn, who retired Sept. 1 after 18 years as the agency's executive director, and the election of his successor, J. Brent Walker, who previously served as the BJC's general counsel.

BJC directors passed a resolution honoring Dunn's work. "For us, James has been the face of religious liberty," it said in part.

Since retiring, Dunn, 67, now has two jobs. He has assumed duties as president of the Baptist Joint Committee Endowment, where he is working on raising the last \$100,000 of a \$1 million fund-raising goal by the end of this year. He also is professor of Christianity and public policy at Wake Forest Divinity School in Winston-Salem, N.C.

In addition to electing Walker, BJC directors also chose new officers of the board. June McEwen of Chattanooga, Tenn., was elected president. McEwen serves on the BJC board as a representative of the 762-member Religious Liberty Council, a dues-paying group set up in 1988 that allows individuals to be involved in the BJC. She succeeds Aidsand Wright-Riggins III, executive director of National Ministries, American Baptist Churches in

the U.S.A.

Boyce Brannock of Staunton, Va., a representative from the Baptist General Association of Virginia, was elected first vice president. Charles Weber of Wheaton, Ill., who represents the North American Baptist Conference, is the new second vice president. Walter Parrish III of New York, representing the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., is secretary.

Directors adopted a year 2000 budget of \$911,075, a 3.8 percent increase over the 1999 budget. Wright-Riggins urged board members to encourage

denominational bodies they represent to increase gifts to the agency.

Wright-Riggins also announced that ABC's National Ministries division would provide \$12,000 to create an internship at the BJC for persons of color. The internship will be named in honor of Earl Trent, house counsel at National Ministries, and Richard Ice, president emeritus of American Baptist Homes of the West, both longtime members of the BJC board.

Directors also approved a bylaw change that allows the board by a two-thirds vote to withdraw representation from groups that over a four-year period neither contribute to the BJC nor participate in meetings. They also authorized staff to secure liability insurance for officers and directors.

They also heard a report that the board's executive committee had named Larry Chesser, communications director, as associate executive director of the agency. Δ



Aidsand
Wright-Riggins III



June
McEwen



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