



BUREAUS

- ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

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Executive Committee approves Annuity Board mutual funds

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press 2/21/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--After more than a year of research and evaluation, the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee and Annuity Board reached an accord allowing the Annuity Board to restructure its investment program into registered mutual funds.

After discussing the proposal for nearly two hours at the end of their Feb. 20 session, Executive Committee members overwhelmingly approved the Annuity Board's request "to establish the Annuity Board Select Funds Trust and the Annuity Board Blended Funds trust" Annuity Board trustees meet in March in Dallas to make a final decision on proceeding with the mutual fund strategy.

The approval of the business trusts and their governing documents, as required by SBC bylaw 35, gives the Annuity Board the go-ahead to convert its massive investment program to a mutual fund structure. For Southern Baptists who have invested in the board's retirement programs, there will be no effect on retirement benefits, board officials said.

In answer to questions posed by the 80-member Executive Committee, Annuity Board officials explained in a prepared response, "The conversion to a mutual fund structure will not impose a greater risk upon the funds accumulated over the years in a retirement plan account. In fact, a mutual fund structure may actually reduce risk. The mutual funds will be required to follow stringent rules and regulations designed to protect investors. As is currently the case, investment risk will depend upon the plan investments selected by the participant or the sponsoring employer."

Executive Committee officials praised the work of the Annuity Board and SBC counsel and the committee's president and chief staff officer, Morris H. Chapman, in researching, analyzing and preparing the information about the proposal. The Nashville firm of Guenther and Jordan is the SBC and Executive Committee legal counsel.

"The Executive Committee recognized the good work that the Annuity Board has been doing in this investment area," R.L. "Bob" Sorrell, chairman of the Executive Committee administrative subcommittee, told Baptist Press following the lengthy executive session of the committee. "The Annuity Board investment strategy has been good for Southern Baptists. The purpose of these meetings was to respond to the Annuity Board's request to expand appropriately into other markets."

Sorrell, associate pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn., said, "After months of research and investigation into all aspects of the request, the Executive Committee has agreed that the overall interests of Southern Baptists would be served."

At the Feb. 19-20 meeting, Executive Committee members of the bylaws workgroup and the administrative subcommittee also spent extensive time in executive sessions to deal with the matter.

Chapman said the executive sessions were needed because of the "wide-ranging legal considerations which required extensive discussions prior to coming to a decision."

Because of the executive session, the vote on the proposal was not released but officials said it was overwhelmingly positive.

Executive Committee Chairman Ronnie W. Floyd, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., said Southern Baptists can "rest assured that the will of God has been done." Floyd said an "incredible amount of study and research has been done (in this matter)."

Included in the approval were some changes in the trust documents, initially approved by the Annuity Board's 50 trustees last November. The approval has some specifications which tie the trust structure closely to the Southern Baptist Convention, e.g., "the governing board of any investment adviser" hired for the two trust funds "will be composed entirely of persons then serving as trustees of the Annuity Board of the SBC." Also, the approval says Annuity Board bylaws regarding election of trust trustees cannot be changed without prior consent of the SBC or its Executive Committee.

The two trusts would each have 10 trustees, six from the board of trustees of the Annuity Board and four "disinterested" but who would have to be Southern Baptists. Federal security laws require 40 percent of the trustees to be "disinterested." The SBC Committee on Nominations would recommend 14 people to the SBC annual meeting and messengers would approve 14 people. The Annuity Board would then pick eight of the 14 (four for each trust board) and the remaining six would be available for election in the case of death or resignation of one of the "disinterested" trustees. These trustees will serve for one year and can be re-elected to a total of five consecutive years.

The trust documents include, "as a fundamental policy of the mutual fund, a provision imposing investment restrictions identical to those currently imposed by the investment policy of the Annuity Board trustees." This would mean the board's current policy of not investing in "sin" stocks would continue in the mutual fund trusts.

Annuity Board officials, in their statement, told the Executive Committee "the mutual fund structure extends a comprehensive level of protection by adopting rules and regulations practiced by the mutual fund industry. For example, a mutual fund structure provides a standard format for disclosure and reporting of information to investors and a uniform basis upon which to compare investments in Annuity Board plans to other types of investment options."

Regarding whether registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission would open the door for future federal intrusion into, and increasing influence over, Annuity Board activities, board officials said no.

"Affirmative compliance with various requirements of federal and state securities laws would be far less disruptive to the operations of the Annuity Board and its controlled corporations ... than regulatory enforcement action which might result from failure to comply."

Annuity Board officials said the registration would require compliance with SEC procedures, and "it will not impose an unacceptable burden which would adversely affect the operations of the Annuity Board or its controlled corporations."

2 SBC budget recommendations
depend on bylaw 15 outcome

By Herb Hollinger

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Budget planners for the 1996-97 Southern Baptist Convention year cannot know for sure if messengers to the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans in June will approve, for a second time, a change to SBC bylaw 15.

Consequently, members of the SBC Executive Committee approved two Cooperative Program Allocation budgets for the 1996-97 year -- depending on whether bylaw 15 is amended. Both budgets are the same total: \$145,053,499, a 2.42 percent increase above the current year. SBC agencies had requested \$150,809,379 for 1996-97. Bylaw 15 simply lists the names of SBC entities, several of which are to change under the SBC restructuring.

If bylaw 15 is changed -- the last provision needed before SBC officials can move ahead with the restructuring of the denomination -- the 1996-97 budget will have two parts: a nine-month provision and then a three-month provision. If bylaw 15 is not approved, the budget would look more like previous SBC budgets.

That would be necessary because, under the restructuring, in the last three months of SBC fiscal year 1996-97 (July, August and September) there would be only 12 agencies instead of the current 19. The "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring plan reduces the number of agencies in the SBC by eliminating several, merging others and creating a new evangelistic/missions/communications agency called the North American Mission Board.

The Executive Committee also approved four initial recommendations for implementing the sweeping restructuring, approved by messengers to the 1995 SBC annual meeting in Atlanta. The recommendations, presented by the Executive Committee's 10-member Implementation Task Force, include the hiring of a management consulting company to assist in creating the new North American Mission Board "at a cost not to exceed \$495,000."

The other three recommendations involved a proposed charter for the NAMB -- created from the merger of the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission -- and proposed legal documents relating to seven SBC agencies slated for dissolution or merger.

A considerable portion, \$685,424, of the proposed 1996-97 budget, if bylaw 15 is approved, would go for "Covenant Transition" expenses for the restructuring in a line item identified for the period July 1-Sept. 30, 1997. The "bylaw 15 approved" budget would also hold agencies affected by the restructuring to basically the same budget as the current year has for nine months. The Foreign Mission Board, to be renamed the International Mission Board, would receive 50 percent of the Cooperative Program in both budgets.

The "bylaw 15 approved" budget also has a note at the bottom: "This budget responds to the unique fiscal situation created by the SBC revision of bylaw 15, June 11, 1996. It is transitional in nature and should not be interpreted as establishing a pattern for CP allocations in future years."

In other action, the Executive Committee:

-- added its endorsement to the Home Mission Board's national "Celebrate Jesus 2000" evangelistic thrust, with a goal "to pray for and share Christ with every person in America by the end of the year 2000 AD," entailing a national media campaign, simultaneous revivals and/or area crusades in every community during the spring of 1999, a national satellite crusade that fall, along with prayer, door-to-door witness and follow-up discipleship efforts.

-- approved a request from the Baptist Sunday School Board for a \$20 million capital fund-raising campaign for Glorietta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) conference centers, targeting about 500 selected potential donors, to begin in March and continue through July 1997.

-- formally elected A. William "Bill" Merrell as Executive Committee vice president for convention relations, who assumed the position Jan. 1. Merrell's appointment had been approved by Executive Committee officers Dec. 11.

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-- declined to recommend a resolution from the Dakota Southern Baptist Fellowship requesting amendment of SBC bylaw 32 to reduce the size of membership of cooperating Baptist churches in a state or defined territory required for representation on boards and agencies.

-- approved a request from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to cancel the approval for indebtedness to construct a family life ministry center on its Kansas City, Mo., campus.

-- approved Sunday School Board requests for authorization to publish two new periodicals, a bimonthly, "Minister's Family," a joint project with Focus on the Family, and a quarterly, "Pursuit," an evangelistic resource targeting non-Christians in the "boomer," "buster" and "X" generations.

-- named three people to the 1995-96 SBC Committee on Nominations, replacing members from their states who had resigned: Mark S. Hearn, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Evansville, Ind., replacing James D. Hamilton, pastor of Northeast Baptist Church, Evansville; W.D. "Step" Martin, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., replacing David E. Hankins, former pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles; and Wayne Spencer, pastor of College Heights Baptist Church, Casper, Wyo., replacing Seth E. Johnston, pastor of Antelope Valley Baptist Church, Gillette.

-- approved a 2.5 percent increase in the Executive Committee's staff salary structure, effective Oct. 1.

-- approved the SBC audit for the 1994-95 fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30, 1995. It showed the convention operating reserve fund increased nearly \$49,000 to \$576,970 from the previous year; revenues of \$4,318,442 were \$33,192 short of expenditures of \$4,351,634; and the operating budget fund total, the end of fiscal year 1993-94, of \$627,078 was reduced to \$581,970 at the end of fiscal year 1994-95.

-- adopted resolutions of appreciation for John E. Roberts, who retires Feb. 29 after 30 years as editor of the South Carolina Baptist Courier newsjournal, and William G. Tanner, who retires June 30 after 10 years as executive director-treasurer of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. Tanner also has served as president of the Home Mission Board, Oklahoma Baptist University and Mary Hardin-Baylor College in Texas.

Responding to referrals from the 1995 SBC annual meeting in Atlanta, the Executive Committee:

-- noted, in regard to a motion that the Executive Committee report to the 1996 convention concerning its ongoing study of procedures for removal of trustees: "... the ongoing study of a proposed revision of Article VI of the SBC Constitution that would allow for the removal of a trustee or trustees by simple majority vote of the Convention is being deferred in favor of current organization, program, and policy studies related to the implementation of the Covenant for a New Century in June 1997."

-- declined action on a motion to transfer funds formerly designated for the American Baptist Theological Seminary to the six SBC seminaries for theological education for African American students. The Executive Committee noted: "... the six SBC seminaries have policies in place for determining the allocation of scholarship funds derived from a variety of sources, including the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget."

-- to a motion for the Executive Committee to study alternate ways to provide funding for Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in the San Francisco area, the committee said it "continues to study alternate ways of providing adequate funding for Golden Gate Seminary to meet the missions challenge of the west as reflected in the Golden Gate special allocation of \$200,000 per year for eight years (1989-97) and the Seminary Workgroup's ongoing assignment and commitment to study the programs and the funding for all six seminaries."

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-- declined action on a motion to amend the SBC bylaws to permit the convention to act on referred motions at the time they are reported to the convention. The Executive Committee noted it "declines to recommend changes in Bylaw 20 or 28 because of the procedures presently in place which allow the Convention to act on referred motions but will continue to provide resources to messengers to the Convention which will facilitate their understanding and participation in Convention proceedings."

-- declined action on a motion for the Executive Committee to consider increasing the Home Mission Board's recommended budget by 5 percent.

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**BSSB releases resource
for time-savvy '90s teens**

By Chip Alford

**Baptist Press
2/21/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--When Richard Ross began working as a youth minister more than two decades ago, he rarely talked with teenagers about an upcoming event more than two weeks in advance.

"If I did, they would just shrug their shoulders," Ross, youth ministry consultant at the Baptist Sunday School Board, explained. "But today, even when I talk about trips and events months in advance, a lot of the older youth start pulling out their planning notebooks or calendars to make sure they don't already have something planned.

"It's a different world; teenagers are much more interested in time management than in the past. For good or ill, their lives are much more programmed," said Ross, who also is youth minister at Tulip Grove Baptist Church, Hermitage, Tenn.

Evidence of adolescents' preoccupation with time management can be seen in the proliferation of teen-targeted daily planners now on the market. Last year, Day-Timer unveiled a "Student Planner" for high school and college students, and Mead School and Office Products now offers a variety of personal planners designed to help students map out their lives.

Even elementary school students are getting in on the act. Scripps Howard News Service reported late last year "thousands upon thousands" of kids learn about daily planning in school and are "pencil in play dates and homework reminders."

In the same article, Boulder, Colo.,-based educational consultant Gloria Frender of Brain Power Inc. explained the phenomenon this way: "Life is getting complicated. Kids are busier than ever with extracurricular activities, community involvement and responsibilities at home, especially if both parents work."

Christian teens are no exception to the rule. In fact, church activities create another section of entries in their already-overflowing daily planners. Editors and consultants at the Baptist Sunday School Board became increasingly aware of that fact in recent years as they began receiving requests from youth ministers for a Christian-based planning tool for teens.

"They wanted something that would help their teenagers plan their days and encourage them in their daily walk with Christ," said Dwayne Ulmer, youth-adult leisure reading and devotional designer at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

A Christian-based organizer wasn't a new idea for board editors. The BSSB released a planning resource for youth ministers -- "The Youth Minister's Life Management System" -- three years ago. But developing a life management system for teens was definitely a special project, Ulmer said. Input was received from youth ministers, teens and a team of youth-related personnel from several BSSB components, including Bible teaching-reaching, pastor-staff leadership, and discipleship and family development.

The result of their efforts is "Student DayMaker," a planning resource released earlier this month at Youth Ministry National Conference 5 in Atlanta.

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Among its features: monthly calendars and daily planners, class schedules, Scripture verses, evangelism and Bible study helps, a glossary of religious terms, storage pockets for Sunday school and discipleship materials and information about several Southern Baptist youth-related emphases such as the "True Love Waits" abstinence campaign and "See You at the Pole" prayer rallies. There also is a "how-to" section with tips on having a quiet time, setting goals, prayer, leadership and memorizing Scripture.

Another section offers counseling suggestions designed to help teens minister to peers experiencing a variety of problems, such as suicidal feelings, alcohol and drug abuse or the death of a family member or friend.

"I really feel the counseling section is one of the most practical features of the resource," said Ross, who also was involved in developing the project. "I think students will use it to reach out to their peers."

Student DayMaker also includes support materials for "First Priority," a strategy for organizing cities to support Christian clubs on secondary school campuses.

According to First Priority founder and executive director Benny Proffitt, the strategy ties together Southern Baptist-focused M-Pact clubs, First Priority clubs and other Christian clubs and organizations, empowering students to reach their campuses for Christ.

"About 20 to 25 percent of teenagers attend church, but 95-100 percent are in school five days a week. We must have a consistent outreach on our junior high and high school campuses if we are going to reach American teenagers for Christ," he said.

Ross said Student DayMaker is an "ideal resource" for youth involved in leading Christian clubs on campus.

"Not only can it help keep these leaders organized, it can help them focus on leading their peers toward Christian growth as well," he said.

Ulmer said the Sunday School Board will customize Student DayMaker (e.g., special logo or church name on the cover or additional pages inside) for churches, associations, state conventions and other groups who purchase the product in quantities. For more information, call Bill Craig at (615) 251-2761.

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**Baptists add 'First Priority'
to reaching teens on campus**

By Chip Alford

**Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--After 26 years as a bivocational youth minister and teacher/coach in private high schools, Benny Proffitt was convinced of the need for a Christian outreach on secondary school campuses.

"About 20-25 percent of teenagers attend church, but 95 to 100 percent are in school five days a week. We must have a consistent outreach on our junior high and high school campuses if we are going to reach American teenagers for Christ," the Franklin, Tenn.,-based minister said.

Too many churches, Proffitt said, have turned away from that challenge.

"Some have backed away by choice. They are only willing to deal with people who are willing to come to them," he explained. "Others have hesitated because of a misunderstanding of the separation of church and state. They didn't think they could make an impact in the schools."

The truth, Proffitt said, is the 1984 Federal Equal Access Act supports the existence and activities of Christian clubs and organizations in secondary schools (grades seven through 12). They simply must be student-initiated and student-led, he said.

"We have an open door; we need to be supporting these student groups with everything we've got."

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That "open door" is what led Proffitt to launch "First Priority of America" 15 years ago. The multi-denominational ministry carries out the "First Priority" strategy of organizing adults and churches in cities across the country to support student ministry efforts on secondary school campuses. The First Priority Campus Club Support Strategy is now supported by youth-related components at the Baptist Sunday School Board and the evangelism department at the Home Mission Board. Support materials for First Priority also are included in "Student DayMaker," a time-management resource for Christian teens recently released by the BSSB.

Proffitt said First Priority "encourages and trains youth pastors to network with all the churches in their community who have the desire for young people to come to Christ. We encourage them to equip, encourage and empower students in their ministry to their peers."

The First Priority strategy, he said, is designed to provide the following for campus-based Christian clubs:

- a network of local churches and youth ministries to assist and encourage youth in their club's mission.
- a connection with all other Christian clubs in their school, community and state, as well as helpful resources.
- the support of local Christian business people in the community.
- a series of events, programs, concerts and other opportunities for sharing Christ.

First Priority also produces manuals for student leaders and business and church leaders interested in lending their support to on-campus ministries. They can be purchased from the Sunday School Board.

While there are First Priority clubs on many school campuses, Proffitt said they aren't trying to replace para-church or denominational groups, such as YoungLife or the Southern Baptist-focused M-Pact clubs supported by the Home Mission Board.

"We are not anti-denomination; we are very pro-denomination," Proffitt said. "We don't want to replace these groups; we just want to provide them with a strategy for working together in reaching their campuses for Christ."

And there is plenty of work to be done, Proffitt said. There are currently more than 56,000 secondary schools in the United States and only about 10,000 have some type of Christian club or organization.

But First Priority is beginning to make an impact. In the last six months, Proffitt said First Priority ministries have been established in 20 cities. And in the last two years, individuals, church leaders and business people in more than 700 cities have contacted the ministry asking for information.

"We have an opportunity; I'm excited about the possibilities," he said.

For more information about First Priority, write to First Priority of America, P.O. Box 681119, Franklin, TN 37068-1119, or call (615) 221-4963.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) posted in the SBCNet News Room and mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

If you've got a mailbox,
you're set for Bible study

By Eva Wilson

Baptist Press
2/21/96

O'NEILL, Neb. (BP)--Distance and circumstances may prevent some people in the Nebraska Sandhills from attending church. But they can still learn about God with the help of their mailboxes.

The Mailbox Club, a Bible correspondence club, was developed in 1985 as a way to follow up children who were enrolled in Vacation Bible Schools in the Sandhills.

Summer missionaries Nat Lindsay and Christine Johnson enrolled children as they ministered throughout the Sandhills that summer.

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"Kids love to get mail in their own name" and they like to belong to clubs, said Dennis Hampton, church planter strategist for Sandhills and Platte Valley Baptist associations.

At the end of that summer, children from 17 Nebraska counties were enrolled in the Mailbox Club.

Hampton first took on grading the correspondence lessons. But he soon found the need to pass that responsibility to someone else.

Diane Gotschall took over for a year and a half, then Sandra Olson assumed the role for two years. The two are members of Green Valley Sunday school, a lay-led Baptist congregation southwest of Atkinson.

Connie Gompert of Center has handled the task for the last seven years. She and her husband, Terry, are active in Sandhills Baptist Association work and minister extensively out of their home. Terry is the Knox County extension agent.

Hampton estimates about 150 to 200 people are involved in the Mailbox Club annually. The ages range from preschoolers to senior adults.

Gompert grades the lessons for children, and Joel Wentworth handles the task for youth and adults. Wentworth is the moderator/coordinator for the Sandhills association.

The lessons include multiple-choice questions to answer and mail back. Hampton looks over the answer sheets for the students' comments on what was most meaningful to them from the Bible lessons. He then sends the answer sheets to Gompert for grading.

Gompert's desk consists of an antique kitchen cabinet in her "loom room," where she has two looms set up.

As she grades the lessons, Gompert writes an "encouraging personal note" to the student. She keeps a file on each student and writes them when she hasn't heard from them for awhile.

Students earn a certificate when they complete seven lessons. Mailbox Club participants also live in such distant states as Washington and Virginia. Children may spend the summer with a parent in Nebraska and spend the rest of the year with their other parent out of state.

Although the Mailbox Club was originally intended to be a follow-up tool, it is being used for evangelism and church planting.

It is difficult to know exactly how many people have been saved through the club. But Hampton said it reached two children who later were killed in accidents. Without the Mailbox Club, they might never have been exposed to the gospel.

The mail in early January brought a lesson completed by a 5-year-old boy with the help of his mother.

A question on the answer sheet asked, "Have you taken the Lord Jesus as your Savior?" The answer was "Yes." When? "Today, 12/28/95, with the lesson."

"I can dream of other ways to use this material that we've never tried," Hampton said.

Now the Mailbox Club has cousins, one in Oregon and the other in another area of the Nebraska Sandhills.

The Mailbox Club in Oregon was developed by Jim Gantenbien, who heard Hampton speak at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center in New Mexico. Gantenbien was pastoring in the High Desert area of Oregon and was trying to reach ranchers in remote areas.

He developed a prototype of the Mailbox Club used in the Nebraska Sandhills. Gantenbien publicized his Bible correspondence club through weekly newspapers, agricultural publications and mass mailings to post office patrons.

Then he recruited retired people in his association to grade the lessons. He hand-delivered certificates to his students in an effort to meet them personally. Gantenbien then asked if they were interested in being part of a Bible study.

Gantenbien's version of the Mailbox Club drew the interest of Norbert and Sylvia Krieger, who are serving as Southern Baptist Mission Service Corps volunteers in the Sandhills.

The Kriegers are using their version of the Mailbox Club as a church-planting tool. People who enroll will be asked if they would like to join a Bible study group.

In early January, 21 people from Elgin, Spaulding and Ericson had enrolled in the Kriegers' Mailbox Club. Such a response is "phenomenal," they said.

HOUSE MAIL

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