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May 31, 1996

96-95

TENNESSEE--Leaders recommend change in mission statement to Executive Committee.
 WASHINGTON--Panel OKs bill to combat homosexual marriages.
 ALABAMA--WMU AIDS project tops 100,000 in money, items.
 MINNESOTA--Minn./Wisc. Convention, Bethel Seminary link OK'd.
 KENTUCKY--Southern Seminary adds six new faculty for fall.
 TENNESSEE--BSSB division combines two biblical studies departments.
 DALLAS--Lloyd Elder employed as Texas consultant.
 TENNESSEE--Corrections.

Leaders recommend change in mission
 statement to Executive Committee By Bill Merrell

Baptist Press
 5/31/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A change in the wording of the mission statement in the Covenant for a New Century is to be recommended to the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee by the president of the Executive committee, its chairman, and the chairman of the Program and Structure Study Committee.

The trio announced May 30 they will recommend the Executive Committee, during its pre-convention meeting June 8 in New Orleans, amend the mission statement to include the phrase, "to the glory of God the Father." If the Executive Committee gives its approval to the amendment, it would, in turn, recommend it to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans June 11-13.

Paul Brady, pastor of the Ranch Acres Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla., had expressed concern over the lack of notice given to God the Father in the mission statement. He made a motion at the 1995 SBC meeting calling for a correction which was referred to the Executive Committee. In its September 1995 meeting, the Executive Committee declined to act upon his motion.

Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the Executive Committee, said, "I believe that it is the wise thing and the right thing to do for the Executive Committee to revisit the question."

Noting the Covenant ought to magnify Southern Baptists' doctrinal agreement and mission commitment, he said, "If the mission statement as it is written has the potential to cause concern or confusion among Southern Baptists, then it needs to be reconsidered. That Southern Baptists believe in the Trinity is not in question."

Mark Brister, chairman of the PSSC agreed, "For the sake of theological clarification, we are suggesting to the Executive Committee that it include this reference to God the Father in the mission statement of the Covenant."

R. Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and member of the PSSC, said he had been impressed by the discussion which followed Brady's suggestion. "I take pleasure that Southern Baptists feel strongly enough about the doctrine of the Trinity that they are willing to put themselves on the line, even to the point of public debate."

Calling the doctrine of the Trinity "one of the most neglected doctrines in contemporary Christianity," Mohler said, "It is the central doctrine to our understanding of God and the entire system of theological truth."

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Ronnie Floyd, PSSC member and chairman of the Executive Committee said, "The initial formulation of the mission statement was not intended to state everything that we believe doctrinally about the Lord, the churches, and the work we undertake together. But it was certainly our intention, and it still is, to give Southern Baptists a standard to rally round, and a reminder that this is God's work, and not our own; it is God's Word that is our authority, and not our own; and it is God's power on which we depend, and not our own."

Mohler agreed, saying, "From the onset of its discussions, the Program and Structure Study Committee established that the Baptist Faith and Message (which affirms the Trinity) would function as the theological undergirding of its work. Of course, it was not our purpose then, nor should we take as our purpose now, to establish a new confession of faith or confessional statement." He said the PSSC was "determined to provide a clear theological rationale within our mission statement which articulated the heart of our identity and mission."

The suggested amendment refers to God the Father in a statement of doxology. If approved, the mission statement would read: "The Southern Baptist Convention exists to facilitate, extend, and enlarge the Great Commission ministries of Southern Baptist churches, to the glory of God the Father, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, upon the authority of Holy Scripture, and by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit."

The Covenant for a New Century was approved at the 1995 SBC annual meeting and is the blueprint for a restructuring of the denomination. It was developed by the Program and Structure Study Committee, which was appointed by the SBC Executive Committee, in response to a motion in the 1993 annual meeting to study the convention's structure in preparation for a new century.

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Panel OKs bill to combat
homosexual marriages

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
5/31/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--A House of Representatives subcommittee voted May 30 to approve legislation designed to enable states to refuse recognition of homosexual marriages.

The vote by the Constitution Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee marked the first action taken on the Defense of Marriage Act, H.R. 3396.

The bill says no state shall be required to recognize a homosexual marriage from another state. It also amends federal law to define marriage as "only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife" and to define a spouse as "a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife."

The 8-4 vote to report the bill favorably to the Judiciary Committee was split along party lines, with Republican members voting for it. Four amendments, two which would have seriously altered the bill, were offered by Democrats but defeated.

The legislation was introduced in both the House and Senate in early May in response to an expected Hawaii court ruling which threatens to legalize homosexual marriage in a sweeping way. In a case scheduled to go to trial this summer, it is anticipated a Hawaii court will declare homosexual marriage constitutional.

If such a union is declared legal in Hawaii, it likely would be considered legal in all other states under the full faith and credit clause of the U.S. Constitution, unless a state is able to show it has a compelling policy opposing such unions. Eleven states have enacted legislation banning homosexual marriages, according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

"It is gratifying to see the House move swiftly on this critical piece of legislation," said Will Dodson of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "The Constitution Subcommittee, under the leadership of Charles Canady, is to be commended for its action on this matter."

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Opponents of the bill argued it is unnecessary, unimportant, a violation of states' rights and political posturing in an election year.

Rep. Barney Frank, D.-Mass., said the bill was not required because states already are able to exempt themselves from the laws of other states.

Proponents of the bill argued it is unclear how the courts will rule minus congressional action.

It is "obligatory that this Congress should clarify" in what situations marriage laws in states can be nullified by laws in another, said Rep. Martin Hoke, R.-Ohio.

Prior to the situation in Hawaii, Canady, R.-Fla., subcommittee chairman, said "there was never any reason to define the words 'marriage' or 'spouse' in federal law, because the laws of the 50 states were uniform in defining them exclusively with reference to heterosexual unions. But now, it is necessary to make explicit in the federal code Congress' well-established and unquestionable intention that marriage is limited to unions between one man and one woman."

While Frank, whose homosexuality has been public for many years, called the bill a "desperate search for a political issue," Hoke said such an assertion is a "desperate attempt to politicize what is not at all a political issue."

It is "a moral issue," said Rep. Henry Hyde, R.-Ill. "The institution of marriage is trivialized by same-sex marriage."

Canady released a May 29 letter from the Department of Justice reasserting its opinion the bill is constitutional. The letter confirmed President Clinton would sign the legislation if it is presented to him in its current form. The letter also said the Supreme Court's recent Romer v. Evans decision did not alter the department's analysis.

On May 20, the high court ruled as unconstitutional a Colorado amendment which prohibited local or state laws granting civil rights status to homosexuals.

Rep. Bob Barr, R.-Ga., and Sen. Don Nickles, R.-Okla., introduced the Defense of Marriage Act in their respective chambers. The bill is S. 1740 in the Senate.

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WMU AIDS project tops
100,000 in money, items

By Teresa Dickens

Baptist Press
5/31/96

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Southern Baptists gave \$126,457 and 123,598 items to support local and global AIDS ministries through Woman's Missionary Union's second national ministry project, Project HELP: AIDS.

Of the totals, \$17,461 and all of the items were donated by Southern Baptist churches to AIDS ministries in their communities and states. The remaining funds, \$108,996, were given through the WMU Vision Fund to support the House of Hope in Vitoria, Brazil, an AIDS hospice under the direction of Southern Baptist foreign missionary Karen Gray.

The top 10 states in monetary contributions to the project, including monies donated to local and global ministries, are Kentucky, \$18,441; Alabama, \$14,094; Tennessee, \$10,799; South Carolina, \$9,807; Texas, \$9,755; Virginia, \$8,839; Georgia, \$8,775; Arkansas, \$7,208; Missouri, \$4,814; and Mississippi, \$4,498.

The top 10 states in items donated are Georgia, 17,828; Texas, 15,663; Kentucky, 11,658; Arizona, 10,701; Alabama, 10,239; Tennessee, 9,464; Arkansas, 8,244; Mississippi, 6,841; Virginia, 5,269; and Missouri, 4,426. The items donated by churches have included a variety of things, including personal hygiene products, furnishings and appliances for hospices, and handmade quilts for children with AIDS.

"The response to Project HELP: AIDS has been phenomenal," said Dellanna O'Brien, WMU executive director. "While it might have been expected that there would be much criticism and little participation, the opposite has been true. Many pastors have written or called to express their gratitude to WMU for opening up a very sensitive area for understanding and ministry. We will never know the full impact this project has made."

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Trudy Johnson, WMU special projects manager, agreed. "These totals reflect only a portion of the impact this emphasis has made in our churches and their communities," she said. "Based on the letters, telephone calls, e-mail messages and personal testimonies we have received, persons who are HIV positive and who have AIDS have heard the message that Southern Baptists care about them."

"The project has indeed opened many doors for Southern Baptists to share the love of Christ with people who have been affected by AIDS," said Sandra Nash, chair of the Project HELP: AIDS Task Force and WMU executive board member. "I am pleased that WMU members have taken the risk in leading their churches to reach out to these individuals and families who so often are shunned and misunderstood."

Among those who have seen the impact of Project HELP: AIDS are professionals who work in ministries related to AIDS. Johnson referenced an e-mail she received from Malcolm Marler, AIDS chaplain at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital, in which he wrote, "Thank you WMU for opening more doors in Baptist and other faith communities with Project HELP than opened in 10 years before in the religious community."

Fred Loper, national missionary for medical missions with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, echoed Marler's comments. Loper is a member of the Project HELP: AIDS Task Force and has led hundreds of AIDS conferences during the emphasis in churches, associational and statewide events, and on college campuses.

Loper said his experiences with Southern Baptists over the past year had revealed several things to him. First, Southern Baptists are positive about and interested in ministering to individuals affected by AIDS.

Secondly, he noted, Southern Baptists are "amazed at how much AIDS has already affected us. Inevitably during each of the meetings where I taught, people shared how AIDS had affected their own lives, their family members' lives, or their church families' lives. For some people, it was very eye-opening. They did not know that it had touched where they live."

Thirdly, the project has drawn the attention of individuals and groups outside of Southern Baptist life. Loper noted in many of the places he has been non-Southern Baptists and in some cases, non-Christians, participated in the meetings.

While some of these individuals attended the conferences because they were "curious about what Baptists had to say about AIDS," Loper believes they left with a positive attitude toward Southern Baptists. "I think it has given us a reputation, in some arenas, of being more authentically interested in real life."

"I believe that Project HELP: AIDS has been a very successful emphasis," Loper concluded. "I'm pleased that the conversation has even been broached by WMU because for most Southern Baptists, it was the first time they had ever talked about AIDS and how it was impacting their community."

Noting the national project does not officially conclude until September 1996, Johnson said churches and individuals wanting to order resources related to the project may do so by calling WMU Customer Service at 1-800-968-7301.

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Minn./Wisc. convention,
Bethel Seminary link OK'd

By Gomer R. Lesch

Baptist Press
5/31/96

ROCHESTER, Minn. (BP)--The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist Convention Executive Board has approved the establishment of a program of study at Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., for two degrees -- Master of Arts in Theological Studies and Master of Divinity, to prepare students for service in MWBC churches.

"The creation of seminary education in Minnesota-Wisconsin is crucial to the development of indigenous leadership for the churches, and will serve to enhance more effective transplant leadership," said Bill Tinsley, MWBC executive director.

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As part of the degree requirement at Bethel, a Baptist General Conference seminary, students enrolled in the MWBC program must complete a course in Southern Baptist Convention history and a course in SBC missions strategy and resources within the first two years of study. Professors for these courses must be approved by MWBC.

Students enrolled in the MWBC program must also complete in-ministry studies under the supervision of an MWBC-approved supervisor, and include a section on SBC polity under an MWBC-approved professor. MWBC will provide scholarship assistance to qualifying students based on available funds to cover 80 percent of the difference of about \$450 per course between Bethel Seminary tuition and the average SBC seminary tuition cost. SBC tuition costs are significantly lower because of Cooperative Program subsidies.

The American Challenge Foundation presented a gift of \$5,000 and issued a challenge to match an additional \$5,000 for scholarship assistance. The matching \$5,000 is conditional on at least \$1,000 of additional funds being contributed.

Contributions will be matched up to the \$5,000 figure. To qualify for the match, gifts must be received within six months of the initial gift, or by Sept. 4, 1996.

Glenn Sanders, a member of Cornerstone Community Church, formerly Valley Baptist Church in Winona, Minn., and a member of the MWBC Executive Board, is president and CEO of American Challenge Foundation. Gifts to the seminary fund may be sent to MWBC, 519 16th St., SE, Rochester, MN 55904. Please identify the gift as "seminary scholarship."

In order to qualify for a scholarship, a student must have been a member of an SBC church for at least one year prior to application. The application must be accompanied by three recommendations, one of which is from the pastor or a leader approved by the church.

The report of the seminary study committee noted that several professors who teach at Bethel are Ph.D. graduates of SBC seminaries. Twenty-two professors who have taught at Bethel now teach or have taught at SBC seminaries.

Several volumes of the Broadman commentaries published by the Baptist Sunday School Board were written by Bethel professors. "Seeing this strong SBC interaction between Bethel and SBC seminaries, it only makes sense to work with Bethel to provide quality seminary education in Minnesota-Wisconsin. The nearest SBC seminary is 400 miles from the southernmost border of Minnesota," noted Tinsley.

The Executive Board approved the appointment by the president of a scholarship committee to serve in 1996. The board's administrative committee will study MWBC bylaw changes that would establish a permanent scholarship committee elected by messengers to the annual meeting Oct. 31-Nov. 2.

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Southern Seminary adds
six new faculty for fall

Baptist Press
5/31/96

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Six new people will join the faculty ranks at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary this fall, according to President R. Albert Mohler Jr.

"We are thrilled with the quality and commitment of these outstanding Christian scholars who are becoming part of the Southern Seminary family," Mohler said. "They bring to our campus a remarkable combination of scholarly gifts and practical ministry experience."

In addition to the six now announced, Mohler indicated another six to eight faculty appointments are anticipated within the next 18 months.

New Southern Seminary faculty this fall will include:

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Danny Akin, associate professor of Christian theology, who will also serve as vice president for academic administration and dean of the School of Theology. Akin comes to Louisville from a post as dean of students and a member of the theology faculty at Southeastern Baptist Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Timothy Beougher, associate professor of evangelism, who will also serve as associate dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth. Beougher comes from the faculty of Wheaton College, where he also served as assistant director of the Billy Graham Center.

Paul Kim, dean of the Carver School of Church Social Work. Kim, a Baptist layman and deacon, will take the Louisville post for one year while he is on leave from the faculty of Louisiana State University.

George Martin, associate professor of Christian missions, who comes to Louisville from the faculty of North Greenville College. Martin is a former missionary to Indonesia, where he served under appointment of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Ben Mitchell, visiting professor of Christian ethics, who is a former biomedical ethics specialist with the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Brian Richardson, Basil Manly Jr. professor of Christian Education. Richardson comes from the faculty of Bryan College in Tennessee, where he directed the nation's largest program for youth ministry training.

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BSSB division combines 2
biblical studies departments

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
5/31/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division will combine its two biblical studies departments into one Oct. 1.

According to division director Bill Taylor, the preschool-children and youth-adult departments will become the biblical studies department. Louis Hanks, currently director of the youth-adult department, will lead the new department. Cos Davis, director of the preschool-children's department, previously announced his resignation effective May 31.

The Bible teaching-reaching division's other department -- ministry leadership and development -- will remain unchanged by the restructuring.

"I'm excited about the challenge these new responsibilities represent," Hanks said. "We want to help Christians develop a passion for Bible study by creating a world-class biblical studies strategy that meets the needs of all age groups and generations."

Taylor said the new structure is designed "to position the Bible teaching-reaching division as 'The Center for Biblical Studies,' enhancing our lead role in developing biblical studies products for world-wide use through dated, undated and multi-media formats." The merger should also result in better coordinated workloads and improved production processes for Bible study materials, he said.

With almost 200 employees, the Bible teaching-reaching division produces three Sunday school curriculum lines -- Life and Work, Convention Uniform and Bible Book -- and other Bible study resources for churches and individuals. The latter two lines will change titles in October to Family Bible Series and Explore the Bible Series, respectively. Ninety-three percent of Southern Baptist churches purchase some or all of their Bible study literature from the BSSB.

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The Bible teaching-reaching division's new structure blends seven biblical studies sections into four. The new sections and related managers will be: 1) preschool biblical studies, David Morrow; 2) children's biblical studies, no manager yet named; 3) youth biblical studies, Richard Barnes; and 4) adult biblical studies section, Rick Edwards. Morrow is currently a children's multi-age team leader in the preschool-children's biblical studies department and also has extensive experience in preschool discipleship ministry. Barnes and Edwards already are serving as section managers in the youth-adult department.

Taylor said other current section managers will be reassigned within the division, adding no personnel are being terminated. He also said a nationwide search is underway for a manager of the children's biblical studies area.

In related changes, a Vacation Bible School work and ventures (new product development) team will be placed in each section (age group). In addition, all general VBS products will be transferred from the ministry design and resources section in the ministry leadership and development department to the children's biblical studies section in the biblical studies department to create a holistic approach to VBS materials.

Church weekday education materials will be transferred to the church leadership services division as part of the church growth group's assignment for developing church school materials. No related personnel, however, will be transferred.

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Lloyd Elder employed
as Texas consultant

Baptist Press
5/31/96

DALLAS (BP)--Lloyd Elder, former president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn., has been employed as a special consultant to the Baptist General Convention of Texas Leadership Team appointed to develop a comprehensive curriculum for ministers' continuing professional development.

Emphasis of the program will be upon principles such as the servant leader model of leadership, stress and time management, conflict resolution, managing change, inter-personal relationships and money management, said Dick Maples, BGCT coordinator of Minister/Church Relations.

Elder, who is professor of the Franklin Paschall Chair of Religion at Belmont University, Nashville, also is developing a leadership institute at the university. He is former assistant to the BGCT executive director and a former Texas Baptist pastor.

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CORRECTIONS: In (BP) story titled "Louisiana pastor is nominee for SBC first vice president," dated 5/30/96, please change the last sentence in the fourth paragraph to read:

The only other announced nominee for an officer post is Tom Elliff, Del City, Okla., pastor who will be nominated for president.

In (BP) story titled "Tennessee pastor returns to pray where battle raged," dated 5/30/96, please change the spelling of the missionary's name in paragraph 6 to Toni Myers.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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