



BAPTIST PRESS

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SBC Executive Committee Acts on Education Proposals

NASHVILLE (BP)--Three Southern Baptist seminary presidents reacted strongly to a recommendation before the convention's Executive Committee to organize an inter-seminary council.

The recommendation was amended to make formation of the council less definite and give the six Southern Baptist seminaries greater latitude in determining what form, if any, such an organization would take, if implemented, and to examine any potential dangers from a quasi-policy making arrangement.

The recommendation came from the Committee of Fifteen, a subcommittee of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Executive Committee, which recently completed a four-year study of the SBC's national agencies.

One of three seminary presidents responding to a recommendation concerning the proposed inter-seminary council was Grady C. Cothen, outgoing president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and president-elect of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville. He said that because trustees have responsibility for seminary policy, such an additional policy-making body could endanger accreditation.

Duke K. McCall, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, asked the Executive Committee to refer the recommendation to the seminaries for study. McCall emphasized that he was not resisting the involvement of trustees in such a council or opposing a study of the matter, but he did object to the recommendation as it stood.

McCall continued, "We don't have an inter-seminary council, but have what we call a 'seminary presidents' workshop," which he said is a different kind of structure that does work at the problems of improving theological education and coordinating the programs of the six seminaries.

"We have an agreement that every action of the workshop must be unanimous, because of the organization's character," he added.

McCall said the seminary presidents have involved the schools' trustees in the workshop when situations arise that are related to the trustees. The same applies to the seminaries' faculties and administrations, he said.

Robert E. Naylor, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, agreed with McCall that he would be opposed to any proposal that would hinder the "excellent cooperation" the seminaries now enjoy. "Presidents don't make policy, trustees do," Naylor added. He and McCall urged that the recommendation be revised to recommend a study to determine the "possibility" of an inter-seminary council, but not to order the seminaries to set up such machinery without determining if the council should even be implemented.

A motion then recommended that the "Executive Committee instruct the Program Committee, in cooperation with the seminary presidents, to fully discuss the possibility of an inter-seminary council and report back to the Executive Committee with recommendations by February, 1975."

The Committee of Fifteen also recommended that the seminaries "study the possibility of charging tuition for all persons enrolled in advanced degree programs and for non-Baptists, and report back to the Executive Committee." The proposal was passed with a reporting date of February, 1976 included.

The Committee of Fifteen explained the rationale behind the original two-part recommendation on seminary cooperation, which included the inter-seminary council and tuition proposals:

". . . We believe that the six seminaries are enough of one family to merit close unified cooperation. We wish to congratulate the presidents for the formation of the presidents' council. . . We also believe that this council should be enlarged to include appropriate trustees in some of its meetings, and that all the policy agreements affecting the seminaries be reviewed by the whole council."

Another recommendation related to Southern Baptist education programs and institutions was passed by the Executive Committee asking "the seminary presidents to answer as fully and as completely as possible the request made in September, 1973, for present and future plans for non-degree students."

In its report, the Committee of Fifteen cited the "problem of training for ministers who . . . cannot attend one of our six seminaries," saying the situation "continues to grow as one of the most serious problems in Southern Baptist life."

Naylor responded by citing the more than 5,000 students enrolled last year in Seminary Extension Department programs and called attention to the fact that the seminaries have students enrolled in non-degree programs, in addition to graduate students.

McCall said the six seminary presidents had agreed two days prior to such a plan and said further reports were planned as the various institutions are able to respond.

In related action, the Executive Committee earlier approved a proposal by Southern Seminary's board of trustees that a Ministry Training Center, to be called the Boyce Bible School, be established at the seminary, as part of its present non-degree academic program. The proposal will be presented by the seminary's trustees to the annual SBC meeting in Dallas in June, 1974.

Another earlier recommendation was approved for the Executive Committee's Institutions Workgroup and the state Baptist executive secretaries to "hold a joint meeting, probably in September, 1974, to explore the Bible institute-type of education."

In another published recommendation, the Committee of Fifteen had recommended that the convention's Education Commission be requested to plan toward receiving at least half of its financial support from the 53 Southern Baptist colleges by 1980, and that it propose a plan for the election of more college personnel to its commission membership. The recommendation was not presented by the Committee of Fifteen and was simply released to the commission for its own evaluation. There was no discussion from the floor on the matter.

A final proposal on education from the Committee of Fifteen was passed requesting that the Southern Baptist American Seminary Commission and the American Baptist Theological Seminary board of trustees "continue" working together to "set standards and goals for the school to be met by 1977."

As passed, the action carries the understanding that the seminary's situation will be reviewed at that time and, "Southern Baptists would consider converting their assets to other uses that would help accomplish education of black young people in training for the ministry."

The commission is to report the decision on minimum standards to the Executive Committee not later than February, 1975.

The Committee of Fifteen report noted that "The American Seminary has not significantly grown during the time when most other Baptist institutions have experienced significant growth." The report said the school has been "repeatedly disturbed with financial, recruitment and administrative problems." It also noted, "Black leaders are divided in their support of the school," among other considerations. It was acknowledged that the setting of standards and goals was already in progress.

Home Mission Board Granted
\$11 Million In Loans in '73

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB) which began a church loan fund with \$500 in 1882 last year loaned more than \$11 million to 235 churches.

Robert H. Kilgore, director of the board's division of church loans, hailed the year as the best "growth" period in recent years.

The board completed 235 loans in 1973 for more than \$11 million and has 90 more in process for \$5,338,900.

Included in the 235 completed in 1973 were 21 loans for \$586,000 from the HMB's Negro and ethnic loan fund. Established in 1972 to assist Negro and ethnic churches which are not affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the fund has been used to assist a total of 31 churches with loans totaling more than \$750,000.

The Home Mission Board began providing loans to churches through a \$500 fund begun in 1882. A recent report revealed that in the last 20 years the division of church loans has processed some 4,700 loans for more than \$80 million.

Loans made by the HMB averaged only \$8,767 in 1951 but the 90 in process for completion over the next 15 months will average almost \$60,000 each, Kilgore said.

"Inflation and increasing building costs have pushed it up," he noted.

The board makes loans to churches which cannot obtain them through the usual channels. Loans total as little as \$2,000 and as much as \$175,000.

Kilgore said that, in spite of inflation, churches were meeting their obligations in the most satisfactory manner in the last 10 years.

"Delinquencies are at their lowest point in 10 years--10.6 per cent," he said. "That is a gain of almost nine per cent over the 12.2 per cent in 1972."

The 10.6 per cent delinquency rate represents those churches which are behind as much as three months in their payments.

Though 10.6 per cent are delinquent, they represent only 1.5 per cent of the amount on loan, Kilgore noted.

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Pastor's Letter Prompted
Establishment of Loan Fund

2/22/74

ATLANTA (BP)--A letter from a black Baptist pastor in North Carolina in 1969 prompted a chain reaction that in the last two years has enabled 31 churches to obtain badly needed loans from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (HMB) and opened doors to other lending agencies for more than 200 others.

In 1969, the pastor of a 150-member black church in eastern North Carolina wrote a poignant letter to the National Council of Churches (NCC) explaining that his church, composed mainly of women and children, had saved \$10,000 and had employed an architect who had drawn plans for a \$145,000 building.

The pastor wanted to know where he could borrow the money for the building.

The NCC said they did not have any answers and, though it has no connection with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), forwarded the letter on to the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville. The letter eventually found its way to the Home Mission Board offices in Atlanta.

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For years, according to Robert H. Kilgore, director of the Home Mission Board's division of church loans, they had been aware of the plight of many churches, mostly black, which had been unable to obtain badly needed loans for improvements or new buildings.

The North Carolina pastor's letter started the matter moving toward a solution.

The HMB earlier had been given responsibility for implementing the "Statement on the Crisis in Our Nation" adopted by the SBC in Houston in 1968.

In 1970, at the observance of the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Home Mission Board in Augusta, Ga., the board authorized establishment of the Negro and Ethnic Loan Fund (NEL).

The NEL fund was begun with \$1 million ticketed for loans to Negro and ethnic churches not affiliated with the SBC.

In the last two years, 31 churches have been granted loans totaling more than \$750,000 from the fund.

But for every church that gets a loan, Kilgore says, there are many others that the HMB assists in getting financing through local sources.

HMB representatives have counseled with some 250 churches about NEL loans in the last two years.

"The loans we make provide a genuine ministry and meet a real need," Kilgore said. "But the ministry is greatly expanded through the counseling and assistance we offer."

Field representatives from Kilgore's division counsel with the churches, many of whom have no idea what local resources are available to them.

An Oklahoma church, for instance, which for years had vainly sought local financing for a new building suddenly found its loan approved when the division of church loans agreed to make the loan if it could not be obtained locally.

Advice from the loans division can save others countless dollars. For example, the North Carolina church, which paid a substantial amount of its \$10,000 savings for a \$145,000 building plan for 150 women and children, could have been steered to the church architecture department of the Baptist Sunday School Board and a ready-made plan for a fraction of the cost.

No grants are made under the program; all of the money is loaned at the prevailing rate of interest. Loans vary from \$5,000 to \$40,000 and are prepaid over two to twenty years.

To qualify, a church must be a regularly constituted Baptist church adhering to New Testament faith and doctrine. Loans are made for purchase of a church site, erection or remodeling of a building or purchase of an existing building.

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Religious Leaders to Push
Integrity in Government

2/22/74

WASHINGTON (BP)--Nineteen national religious leaders of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and other groups and denominations announced here formation of the Religious Committee for Integrity in Government, a non-partisan interfaith committee of Washington-based religious staff persons.

Sponsors making the announcement were James Armstrong, bishop of the Dakotas Area of the United Methodist Church; Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; and William P. Thompson, stated clerk of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

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Among those listed as members of the Washington committee is James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and John W. Baker, associate director in charge of research services of the Baptist Joint Committee.

Expressing his personal concern about the crisis in government, Wood said, "Surely there never was a time in which the need was greater. . . for giving visible evidence of concern for integrity in government. The events of the past year," he added, "constitute an unprecedented American tragedy."

Wood stated that the current governmental crisis marks the "dark ages of public affairs" and warned that without integrity in public office, no credibility or confidence on the part of the public is possible.

The Baptist leader underscored the newly-formed committee's positive function, insisting that in no way should its purpose be seen as seeking a vendetta against the President of the United States. Rather, its formation signals the beginning of an effort to bring cleansing to the nation's political processes.

Appearing at a news conference, the sponsors of the committee said it will work for five initial objectives:

1. Clarification of critical moral issues in the present crisis. "The current crisis is clearly a moral as well as a constitutional one," they said. "The religious community has a unique obligation to clarify the critical moral issues involved."
2. Justice for the President and the American people, including support of an orderly and expeditious inquiry by the House Judiciary Committee as to whether grounds exist for the impeachment of the President.
3. Campaign reform, including public financing of election campaigns. The committee voted this week, in its first official action, to support the campaign reform bill recently introduced in Congress.
4. Restoration of constitutional checks and balances in the federal government, including a challenge to the impoundment of funds and the abuse and improper assumption of authority on the part of some law enforcement agencies.
5. Clarification of critical moral issues facing citizens in the elections of 1974 and 1976.

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Israel Baptist Center
Damaged by Arsonists

2/22/74

JERUSALEM, Israel (BP)--The Israel Baptist House, on Narkis Street here in the middle of a predominantly Jewish area, escaped serious damage after being hit with rocks and kerosene-soaked rags that started a fire in the building.

The Baptist center was the first of three Christian religious centers attacked here in a single day by arsonists in mid-February. Serious damage was averted in the Baptist House when a Baptist church member, who was asleep in the building when the attack occurred, called the fire department.

The blaze was quickly extinguished, according to Missionary Charles C. Worthy. Damages were estimated at \$5,000 to \$10,000, Worthy said.

He indicated that Southern Baptist missionaries in Israel feel the isolated attack on Baptist House is not representative of the majority attitude of the Jewish community toward Christian groups.

An hour after the attack on Baptist House, the Missionary Swedish Lutheran Theological Institute and the Pentecostal Zion Mission Bookstore, were set afire.

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A week after the Christian centers were hit arsonists set fire to a Jewish religious book store in Jerusalem's Muslim quarter. Again, prompt action by the fire brigades prevented serious damage.

Israeli authorities declined to say if they believed the attack was related to the earlier attack on the Christian centers.

Damage to Baptist House was limited to one room which contained a bookstore and reception center. Rocks were thrown through a glass door and windows, and kerosene-soaked rags started the fire.

Jerusalem's Mayor Teddy Kollek condemned the acts as "contrary to the true spirit of the holy city. . .," and offered the institutions municipal aid in repairing damages, according to press reports.

Kollek later received an anonymous phone call threatening his life if he continued to offer help to the Christian institutions.

Missionary Robert L. Lindsey, along with Worthy, expressed appreciation for the "heartwarming" concern and sympathy shown by Jewish friends and neighbors of Baptist House.

In a letter to the editor of the Jerusalem Post, Lindsey expressed the regret of the Southern Baptist missionaries in Israel about the burning of the Jewish book store. He stated that the missionaries hope that there will be no retaliation by Christian groups. That is not the answer to the problem, he said.

According to Worthy, 12 suspects have been arrested and charged with arson in connection with the first incident in mid-February.