



-- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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80-73

Annuity Board Affirms

Board's Doctrinal Integrity

By Larry Crisman

DALLAS (BP)--A resolution approving the "theological integrity and commitment of the president and staff of the Annuity Board" was passed unanimously by the Southern Baptist Annuity Board's executive committee, April 30.

The resolution stemmed from a recent Baptist Press news story by Toby Druin which indicated that charges have been leveled that some employees of Southern Baptist agencies and institutions don't believe in historic Baptist positions on biblical authority.

D. William Dodson Jr., chairman of the retirement and insurance programming institution's board of trustees, delivered the resolution.

"I move that the executive committee of the trustees of the Annuity Board express our confidence in the moral, spiritual, biblical and theological integrity and commitment of the president and staff of the Annuity Board," said Dodson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Martin, Tenn.

The vote came after Darold H. Morgan, Annuity Board president, told trustees of his "deep concern about an organized effort in convention life to control the trustee selection process on a creedal basis."

"Two things I believe in deeply," he said. "One is that I construe myself to be a conservative Baptist, thoroughly committed to the Bible as God's divine word--indeed truth without any mixture of error. Second, I believe in the historic Baptist position which has a strong aversion to creedalism."

In another action, the board's executive committee formally approved the Annuity Board's gearing up administratively to comply with federal pension law, ERISA, primarily as it would apply to church agencies.

The committee adopted a recommendation by the administrative policy committee "to take steps necessary to develop and implement church agency programs which satisfy the requirements of ERISA."

Morgan explained that "a great deal of work has been done in this direction, but a clarification of specific policy direction was necessary."

"This policy, with the passage of 'church plan' legislation now pending in the House and the Senate, will greatly assist the board in its continued service to Baptist agencies," he said. Church plan legislation is being sponsored in the House of Representatives by Rep. Barber B. Conable and in the Senate by Senators Herman Talmadge, Lloyd Bentsen and David Boren.

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Morgan indicated the church plan legislation is currently closer to passage than at any time since its introduction in 1978. If passed, he said, it will "greatly assist church pension funds in coping with ERISA," by clarifying current legislation scheduled to take effect Jan. 1, 1983.

Through the Annuity Board, the Southern Baptist Convention is one of 27 major religious denominations represented on the Church Alliance for Clarification of ERISA.

The members of the Church Alliance, chaired by Morgan, support the legislation which could amend the ERISA definition of "church plan" to recognize traditional retirement plans covering church and agency employees.

Without the amendment and "clarification" of ERISA, Morgan said many Southern Baptist ministers and church and denominational employees will not be permitted to continue participation in Annuity Board church retirement plans after Dec. 31, 1982--"unless there are substantive internal administrative changes."

"We're simply getting ready for any eventuality," Morgan said.

The Annuity Board's executive committee urged Southern Baptists to indicate their support of the Church Alliance's "church plan" legislation to members of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee.

Introduced to the Senate Finance Committee by Sen. Talmadge, D-Ga., the "Talmadge Church Plan Amendments" to S. 1076 is legislation to clarify ERISA which is supported by the Church Alliance.

Originally expected by May 1, a vote by the Senate Finance Committee on S. 1076 and the Talmadge Amendments has been rescheduled for action in the next 60 days, Morgan said.

He said this will give Southern Baptists more time to express their concern to members of the Senate Finance Committee.

Besides Talmadge, others on the Senate Finance Committee are Senators David Boren, D-Okla.; Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas; Russell Long (chairman), D-La.; Abraham Ribicoff, D-Conn.; Harry F. Byrd Jr., Ind-Va.; Gaylord Nelson, D-Wis.; Mike Gravel, D-Alaska; Spark M. Matsunaga, D-Hawaii; Daniel P. Moynihan, D-N.Y.; Max Baucus, D-Mont.; Bill Bradley, D-N.J.; Robert Dole, R-Kan.; Bob Packwood, R-Ore.; William V. Roth, R-Del.; John C. Danforth, R-Mo.; John H. Chafee, R-R.I.; H. John Heinz III, R-Pa.; Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo.; and David Durenberger, R-Minn.

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Robert O'Brien To Pilot News
Project for Foreign Board

Baptist Press
5/5/80

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Robert J. O'Brien, news editor for the national office of Baptist Press in Nashville for the past seven years, will join the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff to coordinate planning for an intensified program of overseas news coverage.

O'Brien, expected to join the staff about mid-July, will help plan the new program during his first year at the board and then move overseas for about two years to conduct a pilot news project in a region to be selected.

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The plan involves the use of professional journalists in strategic regional locations overseas to report news firsthand and work with missionary press representatives in the 94 Southern Baptist mission fields.

In his new assignment, O'Brien will be overseas news coordinator and special correspondent for the board's news and information services, which serves as the foreign news bureau of Baptist Press, and also will relate closely to other departments in the board's new office of communications.

"We welcome the missions commitment, strong professional experience and understanding of the news media which Robert O'Brien brings to us as we prepare to tell the global missions story more effectively to Southern Baptists," said Bob Stanley, director of news and information services.

"The pilot project Robert O'Brien will develop overseas will expand news coverage for Baptist work. We are glad he will continue to be a vital part of the Baptist Press system," said Wilmer C. Fields, director of Baptist Press.

O'Brien, 40, a native of South Carolina, has over 21 years experience in secular and Southern Baptist journalism. As BP news editor he has supervised news coverage of the denomination's news service, coordinating work with six BP bureaus and other news sources and relations with secular and religious media.

Each year he has set up and managed the newsroom at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, and this year will also direct coverage of the Religious Communications Congress/1980 in Nashville in May and the 14th Baptist World Congress of the Baptist World Alliance in July in Toronto, Canada.

O'Brien joined the SBC Executive Committee in 1973 as BP news editor after eight years in denominational journalism posts and nearly seven years as a reporter and editor for metropolitan daily newspapers.

Denominational work included five years (1968-73) at the Baptist General Convention of Texas, where he was press director and associate chief of the Dallas bureau of BP, and three years (1965-68) at the SBC Brotherhood Commission, Memphis, Tenn., as assistant editor of Royal Ambassador boys' magazines.

He also served as visiting professor in communications at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., in 1979, and, before entering SBC journalism fulltime, did some part-time news and feature writing for the Foreign Mission Board.

O'Brien was religion editor and reporter for the Richmond (Va.) News Leader, 1963-65, and earlier covered police and general assignments for the Newport News (Va.) Daily Press and sports for the Newport News Times Herald.

Active in professional groups, O'Brien has earned accreditation from the Public Relations Society of America and is current national membership chairman of the Religious Public Relations Council. He also serves on RPRC's national board of governors and is a past president of RPRC's Nashville chapter. His writing has won 20 awards in annual, national competitions of RPRC and the Baptist Public Relations Association.

A journalism and history graduate of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va., O'Brien holds a master of science degree in journalism from Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., and is nearing completion of a master of religious education degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has also studied at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

He married Shirley Bradley, a Virginia native, in 1965. They have two sons, Eric Robert, 10, and Paul Bradley, 9.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers.

Honeymoon Savings, Truck
Go for Church Building Funds

By Robert Hastings

Baptist Press
5/5/80

BETHALTO, Ill. (BP)—Members of at least two Southern Baptist churches in Illinois are making unusual sacrifices in local fund-raising efforts. Honeymoons, playhouses, and old silver tell the story.

At the First Baptist Church in Bethalto, Keith Tite gave \$500 of his honeymoon savings toward a building fund goal of \$100,000. Tite, 21, who accepted Christ and united with the church only last January, plans to marry fellow member Linda Pitchford on May 16. His \$500 gift came from the money he'd been saving for their honeymoon. But they are making simpler plans, so they could help First Baptist reach its goal.

Ryan Marshall is postponing plans for a playhouse in his backyard. Thirty-nine pounds of pennies, over \$50 worth, earmarked for the playhouse, went to the church instead. Ryan's father, David Marshall, is church organist and a deacon.

Meanwhile, the First Baptist Church in Springfield is also trying to raise \$100,000 for indebtedness by July 6. There, Etna Hemken, 87, is giving three antique silver coins, dated in the 1800s, that she had been saving for years. And an anonymous donor dropped a gold tooth filling in one offering plate!

Wynona Allen, 67, who is retired from Illinois Bell, plans to go back to work for three months and give everything she makes. "I hope to work for the U.S. Census, or whatever," she said. Another unique gift is from Danny Eddington, who is selling a truck and giving the proceeds. "This is an extra vehicle we decided we could do without," he explained.

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Professor's Wife
Dies After Illness

Baptist Press
5/5/80

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Dorothy Vaughan, wife of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor W. Curtis Vaughan, died April 30 following an illness of several months. She was 54.

The former Dorothy Marian Withers of Point Pleasant, W.Va., was a graduate of the University of Virginia and Southwestern Seminary.

Survivors include her husband, a member of the seminary faculty since 1950, two sons, a daughter, one grandchild, her mother and two brothers.

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Plan Unveiled To Extend SBC Seminary Education

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Plans for a "bold new dimension" in theological education were announced in a joint statement by presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries.

Speaking on behalf of the seminary presidents, Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Seminary and chairman of the president's group, outlined a new "division of extended studies."

He said it was created to meet the needs for theological training in pioneer (newer work) areas of the convention and in response to a request by the SBC, in its 1979 meeting in Houston, to study expansion of seminary education into the northeastern, north central, western and northwestern portions of the U.S.

The new division, a joint effort of the seminaries, will include a seminary satellite department to provide degree-level credit work in off-campus programs beginning in the fall of 1981.

In the meantime, Roy L. Honeycutt Jr., provost of Southern Seminary, will coordinate some initial off-campus courses in cooperation with the academic officers of the other seminaries.

The division of extended studies will also include reorganization of the seminaries' current Seminary Extension Department (SED) into a seminary extension center department and a seminary independent study department. These two departments will continue and expand work now offered by SED through extension centers and home study. SED currently has about 10,500 students and 381 centers across the nation.

Raymond M. Rigdon, current SED director, will direct the division of extended studies, with offices at the Southern Baptist Convention Building, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tenn. 37219.

The division resulted from a survey of the needs in the northeast, north central, west and northwest conducted from June 1979 to January 1980, for the seminaries by Harold Graves, president emeritus of Golden Gate Seminary.

"The seminary presidents and deans are vitally interested in providing the resources and programs required to undergird Bold Mission Thrust among Southern Baptists, not only in the so-called pioneer areas but throughout the country and the world," Ferguson said.

Ferguson said the new structure reflects the commitment of the seminaries to provide training for effective leaders in and through the churches.

"The new division will be administered by a governing body comprised of the six seminary presidents. Supervision of all academic matters will be provided by a deans council made up of the academic officers of the six seminaries," he said.

Ferguson said the satellite department is expected to be fully operational by August 1981. However, some initial courses are projected for at least three locations and target areas in the north central and northeast part of the country beginning with the fall of 1980. Honeycutt's office will issue additional information regarding programming for 1980-81.

The courses, to be selected and scheduled in cooperation with local leadership, will be taught by regular seminary professors from the six Southern Baptist seminary faculties.

"A report outlining additional provisions of this new dimension in theological education among Southern Baptists will be presented to the SBC Executive Committee in St. Louis, June 9, 1980," Ferguson said.