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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355  
Wilmer C. Fields, Director  
Dan Martin, News Editor  
Craig Bird, Feature Editor**BUREAUS****ATLANTA** Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
**RICHMOND** (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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83-7

Resolutions Committee  
For 1983 SBC Appointed

By Dan Martin

EULESS, Texas (BP) -- Calling the appointments a "team effort," Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr. has announced the resolutions committee for the 1983 meeting of the SBC in Pittsburgh.

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, said the appointments are a "three-man effort" between the president and the two vice presidents of the 13.8 million member denomination. "I feel I have done everything humanly possible to make it so," Draper told Baptist Press.

Draper said he was following through on a pledge to make key committee appointments far in advance of the June meeting of the SBC. He made the pledge after the appointments and their release became the subject of controversy before the 1982 annual meeting in New Orleans.

In September, Draper named Tal Bonham, executive secretary of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, Columbus, chairman of the resolutions committee. He also named three members of the SBC Executive Committee--required in convention bylaws--to serve on the committee. They are LeRay Fowler, pastor of West University Baptist Church of Houston; Thurmond George, pastor of First Baptist Church of Gilroy, Calif., and Lois Wenger, a member of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla.

The new appointments include five persons: a pastor, a retired pastor, an evangelist and two laypersons. A sixth person will be named at a later date, Draper said.

Those named are:

--John T. Tippet, pastor of Calvary Baptist Temple in Savannah, Ga., a former president of the Georgia Baptist Convention, a current member of the Georgia Baptist Executive Committee and current chairman of the Georgia Baptist Public Affairs Committee. Calvary Temple contributes 12 per cent of its undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program;

--Verlin Kruschwitz, retired pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church of Elizabethton, Ky., and a former president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. He currently is a teacher at Boyce Bible School, a part of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Louisville;

--Rudy Hernandez, an evangelist from Catrina, Texas, and current president of the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas. He is a former staff member of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and president of the Texas Baptist Evangelists Conference;

--William Rhodes, an attorney, deacon and Sunday School teacher at Briarlake Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga. He is past moderator of the Atlanta Baptist Association and currently is a member of the advisory committee for the SBC Brotherhood Commission in Memphis. Briarlake church is the number two church in Georgia in Cooperative Program giving, and

--Joan Tyler, the wife of a physician in Collins, Miss. She is a member of Collins Baptist Church, which has 356 members and gave \$17,759 through the Cooperative Program and \$35,431 to all missions causes last year. She is a member of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Executive Board and Executive Committee, as well as first vice president of the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union.

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Both John Sullivan, first vice president, and Gene Garrison, second vice president, agreed with Draper that the appointments were a "three-man effort."

Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church of Shreveport, La., said the appointments "are as much mine as they are Jimmy's."

Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, said Draper has been "super to work with. We have been double, triple cautious to make sure the ones we appoint represent Southern Baptists."

Draper also said he has requested that Bonham call a meeting of the entire resolutions committee, possibly in early May, to discuss ways to streamline the exhaustive process. "I have asked him to do so and he has agreed, although a date has not yet been set," Draper added.

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High Court Avoids Student  
Religious Rights Dispute

By Stan Haste

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Rejecting an appeal from a Texas school district, the U.S. Supreme Court announced Jan. 17 it will not review a lower court decision striking down a policy permitting students to gather for religious purposes before and after school hours.

At issue in the bitterly disputed case was a 1980 policy of the Lubbock Independent School District permitting students "to gather at the school with supervision either before or after regular school hours on the same basis as other groups as determined by the school administration to meet for any educational, moral, religious or ethical purposes so long as attendance at such meetings is voluntary."

Although a federal district court ruled earlier that the Lubbock policy did not violate the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals last March reversed the lower ruling. The school district then asked the Supreme Court to review that decision.

But in a one-sentence order that followed its tradition of not explaining its reasons for denying appeals, the high court rejected the school board's arguments. None of the nine justices entered a dissent to the order.

By denying the appeal, the justices let stand the Fifth Circuit decision but stopped short of affirming the lower panel, a distinction often missed by the public but legally important. If it had chosen to affirm the lower court, the nation's highest tribunal would have placed its seal of approval on the lower court's decision and reasoning.

By simply rejecting the appeal, however, the high court avoided setting a legal precedent and left open the possibility that another similar case might be accepted for review.

Some church-state observers had warned the facts in the Lubbock case might cause the court to take the course of action it chose.

Following the high court's landmark rulings of 1962 and 1963 forbidding state-written prayers and state-enforced Bible readings and prayers in public schools, the Lubbock school district defied the court by continuing practices outlawed by the decisions.

After 17 years of such defiance, attorneys for the Lubbock Civil Liberties Union in 1979 took the school district to court for the practices, which included daily Bible readings over school public address systems and teacher-led prayers in classrooms.

Responding to the legal challenge, the school district in August 1980 announced the policy permitting students to gather with school personnel supervision before and after school. But the Lubbock Civil Liberties Union challenged the new policy as well.

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After a trial, a federal district court ruled that while the former Lubbock practices violated the no establishment clause, the 1980 policy met constitutional requirements.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans disagreed, invalidating the policy on the grounds that it had no secular purpose, had the primary effect of advancing religion and created the likelihood of government entanglement with religion.

In asking the nation's high court to review that decision, attorneys for the school district argued the case deserved to be heard because "its resolution will affect the interests of more than forty million public school students and will furnish almost ninety thousand public schools with definitive guidance concerning the extent, if any, to which they may provide an opportunity, outside school hours, for noncurricular, student-initiated religious speech and association."

Tying their arguments to a 1981 high court decision that public universities may not deny student religious groups access to campus facilities for their meetings, the Lubbock school attorneys maintained that "public school students, like university students, have the right of free speech on school property, even as to controversial subjects."

They also argued that the Fifth Circuit ruling amounted to hostility to religion in contrast to the "benevolent neutrality" characterizing the Lubbock policy.

But the high court justices apparently agreed with two Lubbock Civil Liberties Union lawyers, who argued on the other side that the 1981 decision regarding use of university campuses does not apply to elementary and secondary schools and that the Lubbock policy violated the ban on an establishment of religion by the state (82-805, Lubbock Independent School District v. Lubbock Civil Liberties Union).

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Christian-Jewish Dialogue  
Includes Southern Baptists

Baptist Press  
1/17/83

IRVING, Texas (BP)--Jewish seminary students from New York, Cincinnati and Philadelphia rubbed shoulders with future Baptist and Methodist preachers and Catholic priests from Texas in a dialogue between young Jewish and Christian seminarians.

The "Seminarian Conference on Jewish and Christian Relations" sponsored by the Council of Southwestern Theological Schools (COSTS), an association of Protestant and Catholic seminaries, and the American Jewish Committee met at Holy Trinity Seminary at the University of Dallas.

Participants included students and faculty members from COSTS seminaries, including Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Holy Trinity Seminary, and Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and leading theologians, educators and intergroup relations specialists from all parts of the country.

"We have really broken new ground here," said Marc H. Tannenbaum, AJC national director of interreligious affairs. "This is the first time seminarians from Roman Catholic, mainline Protestants, Evangelicals, Pentacostal and Jewish communities have come together for dialogue."

Professors from Christian seminaries in the Southwest and from Jewish seminaries in the North and East presented papers on major problems in Jewish-Christian relations. SWBTS professors were Bobby Adams, Boo Heflin and Cecil Roper.

Tannenbaum said the meeting's success was even more significant because it was held in an area where evangelical Christians dominate the religious scene and where Jewish congregations are few. "This is a whole new disciplined way of laying a foundation for the next generation of Christian and Jewish leadership," he said. These kids ten years from now will be running the churches and synagogues of America and also the seminaries. They will fill permanent pulpits and help form the consciences of thousands and thousands of their constituents."

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The Christian seminary representatives called for a follow-up meeting as the first step in devising new curricula on Jewish-Christian relations in the Texas seminaries.

"Most of the Jewish seminarians had never talked to Christian seminarians before," said Tannenbaum. The same could be said of most Christian seminarians in Texas, who never had any meaningful conversations with Jews.

At workshops and in rap sessions students candidly told of their family backgrounds, shared their deepest religious experiences and asked questions about each others' beliefs.

Keynote speaker Carl Van Buren, professor of religion at Temple University, challenged the Christian community to rediscover how Jewish it really was. "Being nice to Jews is not the point," he said, Christians, through seminary teaching and other teaching, needed to become aware of an "amazing reversal that had occurred since Vatican II."

"Both Protestants and Catholics" he said, "have scrapped the old teachings that God has ended his covenant with the Jewish people and made a new covenant with Christians. Now the main body of Christians believes God's covenant with the Jews is still in effect and will endure forever."

Christian seminaries need to make major curriculum changes to catch up with the new view of the church, he said.

Tannenbaum said Jewish-Christian relations had "progressed more in the last 20 years than they have in all the years before that."

He said Jews too had much to be gained in recognizing that the things that unite the two faith groups were far greater than those that separated them. "It is not a matter of being nice to Christians," Tannenbaum said, echoing the earlier statement by Van Buren.

"They share the Bible, the vision of one God who reveals his moral will in the Ten Commandments. They share a concern for social responsibilities to help one's fellow man."

On the final day students were asked to "testify" about their conference experiences.

Sam Weintraub, a student at Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, said he had never heard about the kind of Christians he met at the conference--those who show love and respect for the Jewish faith. "The only Christians I had heard of were the ones who had made it so hard on the Jews."

Nancy Ellett, a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, admitted she came from a background of religious prejudice. All Jews had formerly been considered as objects of conversions, she said. "We (Baptists) have not always been sure that Catholics are Christians," she said.

Like other seminarians, Ellett said she had felt a "deep spiritual community" in the meeting with the Jewish seminarians and had vowed to help open the eyes of Baptists to the importance of good Jewish-Christian relations. "To a majority of Southern Baptists (Jewish-Christian relations) is a non-issue," she said.

Dayle Rabinowitz, a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, said she had found the conference to be "an intensive spiritual moment in my life."

"Now I, as a Jew, feel responsible to learn of the Christian faith," she said. "As long as my religion was rejected I could ignore Christianity, but now I find I must find a place for your tradition--not as erroneous but as an authentic expression of religious faith."

Although the conference was marked by warmth and good humor, disagreements occurred. Sometimes feelings were hurt and lively arguments developed.

One of the liveliest occurred in a workshop when two young religious leaders, Rabbi Michael Goldberg of Dallas and William Longworth of Brite Divinity School clashed.

Goldberg, who is a friend of Longworth's, took the position Judaism would prevail--that it ultimately would be the vehicle through which God would save all men, including Christians. "I realize that offends many of you here," said Goldberg, "but I just don't think it helps a whole lot to sit around and jolly one another." Longworth said both Jews and Christians have a right to live out their distinctive faith and "should watch out for imperialist claims."

"In the long run, salvation is God's business and how salvation comes about is not for me to say," remarked Longworth.

Tannenbaum said the view expressed by Goldberg "is a very specialized point of view--a kind of Jewish triumphantism which to me is just as unacceptable as Christian triumphantism."

The climax of the conference came as participants--preachers, rabbis and students--joined hands in a circle with each one offering a prayer or thought as they passed around a clay pot which had twin vases, extending from a single base.

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Policeman Uses Tracts  
To Aid Those In Trouble

By Charles Willis

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HARTWELL, Ga. (BP)--Policemen don't always use guns and nightsticks. At least one peace officer, Horace Chastain of Hartwell, Ga., has found God's Word as presented in religious tracts can be most effective.

"The worst thing a policeman can get involved in is a domestic problem," Chastain said, reflecting on the range of situations with which he has had to deal.

Once he told a married couple, "The police can't help you. You can't even help yourselves. What you're going to have to do is let the Lord take over." Giving a tract each to the man and the woman, he said, "I want you to sit down and read these together."

Several months later while Chastain was working patrol at the elementary school, the husband came up. "We read those tracts until we almost wore them out," he told Chastain. "We went to church and were saved. Now we're the happiest we've ever been. I just wanted you to know we appreciate your giving us the tracts."

A long-time member of New Prospect Baptist Church near Hartwell, Chastain began using tracts after a hospital chaplain gave him one to read during recuperation from an illness. An enthusiastic visitor for his church, Chastain promptly began ordering the tracts from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church media library department in Nashville, Tenn.

The soft-spoken officer has used tracts not only in domestic squabbles, but also with persons in trouble for fighting, gambling and drinking alcohol.

"I want you to think about something," he once told several men who had gotten into a fight over a card game on a Sunday morning. "If you had been in church with your families where you should have been, this wouldn't have happened. This is the Lord's Day and this is some way to observe it. Let the Lord take care of your life."

To a man who cursed him for issuing a parking ticket, Chastain said, "I'm a Christian man and you're taking my Savior's name in vain." When he handed the man a tract, Chastain recalled with a smile, "He got right bug-eyed."

Believing that "a policeman can be firm without being harsh," Chastain is selective and purposeful in choosing situations in which to use tracts. His estimated use of 100 tracts a year is far below the number of persons he encounters in his work. The tracts he uses most frequently are "Gems of Comfort and Hope" and "God's Word to the Lost."

"His godliness shows through in his work," observed Hartwell's Mayor Joan Saliba. "This is something we're thankful for. He serves our community faithfully with love and devotion."

But Chastain says he isn't seeking any earthly glory. He simply wants to share his faith, because "the Lord's been mighty good to me."

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