



BAPTIST PRESS

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. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

September 27, 1983

83-147

Public Affairs Committee
Meets, Discusses Role

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The role, responsibilities and function of the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee were discussed by the 15-member committee during a September meeting.

The meeting is only the second time in recorded SBC history the PAC has met. Traditionally, its role has been interpreted as being the means through which the Southern Baptist Convention names representatives to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and funds the work of the BJCPA.

The BJCPA, a coalition of nine Baptist bodies focusing on separation of church and state and religious liberty, has been involved in increasing controversy, most of which centers on BJCPA opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment on prayer in the public schools.

The meeting was called by Sam Currin of Raleigh, N.C., who was elected a member and chairman of the PAC during the 1983 annual meeting of the SBC. Currin, a former aide to U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., said he believes the PAC should have frequent meetings "to talk about the Southern Baptist perspective on issues. I think the people are demanding it. Rank and file Southern Baptists want us to meet and at least give the perception we care about them and are representing them...."

Currin, SBC President James T. Draper Jr. and Albert Lee Smith of Birmingham, Ala., were critical of the BJCPA. Draper noted: "I think we need a Baptist Joint Committee but the feeling is that the committee is insensitive...that only one viewpoint is represented...."

Smith, who served one term in the U.S. Congress, said "Southern Baptists in Birmingham know Southern Baptists are putting 75 to 80 percent of the money into the Baptist Joint Committee and have a third of the membership. And then the Baptist Joint Committee goes on record against voluntary prayer...."

BJCPA Executive Director James Dunn interrupted Smith to say the BJCPA has never opposed voluntary prayer, but is opposed to state mandated prayer, which it sees the prayer amendment as being. He added the perception the BJCPA is opposed to voluntary prayer is "fostered by politicians out for a vote, preachers out for an amen and journalists out for a headline."

"It has never been made clear that voluntary prayer has never been ruled out of the classrooms, and in fact cannot be ruled out," he added.

James Smith, executive director of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn., asked what other issues "rank and file Southern Baptists are dissatisfied with the Baptist Joint Committee about. I haven't heard any criticism of their handling of ERISA (retirement) or the IRS or about taxes on the salaries of foreign missionaries."

Currin admitted the "prayer thing is the main issue...."

Much of the discussion concerned the function of the PAC. Russell Dilday Jr., president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and immediate past PAC chairman, said research on the history of the PAC found "no reason for existence outside of being the mechanism by which Southern Baptists choose their representatives to serve with other Baptist bodies on the BJCPA."

--more--

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, said rules of the SBC "prohibit the allocation of Cooperative Program funds to an entity where trustees are not elected by the convention. So, therefore, the committee functions as a channel through which Cooperative Program funds can be sent to the Baptist Joint Committee."

Bennett added, according to SBC policies, the PAC is a standing committee, and thus is entitled to only one meeting per year. "If a second meeting is wanted, the standing committee must receive special approval from the Executive Committee."

Several committee members indicated a request for additional meetings would be opposed.

Jimmy R. Allen, president of the SBC Radio and Television Commission, said he thinks the current system "works well" with the PAC "a unit of the Baptist Joint Committee. I don't think we have any meetings to have. I do not believe we are subject to the call of the chairman (to meet)," he said. "If we feel we need to meet, then we need to go back to the convention and tell them we need a committee and not a joint committee."

The controversy concerning sending of two letters to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee also was discussed.

Shortly after his election, Currin sent a letter to Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., in support of the school prayer amendment. He identified himself as chairman of the PAC, said he supported the prayer amendment and included a copy of a resolution passed at the 1982 annual meeting in support of the amendment.

Almost immediately, another letter to which 12 of the 14 remaining members names were affixed, was sent. The second letter said Currin spoke only for himself and the signers supported the testimony of John Baker, BJCPA general counsel, opposing the amendment. Draper declined to sign and Albert Lee Smith was unavailable.

Even the letter became controversial as two--William G. Tanner, president of the SBC Home Mission Board, and James Smith--said they were out of the country when the letter was circulated. The names of both men were added by associates at their agencies.

In addition, Tanner said he did not agree with part of the letter, noting he voted for the 1982 resolution on school prayer. He added he did not vote his conscience when BJCPA trustees unanimously adopted the stand opposing the amendment during their March 1982 board meeting.

Dilday told the September meeting he intended the letter to "correct the misconception the chairman spoke for the committee. That was the first purpose and I felt strongly about it." The second purpose, he said, was to "indicate there had been other resolutions...."

During the discussion, James Smith told Currin: "I think it was unfortunate you were selected as chairman...it was unfair to you. It was unfortunate you felt you had to address this issue before you had had a chance to meet with the committee."

R. Gene Puckett, editor of the Biblical Recorder, newsjournal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and chairman of the BJCPA, introduced a means to prohibit any statement which "in any way utilizes the name of this committee reflecting a position of the committee...until the complete text has been verified and confirmed by every member...."

The motion died when R. Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board said: "I don't know if we are constituted to do business."

The PAC has 15 members, 10 of whom are specified in SBC bylaws: the president of the convention, the executive secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee, and the executive officer or staff representative of the Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, Christian Life Commission, Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union. In addition, at least two other agency executives may serve.

Current members are Draper, Bennett, Parks, Tanner, James Smith, Foy Valentine (CLC), Carolyn Weatherford (WMU), Allen and Dilday. At-large members are Currin, Albert Lee Smith, Donald Brewer of Chicago, Donald Aiesi of Greenville, S.C., and Puckett.

Missouri Court Rules Against
Baptist Store's Tax Status

By Linda Lawson

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--The Baptist Book Store in Kansas City, Mo., should not be exempt from paying taxes, according to a Sept. 20 ruling of the Missouri Supreme Court.

In a 6-1 decision, written by Justice Warren Welliver, the court said the store in downtown Kansas City was being operated in a manner similar to other retail book stores. "This book store is not substantially different from any other religious book store," Welliver wrote. "It sells to all members of the general public as well as churches and Sunday schools. The literature it sells is not purely denominational."

Officials of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board which owns and operates the 62-store chain said further legal action in the case is under consideration.

Albert L. Rendlen, chief justice of the Supreme Court of Missouri, said in the lone dissenting opinion that the fact the store sells materials to others "indicates the reason for being of the Book Store is to spread the religious messages the Sunday School Board seems consonant with the tenets of the Southern Baptist Convention."

According to Sunday School Board President Grady C. Cothen, "The chief justice in this case has given a good interpretation of the Sunday School Board's objective, which is to assist churches in their efforts of bringing men to God through Jesus Christ. That's why we publish literature, that's why we operate the conference centers and that is the reason we operate Baptist Book Stores."

"I believe the majority of the Missouri court missed several important points in arriving at their decision," said Cothen. "The first amendment right to conduct both training and evangelistic ministries is inherent in the task of the Sunday School Board. I believe the Missouri ruling levies taxes on these rights."

BSSB attorneys filed suit against Jackson County over payment of \$13,612 in merchants and manufacturers taxes, business personal property taxes and property taxes during a two-year period. The merchants and manufacturers tax is levied on inventories of businesses.

In the suit, the board contended its book stores should not have to pay the taxes because of the provision in the Missouri constitution that allows property used exclusively for religious worship or for "purely charitable purposes" to be exempt from taxes.

The trial court ruled in favor of the board on the grounds that store profits were used for charitable purposes. However, Jackson County appealed the decision and the majority of the Supreme Court disagreed and reversed the lower court ruling. The Supreme Court did note that more than two-thirds of the sales of the Kansas City store are made to churches and church organizations.

--30--

Women Deacons Ordained
By Oklahoma City First

Baptist Press
9/27/83

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (BP)--A "larger than usual" crowd was on hand at First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City Sept. 25 for the ordination of six deacons--three of them women.

Edna Dunn, Kathleen Nash and Sherry Lawson were elected Aug. 21 when the church elected 18 deacons from a list of 48 persons which included seven women. A fourth woman was elected but declined to serve. Twelve of those elected had been ordained previously.

The Sunday evening service concluded a process that began in March of 1981 when a committee was named to study the role of women in the church. After two years of study the group reported it found nothing in the New Testament to prevent women from becoming deacons and recommended changing the church's bylaws to allow women deacons. That recommendation passed, 232-167, last January.

-more-

All six of the candidates for ordination met with a 35-member ordination council for questioning Sunday afternoon. The all-male council elected Pastor Gene Garrison as moderator then asked each candidate a single set of questions over Baptist doctrinal beliefs such as baptism, grace and salvation, a deacon spokesman said.

The candidates were presented to the church in the evening service where each stood in the pulpit and gave a testimony. Garrison's charge to the deacons consisted entirely of reading scriptures dealing with how deacons should act.

Votes by the Capital Baptist Association have expressed strong opposition to the ordination of women as deacons. It is not known what action, if any, the association will take concerning the action by First Baptist Church.

--30--

Seminaries Begin To Establish
Urban Evangelism Fellowships

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
9/27/83

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Declaring they will "challenge the dry eyes that cannot weep for a lost world," Dale Cross and the Home Mission Board, have established the first Urban Evangelism Fellowship.

The organizational dinner, at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, Sept. 22 melded about 80 students and faculty members, committed to Christian work in major cities but often unknown to each other, into a friendship group with common goals.

Cross, director of metropolitan evangelism strategy for the board, plans similar fellowships at the other five Baptist seminaries. He will hold an organizational meeting at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., Nov. 17.

"This is a fellowship of concern about urban America," Cross told the group. "We want to develop a network, a relatedness and connectedness with each other to support and to help each other resist the call of culture that says 'Let's get away from all this.'"

"The cultural call of success makes us hesitate to invest in the tough places. But we won't have the strength, the guts, the courage to be what God wants us to be any place if we avoid the tough places."

America's 50 largest metropolitan areas contain all six Southern Baptist seminaries and 102 million people, according to 1980 census statistics, from New York's 9.1 million, to Albany-Schenectady-Troy's 795,000.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in San Francisco-Oakland is in the sixth largest metro area; Southwestern, in Dallas-Fort Worth, eighth; Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, 29th; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans, 33rd; Southern, 43rd; and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greensboro-Winston Salem-High Point, N.C., 48th.

Cross hopes the fellowship connects students between and within the seminaries. However, he and some seminary faculty members fear firing such enthusiasm may bring disappointment when students graduate into limited vocational ministry opportunities.

"All we can tell them now is to get to the city, get a job and be bivocational," said Justice Anderson, director of Southwestern's World Mission/Church Growth Center.

"I'm concerned that raising expectations will exacerbate the problem we have that people cannot fulfill their dreams through our denomination," Cross said. "But the problem of not challenging them is worse."

"I'm enough of a mystic to believe when people start to pray and God begins working on their hearts, new things can happen."

--30--

Organization For Christian Nurses
To Provide Fellowship, Ministry

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Bringing Christian nurses together under the umbrella of organization and fellowship and ministry is the goal of the newly founded Baptist Nursing Fellowship (BNF).

The BNF will be officially born at the November Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship (BMDF) national meeting in Oklahoma City, Okla., where its proposed constitution, bylaws and slate of officers will be presented to attending nurses. A steering committee of medical professionals and representatives of Woman's Missionary Union, Southern Baptist Convention and the BMDF met last month to plan the launching.

The BNF will be a sister organization to the seven-year-old BMDF, which is endorsed by the Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union, SBC.

WMU has agreed to provide advisory and administrative support for the Baptist Nursing Fellowship.

"We recognize the need for nursing personnel to come together for mission information and inspiration, as well as for the support they can offer career missionaries," Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of WMU, SBC said.

The stated purposes of the BNF are threefold, according to proposed bylaws: to provide nurses and nursing students opportunities for worship, witnessing and ministering through professional association; to provide education and learning experiences through Bible study, theological training, ethical study and evaluation of denominational work and professional education, and to provide members opportunities for expanded Christian service and witness through personal involvement in home and foreign mission activities and through disaster relief projects.

Nursing professionals will pay dues of \$25 per year and nursing students \$5 per year. Nurses who are active or emeritus Southern Baptist missionaries are not required to pay dues.

Weatherford said the BNF expects to have many missionary career nurses attending while home on furlough. "They can be affirmed and helped in continuing education," she said.

Slated officers for 1983-84 are: Ellen Tabor, Winston-Salem, N.C., president; Carol Stephenson, Mesquite, Texas, vice-president; Barbara McCoy, Tifton, Ga., program chairperson; Betty Hall, Wise, Va., membership chairperson; Saramma Joseph George, Nashville, Tenn., service chairperson; Paul Lawrence, Leeds, Ala., finance chairperson, and Nancy Muldrow, Nashville, Tenn., nominating chairperson.

The steering committee was composed of Timothy C. Pennell, professor at Wake Forest University's Bowman Gray School of Medicine; Henry Love, BMDF executive director; Carolyn Weatherford, WMU, SBC executive director, and the slated officers.

"We hope to have at least 5,000 members by the end of the first year," Weatherford said.

For more information concerning the Baptist Nursing Fellowship, contact Carolyn Weatherford, Woman's Missionary Union, P.O. Box C-10, Birmingham, Ala. 35283-0010.