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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 11, 1984

84-85

HMB Elects Three Staff; Optimistic Over Funds

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist Home Mission Board directors elected three new staff members and approved 62 persons for mission posts during their June meeting.

HMB President William G. Tanner also told board members that although receipts for both the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified budget, and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions are running behind last year's figures, he expected the annual offering to provide "adequate funds" to meet the HMB's \$22 million budget for 1984.

Robert E. Wiley was elected associate director of the HMB's associational missions division, succeeding James Hamblen, who resigned last year to become director of missions for Winston-Salem, N.C. Wiley, 42, had served at the board since 1980 as associate director of the rural-urban missions department in the associational missions division. He was appointed missionary associate by the board in 1976 as director of missions for Central Baptist Association in Indiana.

He has been pastor of churches in Indiana and Kentucky. Wiley graduated from the University of Evansville and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and attended Goshen Bible Seminary.

HMB directors also elected Maurice Smith assistant director for interfaith witness department.

Smith, a regional missionary of the department since 1979 for Southwest and Central United States, comes to the board to assist Southern Baptist churches, associations, state conventions and denominational agencies to understand and bear an effective witness to members of non-Christian world religions. He succeeds Peter Chen, who has accepted a new position with the department in San Francisco.

Smith, 53, was pastor of churches in Texas prior to HMB appointment in 1979. He also has worked as a teaching assistant at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and served two stints as a missionary to Ghana, West Africa, under appointment by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Smith is a graduate of Howard Payne University and holds two degrees from Southwestern seminary.

Michael B. Brown was elected director of word processing and will coordinate the board's word processing system, a newly created position. He is a native of Atlanta, Ga., and worked as data processing operations coordinator for the board since 1980. He worked as a senior account representative and a data processing coordinator for firms in Atlanta prior to coming to the HMB.

Brown, 36, attended Georgia State University and DeKalb Technical College in Atlanta and served a four-year stint in the U.S. Marine Corps.

In other actions, board of directors appointed 14 missionaries, four missionary associates and 17 church planter apprentices, and approved 31 persons for church or language pastoral assistance.

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Women In Ministry
Group Draws 250

By Michael Tutterow and Anita Bowden

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Attendance at the second annual Women in Ministry, S.B.C. conference reflected increased interest in women's issues in Southern Baptist life.

About 180 people registered for this year's meeting, and some 250 people, including 40 men, attended the Sunday morning worship service, where Susan Lockwood Wright, pastor of Cornell Avenue Baptist Church, Chicago, preached. Only 80 persons registered for the 1983 meeting in Pittsburgh.

The attendance, double that expected, led Anne Davis, dean of the Carver School of Church Social Work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., to say the meeting "by any Baptist standard, is a success."

Following a year of financial struggle for the group, Anne Neal, chairperson of the Women in Ministry, S.B.C. steering committee, announced Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, intends to include Women in Ministry, S.B.C. as a line item in their 1985 budget. WMU also allowed the fledgling group to use its meeting facilities at the Radisson-Muehlebach Hotel during off-hours of their own pre-SBC meeting.

New steering committee members selected to serve two-year terms are Nancy Ellett of Dallas; Debi Lastinger Pitman of Kansas City, Mo.; Irene Bennett of Gainesville, Fla.; Sylvia Nadler of Plainview, Texas; Ann Hickey of Washington, D.C.; Ashli Peak of Columbia, Mo.; and Jane Medema of San Francisco.

Davis and Neal, Southern Baptist foreign missionary emeritus and pastoral counselor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., who were part of the 1982-84 steering committee, were asked to serve an additional year. Seven other women will serve a second year on the committee.

The group voted during their business meeting not to endorse FOLIO, a newsletter for Southern Baptist women in ministry published by The Center for Women in Ministry, Inc., Louisville, Ky., as the official newsletter for the Women in Ministry, S.B.C. Instead they voted to recommend any newsletter that holds a favorable position toward SBC women in ministry.

Several state groups of Southern Baptist women in ministry reported on their progress in establishing local women in ministry groups.

Nancy Hastings Sehested, associate pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga., said a small group of Atlanta women, including those on church staffs and those serving as chaplains in the Atlanta area, have met several times to discuss balancing career and family responsibilities.

Sehested noted several of the women faced mounting opposition, including one woman whose husband does not support her call to minister, another whose salary is \$10,000 less than her male predecessor on a church staff, and another who "finally acquired a church staff position only to have that joy crushed and demolished in being treated as a hired hand and coffee-fetcher for the male staff ministers."

In small group sessions, women talked about personal frustrations and joys as they struggle to follow God's call for their lives. One woman with a master's degree in religious education who is married to a pastor faced rejection from her husband's congregations when they refused to ordain her. She is scheduled for ordination at another church in the association.

Two female ordained ministers spoke of the pain and tears involved in following their call, but encouraged attendees to persevere, asserting that God was with them and their cause. Lynda Weaver-Williams, co-pastor along with her husband of Goshen Baptist Church in Goshen, Ky., and Wright warned the women that their struggle to minister in the Southern Baptist denomination will not be any easier in coming months but their goal must be following God at all cost.

Participants also heard Elizabeth Barnes, adjunct professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, emphasize that women "have a theological imperative and a theological assurance which not only allows us to claim our place in Christian ministry, but requires it if we are to answer the call forward."

She added that women must remember "that our gifts belong not just to us personally or even to us as women, but to our church and our age."

Women's role in the church cannot be labeled "trivial," added Barnes, but must be viewed as integral to God's redemption of the church, society and the world.

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Texas Baptists Give
\$5 Million To Missions

Baptist Press
6/11/84

DALLAS (BP)--For the first time in history Texas Baptist churches have given more than \$5 million in one month for missions through the Cooperative Program.

Convention Treasurer Roger Hall reported undesignated Cooperative Program giving in May reached a record \$5,071,000. Gifts were more than \$592,000 above the monthly budget of \$4,479,167.

Texas gives 36.10 percent of Cooperative Program receipts for worldwide causes through the Southern Baptist Convention. Distribution for SBC mission causes is sent about three weeks in advance of receipts from the churches, said Hall.

Hall said the 3,700 Texas churches and missions gave \$23,311,000 in the first five months of the year toward the 1984 Cooperative Program budget of \$55,750,000. Gifts are \$915,000 above the budget for the year and 11.3 percent greater than during the same period last year.

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Suit Refiled in Virginia
Asking \$5 Million Damages

Baptist Press
6/11/84

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A former Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board volunteer has refiled a \$5 million damage suit against the board in Virginia after the suit was dismissed in Texas for lack of jurisdiction.

Nasser Lotfi of Austin, Texas, filed the suit March 26 in the U.S. District Court for the eastern district of Virginia, but papers were not served until June 7. The court is located in Richmond.

The suit, which also seeks \$60,000 in disability and medical benefits, claims Turkish immigrants in Augsburg, West Germany, beat Lotfi into unconsciousness March 27, 1982, while he was working to develop a local congregation of Baptist believers. It alleges he suffered permanent disabling injuries to his back and spine.

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Lotfi originally filed the suit in U.S. District Court in Fort Worth, Texas, early in 1983 against the Southern Baptist Convention, but an amended complaint named the Foreign Mission Board as defendant. The case was dismissed Sept. 21. A motion for rehearing was later denied.

Lotfi, identified by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram as a former colonel in the Iranian air force and a naturalized U.S. citizen, went with his wife to West Germany in January 1982 for a two-year volunteer term. They were assigned to minister to Turkish immigrants in the Augsburg area, working alongside Southern Baptist career missionaries and in cooperation with the German Baptist Union.

Mission board officials said Lotfi was selected because of his apparent Christian commitment, his Middle East background, his language skills and his intense desire to go. Officials said consultations were held in July 1982 and a decision was made to end the agreement under which the Lotfis went overseas.

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BPMF Spokesmen
Speak at Church

Baptist Press
6/11/84

By Lonnie Wilkey

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The editor of a newsjournal who contends he "tells the other side" told a gathering at Red Bridge Baptist Church "liberals will completely ruin the Southern Baptist Convention if loyal conservatives leave the denomination."

William A. Powell, Sr., editor of The Southern Baptist Journal, made his remarks during a preconvention conference for conservatives sponsored by Red Bridge Baptist Church. Powell and other leaders of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, an organization of conservative Baptists formed in 1973, were featured during the two-day meeting.

Powell defined theological liberals "as those who deny the Bible as the infallible word of God." All Baptists are free to believe anything they want, Powell contended, but not when they become paid Southern Baptist employees.

Powell called for conservatives not to leave the SBC, but to remain and "help win this battle for the Bible."

During both sessions Powell was particularly critical of certain SBC seminary presidents and professors. He mentioned several names and cases of seminary professors and presidents who had opposite views from Powell and other conservatives.

His remarks about Temp Sparkman, a professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and "his universalism which he believes everybody will go to heaven" drew a variety of reactions.

Powell was asked by one church member what seminary he would recommend. He responded with Mid-America Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., saying "I think it's more Southern Baptist than the other six."

During the question-and-answer session Powell also recommended the designation of Cooperative Program funds. He told the church to "designate all of your mission money to the conservative SBC mission work." He advocated designating to specific missionaries through proper channels.

Fire Damages
Convention Hotel

By Stan Hagley

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Arson is the suspected cause of a Saturday hotel fire which gutted the room of four Southern Baptist Convention news room personnel in town for the 127th annual meeting of the denomination, police said Sunday.

An arson investigator for the Kansas City police department questioned the four, all women, following the late afternoon blaze that apparently started on a bed in the 15th-floor room of the Americana Hotel, one block from Bartle Convention Center where the three-day convention starts.

No serious injuries were reported, although a private security guard and a Kansas City policeman suffered minor smoke inhalation, fire department spokesman Joseph D. Galetti, said.

None of the women--Faye Byrnes and her daughter, Serena Wilkinson, both of the Nashville, Tenn., area, Gaye Eichler of Dallas, and Vern Myers of Fort Worth, Texas--was in the room when the fire broke out at about 4:15 p.m.

Galetti said all 350 guests in the 500-room facility were safely evacuated without incident.

Arson is suspected, police explained, because about \$400 cash and other personal effects were missing from charred purses and pocketbooks found in the debris. As of midday Sunday, hotel officials had not allowed the women to inspect the room and were described by the victims as "generally uncooperative."

Red Cross personnel provided immediate assistance, however, including a cash voucher for each of the women to buy clothing.

Two other 15th floor guests, veteran Southern Baptist foreign missionaries Charles and Indy Whitten, of Equatorial Guinea, escaped by crawling along the corridor through smoke so thick "we couldn't see a thing." They were napping when the first fire alarm sounded and turned on the television set, thinking the alarm was for a tornado.

(BP)

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NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION