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Colorado Conventions Cuts
CP Giving, Staff Positions

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (BP)--Reeling from mounting financial woes, the Colorado Baptist General Convention has made drastic, retroactive cuts in its gifts to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program and defunded its campus ministers and the editor of the state paper.

A six-months review of the CBGC budget in early July uncovered a potential shortfall of \$200,000 to \$300,000 by the end of 1985 if drastic measures were not taken, according to James Brannon, CBGC executive board chairman.

The convention reportedly also has spent approximately \$110,000 of designated funds--including some of the 28.5 percent of all undesignated gifts to the state budget set aside to send to the national Cooperative Program--for operating expenses instead of for their designated purpose which must be paid back.

In addition to the cuts, the CBGC is seeking to negotiate a \$600,000 loan from the Home Mission Board and a \$100,000-plus increase in the amount of Home Mission Board budget support for the convention in 1986.

Messengers to the annual meeting of the CBGC last fall authorized a \$2.6 million budget for the convention. Of that amount \$1.1 million is to come from outside sources (including more than \$800,000 from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and more than \$40,000 from the Baptist Sunday School Board). The additional \$1.5 million--an average of \$126,000 a month--was projected to come from contributions from Colorado Southern Baptist churches. Instead gifts have averaged only \$98,000 per month.

At the end of June the convention showed a bank balance of \$11,000, according to a report in the Rocky Mountain Baptist, the newsjournal of the CBGC. And unpaid was a \$29,000 monthly contribution to the SBC Cooperative Program, the national unified budget which funds Southern Baptist worldwide mission and education programs.

Brannon, pastor of Mississippi Avenue Baptist Church in Aurora, Colo., said the committee had no recourse because, "there are only three areas of the budget not heavily subsidized by the Home Mission Board or the Sunday School Board--campus ministries, the Rocky Mountain Baptist and the percentage we send to the national Cooperative Program."

The 1985 CBGC budget called for \$122,138 in salaries and benefits for four fulltime campus ministers, \$5,000 in salary support for the campus minister at the United States Air Force Academy and \$34,078 for the editor of the state paper and \$104,000 of the \$138,000 budget of the Rocky Mountain Baptist operating budget.

The operating budget for the paper was pared by cutting the publication schedule from weekly to bi-monthly. Charles Sharp, executive director of the CBGC, will assume editing duties of the newsjournal. Reducing the number of issues is expected to save the convention \$20,000 in 1985 and \$50,000 in 1986. Subscription rates (\$5 per year) will remain the same.

Salaries will be continued through Oct. 31, 1985 for: Don Turner, Rocky Mountain Baptist editor; Rudy Antle, director of Denver Metro campus ministries and Mission Service Corps coordinator; Robert Storrs, campus minister at Colorado State University; John Mark Purdue, campus minister at University of Northern Colorado; Robert Timmons, campus minister at the University of Colorado, and Dwaine Gregory, campus minister at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

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The CBGC portion of Gregory's salary reportedly will be picked up by the Home Mission Board but unless Baptist associations around the campuses or individual churches pick up the funding for the other four, Baptist student work on those universities will be curtailed.

Brannon insisted crisis, "has nothing to do with the difficulties and liabilities" of the financially strapped Southern Baptist Foundation of Colorado and the Colorado Southern Baptist Church Loan Corporation but did point out the CBGC faces a deficit of "\$1.3 to \$1.5 million" in those two organization which must be made up within the next five years.

The \$600,000 loan from the Home Mission Board and the proposed sale of the state convention office building are keys to retiring the corporation's deficit. Messengers at the last state convention instructed the building be sold for \$2.3 million.

A glutted real estate market in the Denver area has dropped prices however and Brannon said any sale would probably be "less than \$2.3 million...probably tops at \$2 million."

Board members stressed the cuts were made reluctantly and stated in resolution the actions were "an effort to cut budget costs and not...a reflection of the work" of either the campus ministers or the editor. The positions will not be funded in 1986 either.

Brannon said the six men affected, "are quality people. It would be easier if they were resigning to take other ministries."

Ray Scroggins, layman from Ouray, pointed out the board was dealing with realities. "I don't like the idea of eliminated staff--especially campus work," he said. "But as a business man I know sometimes you have to. When you can't pay your bills you do what is necessary so you can pay them. We should have dealt with this a long time ago. We should have done something last year when we adopted a budget we knew we couldn't meet."

The motion to defund the campus and editor positions passed without opposition.

The motion to cut the level of national Cooperative Program contribution from 28.5 percent to 10 percent retroactive to June 1, 1985 for the rest of the year passed after an amendment to begin the cut Aug. 1 failed.

Pastor Bobby Buster of Security questioned if making the cut retroactive might not be interpreted as a misuse of designated funds already received from Colorado churches. Don Cortes, layman from Walsenburg, contended, "Church members will be more upset with the fact we had to use designated funds for something else" than over the reduced percentage.

Based on a monthly average income of \$100,000 the temporary cut would provide \$18,500 a month in cash flow. The projected budget for 1986 includes a 29 percent contribution rate.

Certificates of deposit, including \$85,000 earmarked to build a motel at Ponderosa Baptist Assembly, will be used to restore "immediately" the designated funds spent for operating expenses. For the rest of the year all designated monies will be placed in a special account, "not...available for any reason other than the designated purpose."

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(This story was adapted from the Rocky Mountain Baptist issue of July 25, 1985.)

SBC 'Peace Committee'
Chairman Optimistic

By Julian H. Pentecost and Thomas E. Miller

Baptist Press
8/1/85

ROANOKE, Va. (BP)--"I would have not accepted the assignment if I believed it were an exercise in futility," said Charles Fuller. "I believe God wants to preserve and use Southern Baptists. I think we ought to give him every chance to accomplish that."

Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va., was elected at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas to chair a 22-member committee assigned to "determine the sources of the controversies in our denomination, and make findings and recommendations regarding those controversies."

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The committee will hold its first meeting in Nashville, Tenn., Aug. 5-6.

"People want peace," said Fuller. "I am not oblivious to difficulties in bringing these people together, but I hear Baptists saying, 'Before God, let's find a place where we can come together.' I believe there is basis for optimism."

"In simplest terms," he said, "I believe the source of controversy is the diversity that always has been and always will be, and the question of how much diversity we can have and at the same time have a bona fide fellowship. How much diversity can we have and still have conviction and community, a sense of togetherness?"

Fuller declared his intention to closet the committee for some of its meetings and to put some distance between the committee and the denomination's professional executive leadership.

"We won't meet in Nashville every time. Some geographic diversity is desirable, and we need to separate ourselves from some possible influences. We are a committee of the convention. The committee needs to reflect its independence."

The first session will be closed to all outsiders, he said, adding, "I just feel that in deference to the committee I must give them the chance to get to know one another and to speak to the question of press representation." Fuller said, "It is possible the committee may say, 'We think we ought to have someone (representing Baptist Press) in here.' But I cannot take it upon myself to assume that initiative."

"It would be a mistake for all sessions to be executive," said Fuller. "The convention authorized the committee and (the constituency) needs to be aware something is going on. Southern Baptists have a right to know what is going on in the committee. But there will be times we need to be away from Nashville where we can be cloistered, when we need several days to thrash things out."

Fuller said he will ask the committee to let him respond to Baptist Press questions and issue a report after the August meeting. He also is required, by convention action, to report to the Executive Committee in September, February and June, and to the convention when it meets in Atlanta.

A recent letter by Fuller to 210 convention executives and leaders requesting restraint in public comments brought numbers of responses, some cautious and limiting.

"I interpret the convention's call for restraint and refraining from divisive action and comments as an attempt to lower the profile of controversy. It is not an attempt to muzzle or throttle expression of conviction. In fact, to do so would be the very antithesis of what we are as Baptists," said Fuller.

"But some are only too willing to start a fight. The presidents (of the state conventions) drafted that request against the backdrop of what was going on immediately prior to the convention in Dallas," he noted.

"Most of the replies I have had (to the recent letter) have affirmed the principle of restraint with the reservation to speak out when it is considered essential. Only the individual can make the decision. The request does not ask one to say, 'I'll never open my mouth,' but to be reasonable."

Fuller said when the committee meets "each member will be asked to answer the question, 'Why did I accept this responsibility?' I want to know the depth of commitment to the task."

"My objective for the first meeting is for the committee members to hear one another and understand one another. I will not try to extract opinions. That won't be necessary. The people on this committee will be willing to speak. But when we realize we are a group we will work together."

Fuller said, "One thing I will do is ask persons on opposite sides to interpret what the other is saying. We will try to work through the posture of the committee becoming a group. We will attempt to discover within the committee what we are saying."

"We will work toward becoming an entity. We won't tackle most of the agenda at the first meeting," he said, adding that 18 of the 22 members are expected in Nashville.

Commenting on his own understanding of the committee assignment, Fuller said, "We are not an inquisition committee. We have a trustee process and structure (for operating institutions and agencies) and we ought to use it. If we create another process we do serious damage."

He said he first planned to "have a meeting on the heels of the convention, if not in Dallas, but that was before Wednesday afternoon and night. At that time I realized we needed some distance and perspective."

He was referring to bitter controversy which erupted in the convention Wednesday and Thursday in which some of the members of the Peace Committee were directly involved.

Commenting on his view of conditions in the denomination, Fuller said, "I have opted not to use the term division, but divisive. Division has a note of finality. This is not to gloss over the differences people have but to identify what we are dealing with. How much diversity can we have and still have a legitimate fellowship and have confidence and conviction about what we are doing?"

"This is my attempt to label what we are doing," he said: "To find a new center. I don't really know if it is a new center or a proper definition of center. Some say the moderate position is the center, but that is not the true center. And the fundamental center is not the true center. The true center is where we keep faith with what we have been historically."

Fuller said: "As to finding the sources of conflict in the convention, I have interpreted 'sources' not so much to pinpoint persons, but to identify what are the irritants, the causes of divisiveness, rather than labeling persons, or this department, or this school."

"We've got 22 people who pretty well cover the waterfront. They can tell us what are the questions and controversies we want to see dealt with," he added.

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(Pentecost is editor and Miller is associate editor of the Religious Herald, newsjournal of the Baptist General Association of Virginia. These stories are adapted from the Aug. 1, 1985 issue of the Religious Herald.)

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'I Am An Inerrantist,'
Charles Fuller Says

Baptist Press
8/1/85

ROANOKE, Va. (BP)—"I am an inerrantist," said Charles Fuller, adding, however "I have never been a part of the inerrantist movement."

He referred to a movement in the SBC which declared in 1980 the intention of using the appointive powers of the convention president to gain control of convention agencies and institutions through election of more conservative trustees.

"My (theological) position does not disqualify me from being chairman of the committee. I have a strong willingness to accept people for what they are, at face value. I have a deep commitment to the Southern Baptist Convention, to the extent that I would do whatever I could to preserve wholeness," Fuller said. "I am willing to stand in the gap between extremes if called upon. I want to do this."

Fuller has led his church to an inclusive doctrinal interpretation regarding baptism and the Lord's Supper. "We practice open communion in our church. The Lord's table is open to the redeemed family," he said.

Regarding baptism, Fuller stated: "We believe in and practice believer's baptism by immersion. Baptism is an ordinance of the church and not the believer. Our response to someone coming from another denomination is in keeping with that denomination's teaching on baptism. If the denomination teaches believer's baptism and the person has been immersed, we do not require that he be baptized again."

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Fuller, 53, has been pastor of the Roanoke church since October 1961. It is his second pastorate, following four years of ministry with Pine Street Baptist Church, Richmond.

When the Andalusia, Ala., native was eight years old his father died. A year later, when his mother entered Woman's Missionary Union's "House Beautiful" in Louisiana to prepare for a long career in church-related work, he moved to West Palm Beach, Fla., where he was reared by two aunts, an uncle and a grandmother.

In his childhood church, Northwood Baptist of West Palm Beach, he met Pat Huff, who in 1952 became his wife. Two other children, who would years later become Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Rogers, were school and church mates. Rogers is pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

At the age of 14, his guardians answered an advertisement in Good Housekeeping magazine and the youngster was enrolled on a work-study scholarship at Fork Union Military Academy, an institution of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

He arrived alone at Richmond's Main Street Train Station, transferred to a bus and traveled to Fork Union where he worked on the academy farm to pay his way through high school.

Although Fuller had, by the age of nine, been drawn to commitment to Christ, it was a 16-year-old cadet at Fork Union who was instrumental in his personal profession of faith.

"I was a senior and a cadet officer," recalls Fuller, "and had a private room. One night a young man in my company came to my room and bluntly asked, 'Are you a Christian?' I said, 'Well, I guess I'm not.' He said, 'Do you know how to become one?' and I said, 'Yes.' 'Well,' he said, 'I just want you to know I have been praying that you would accept Christ.' Then he saluted, did an about face and left. I tried to sleep, but couldn't. And there, in the privacy of my room, I accepted Christ as my savior."

While working as a lifeguard at Ridgecrest Conference Center, Fuller became receptive to God's call to the ministry and went forward on the invitation. Later at staff worship time he preached his first sermon. "Other than being scared, I recall a sense of fulfillment and comfort," he explains.

The preacher for that 1950 Home Mission Week at Ridgecrest was W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas.

Fuller's powers on the football field led to an athletic scholarship at the University of Richmond but an opportunity to become interim pastor of Richmond's Grove Avenue Baptist Church caused him to surrender his athletic scholarship at the beginning of his senior year.

At UR, Fuller met three young men and the four established close friendships that continue to present: V. Allen Gaines, James Newman and Charles Stanley, current president of the SBC.

The four went to Southwestern seminary together in 1954, where Fuller said they were "looked upon with suspicion."

"None of us could get a church. We were untrustworthy," said Fuller, acknowledging the prejudice toward Virginians at that time. "Gaines and Newman finally got churches, but Stanley and I never did while we were in seminary."

A Texas pastor, Neal Jones, now pastor of Columbia Church, Falls Church, accepted Fuller as a youth director. "I was the worst youth director in the world," remembers Fuller. "All I knew how to do was play touch football with them on Saturday afternoon."

After seminary Stanley went to preach and teach at Fruitland Bible Institute in North Carolina. Gaines returned to Virginia and a pastorate at Middleburg. Newman stayed in Texas until called to Mount Vernon Virginia church in Richmond (he later became pastor of churches in Portsmouth and Lynchburg). Gaines is now pastor of Parkview Church, Newport News.

Fuller was called to Pine Street Church, Richmond, where he stayed four and one-half years before going to Roanoke.

Pat Huff Fuller, an honor graduate of Stetson (Baptist) University at DeLand, Fla., married Fuller while he was a student at the University of Richmond.

The couple has three sons: Mark, age 29; David, 24 and Michael, 21. The two elder sons are married and Mark and Vickie presented to the Fullers a grandchild two years ago. Michael, a senior at the University of Richmond, plans a career in medicine. He has a perfect 4.0 grade point average.

Fuller has a long list of involvements in Baptist life. He has served as president of the Virginia Baptist Pastor's Conference and president of the Baptist General Association of Virginia. He has been a trustee of Fork Union Military Academy, Oak Hill Academy and the University of Richmond.

Fuller was a trustee of the SBC Radio and Television Commission for eight years and chairman for two years. In 1984 he was chairman of the SBC Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees, and in 1982 was chairman of the SBC Committee on Order of Business.

In 1985 he preached the annual convention sermon.

Honorary doctorates were conferred on Fuller in 1970 by the University of Richmond and in 1984 by Campbell University.

First Church, Roanoke, where Fuller has been pastor since 1961, made the decision to stay downtown and has been steadily purchasing neighboring property. Church membership has reached 4,236 and is taxing present facilities, requiring two Sunday morning worship services. Sunday school high attendance has been 2,122 in 1985.

The 1985 budget of First Church, Roanoke, is \$1,820,410, including \$303,725 for missions. Of that, \$182,000 (nine percent) will be channeled through the Cooperative Program. The church's 1984 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions was \$63,277 and the 1985 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions was \$16,222.

"I try to be a strong pastor, providing leadership, setting the tone and spirit, sharing with lay leadership my hopes and dreams, and hoping they will share theirs with me.

"I am the moderator in my church, and step out sparingly from that role when an issue rises that I really need to speak to. At times I position myself, but I try not to become so attached that I sense rejection if it doesn't go my way.

"I have allowed their lives to become intertwined with mine," he says of his people. "Roanoke is my home. We try to move together. The patience quotient has grown. I've learned to be willing to wait. I believe in the process, and if what I want is right, it will eventually happen."

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Carl Hart Announces Plans
To Retire From Chaplaincy

Baptist Press
8/1/85

ATLANTA (BP)--Carl Hart, director of the chaplaincy division for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board for the past nine years, announced plans to take early retirement from the board, effective Feb. 28, 1986.

Hart, 57, will have been with the Home Mission Board chaplaincy division for 16 years when he retires next year. His plans were announced during the July meeting of HMB directors by William G. Tanner, HMB president.

In his letter requesting early retirement, Hart said although he enjoys good health at present, he felt the need to wind down toward retirement by going to a personal chaplaincy ministry where there is less stress.

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A native of Collierville, Tenn., Hart was director of chaplaincy for the Tennessee Department of Corrections for three years before joining the Home Mission Board chaplaincy division as associate director in 1970.

Previously, he was chaplain at Brushy Mountain Prison, Petros, Tenn., and Shelby County Penal Farm, Memphis. Before entering prison chaplaincy, Hart was pastor of churches in Tyner and Chapel Hill, N.C., and Fisherville and Union City, Tenn.

He is a graduate of Bethel College, McKenzie, Tenn., and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., and attended Union University, Jackson, Tenn., which awarded him the doctor of divinity degree in 1981.

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Baptists In Kampala Safe,
But Missionary Home Looted

Baptist Press
8/1/85

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Baptists in Kampala escaped serious injury, but at least one Southern Baptist missionary home was looted in the July 27 military coup that ousted Ugandan President Milton Obote.

Missionary Jim Rice, in a phone report July 31 from Nairobi, Kenya, said Conservative Baptist missionary Dick Otto reported some Baptists in Kampala had been "roughed up" or had items stolen, but no one was seriously injured or killed.

Otto also said the home of missionaries George and Doris Berry of South Carolina had been stripped of most portable items and a mission car had been stolen from their yard.

But Rice's home, where goods for two furloughing families were stored, appeared untouched by looters. The Baptist bookstore and center containing Baptist offices and the Bible Way Correspondence School had some broken windows, but nothing appeared to be missing, said Otto.

Because gasoline is scarce and auto travel is still risky, Otto had been unable to check two other missionary homes outside town.

Rice said missionaries had also gotten word from Jinja and Mbale that missionary homes there were unharmed, but have not yet heard news of conditions in Soroti, Lira and Agwata. He said indications were that most damage occurred in Kampala, the capital, and in Lira, the deposed president's hometown.

Southern Baptist missionaries were in Mombasa, Kenya, for mission meeting when the coup occurred. Borders between Kenya and Uganda were still closed Aug. 1 and missionaries were waiting in Kenya for further word about the possibility of returning to Uganda.

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Home Mission Board Asks
For Study Of Ordination

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
8/1/85

ATLANTA (BP)--After debating the issue of women's ordination for more than an hour, directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board asked for appointment of a special committee to develop guidelines concerning ordination for use in the appointment of missionaries.

The special committee was requested by the board's personnel committee, which on the previous day voted eight to seven against recommending appointment of an ordained woman to do student work at Yale University.

The full board, however, reversed the personnel committee's decision, voting 37-34 to accept a minority committee request that Janet Faye Fuller be appointed to the post at Yale and four other campuses in the New Haven, Conn., area.

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Fuller, 29-year-old daughter of foreign missionaries Wayne and Frances Fuller of Lebanon, has been doing student work on the Yale campus for the past six years, first as a volunteer and for the past two years as a HMB US-2 missionary.

Her two years of US-2 service ended in August, and the Baptist Convention of New England had requested her employment be continued in a different category as student work missionary. It was not a new appointment, but rather a reclassification of missionary status, according to HMB officials.

She was one of 40 missionaries and missionary associates appointed for service in 15 states by the board during its summer meeting, but the only one whose appointment prompted extended debate by board members.

In other major actions, the directors approved allocations totalling \$33.5 million for use of the 1986 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions, and elected Larry Rose, currently director of the Center for Urban Studies in Nashville, as associate director of the board's metropolitan missions department.

Acting on several proposals from its church loans committee, the board also authorized a \$600,000 loan to help the financially-troubled Baptist General Convention of Colorado, took additional steps toward offering the sale of \$5 million in investment certificates starting in October, and adjusted interest rates on church loans to 13.75 percent with three points discounts on the first \$200,000 and one point discount on funds beyond \$200,000.

In remarks to the board, Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner pledged support for the 22-member "Peace Committee" appointed by the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas to "determine the sources of controversy" in the SBC and bring recommendations aimed at reconciliation.

Tanner urged board members in their deliberations to honor the request of the convention and its peace committee to "exercise restraint and refrain from divisive action and comments" while the committee does its work.

Tanner said, however, he did not interpret the committee's request as an attempt to "muzzle" elected board members in their deliberations, but urged the board to "avoid divisiveness in what we do and say."

Debate later in the meeting on women's ordination was calm and orderly, according to several observers.

The issue was raised by the board's personnel committee which asked the board's chairman appoint a special committee to develop guidelines concerning ordination for the committee to use in reviewing missionary candidates' files.

Although the motion first asked that the study committee deal with "women's ordination," board members voted 40 to 25 to delete the word "women's" and deal with ordination generally.

A substitute motion asking the board abide by its current policy was rejected by a vote of 37-31.

In the last 16 months, directors twice have reaffirmed the current policy which does not list ordination as a qualification for missionary appointment, maintaining ordination is a matter for the local church to determine.

In March of this year, HMB directors voted 39-32 to reaffirm this policy, rejecting a proposal similar to the one adopted in July asking for a committee to study the entire issue and recommend appropriate action next March.

In the July meeting, the directors voted 37 to 31 against reaffirming its current policy and 57 to 8 to appoint the study committee.

The minority report from the personnel committee asking that Fuller be appointed as a missionary was brought by T.L. McSwain, pastor of Hurstborne Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.

McSwain said he made the motion because of complaints in previous board meetings from members who felt decisions were made in smaller committees without giving all board members an opportunity for participation in the decisions.

McSwain described Fuller's qualifications for appointment as "absolutely impeccable." He added that ordination was the only possible reason for declining her appointment.

McSwain said Fuller feels a strong call to missions and to student work, but has no desire to be pastor of a church. She was ordained in 1981 by Trinity Baptist Church, New Haven, at the request of Yale, which requires ordination for all chaplains on campus.

McSwain opposed ordination of women for the pastorate, but supported Fuller's unique situation, because it would be wrong to deny her appointment and "blackball" her ministry.

Johnny Jackson, pastor of Forest Highlands Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark., opposed Fuller's appointment, saying the real issue is not her qualifications or Yale's requirements, but going against wishes of the vast majority of Southern Baptists who oppose use of Cooperative Program money to support an ordained woman.

Lawanna McIver of Dallas said she felt the personnel committee was out of order in rejecting Fuller's candidate file when board policy clearly stated that ordination is not a criteria for missionary appointment.

A flurry of motions were considered by the board, including a motion to table Fuller's appointment until after the study committee completed its work. The motion to table barely lost 35 to 34.

Another motion which would have continued Fuller's current US-2 status for another year, rather than reclassifying her as an appointed missionary, lost 40 to 24.

Board members expressed appreciation to chairman Travis Wigington, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Norman, Okla., for his fair and impartial presiding and pledged to pray for Wigington as he appoints members to the study committee.

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Dallas SBC Doubles
As College Classroom

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press
8/1/85

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)—Convention watchers would have given the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas last June grades ranging from A+ to F, depending on how pleased they were with the activities.

But three groups of convention watchers were more concerned with their own grades.

Ole Miss, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., each fielded classes to the convention which offered unique laboratories for their particular needs.

The Ole Miss group was an advanced reporting class, led by professor Tommy Miller. Their job was to write stories for several daily newspapers around Mississippi, working just as any regular reporter would do, scrambling for the facts, filing stories with local color and meeting deadlines.

The two seminary classes went to learn how the convention operates. Dan Aleshire, director of professional studies lead the Southern group; Glenn Miller, professor of history, led those from Southeastern. Both courses basically taught how Southern Baptists make decisions which keep its machinery running.

Beth Shaw of Kosciusko, was one of the Ole Miss students who attended the convention. Most of their expenses were paid by a grant from the Reader's Digest for field reporting experiences. "It was much more political than I expected," said Shaw, a member of First Baptist in Kosciusko.

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She noted the convention participants were also "a lot more sophisticated...and generally more articulate than I would have expected." The size of the convention also startled her. "There was four times the population of my hometown under one roof," she said.

Newell Turner, another student said he thought the convention was a great learning experience, walking to a press conference with a reporter for the LA Times, returning with one from the New York Times.

Turner, an Episcopalian, said he believes Southern Baptists want two things which don't work together. "They want to remain autonomous and the other is they want to have one unified voice." He noted, "They just don't work together. It is ridiculous to try to pass resolutions when churches can keep them or throw them away."

Aleshire's course at Southern includes attendance, attendance at pre-convention meetings, and class back in Louisville after the SBC. Aleshire said one student said the experience was like a "roller coaster" of experiences. "At times they were very positive and at times very negative toward the proceedings," said Aleshire, who has led the course at every SBC meeting since 1980, except 1981 meeting in Los Angeles.

The students pay for going to and staying at the convention, in addition to course costs.

"There was a commitment from many of them to be involved in the denomination's life," said Aleshire, "to express their ministry as Southern Baptists."

Most of Miller's group of about 60 traveled together on a bus--many hours from Wake Forest in a situation where "it's hard not to talk," said Miller. He said many students were surprised at how politicized the convention but that most were not changed by going. "There was some good bridge building though," he said.

Miller said the course included lectures by such convention notables as W.C. Fields, public relations director for the Executive Committee; Lee Porter, registration secretary and Russell Kammerling, editor of the independent paper the Southern Baptist Advocate. The students also had to read James Sullivan's Baptist Polity as I See It and write a 20-page paper on the convention.

Miller said he found there is a "considerable amount of plain ignorance" concerning Baptist history and polity. "Things Southern Baptists used to know are not being communicated to the younger generations," he lamented, pointing to the decline of church training as one of the culprits.

"Maybe we're forgetting that 90 percent of theological education takes place in the local church," he said, itemizing such as a basic knowledge of scriptures. In theological education, he said, "it's hard to teach an advanced course when they've never had the basic course."

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Georgian And Floridian Join
Seminary News Bureau Staff

Baptist Press
8/1/85

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Two staff members have been added to the news bureau staff at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Susan M. Shaw, a doctor of education student from Rome, Ga., has been named news director. Shaw is a graduate of Berry College and earned the master of religious education degree from Southern seminary. She is a former intern with the Western Recorder, newsjournal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. She succeeds Robert Allen, who recently became assistant editor of the Baptist True-Union, the Maryland Baptist state paper.

Susan M. Perz, a native of Seminole, Fla., currently enrolled in the master of divinity program at Southern seminary, has been named campus editor/feature writer. She is a graduate of the University of Florida and a former intern with the St. Petersburg Times. She was associate youth minister at First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Fla., and has worked as a counseling supervisor and family therapist.

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