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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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August 7, 1985

85-95

SBC Peace Committee  
To Focus On Theology

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The 22-member peace committee charged with resolving the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention will begin its work by addressing theological issues and differences, according to chairman Charles Fuller.

Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., told Baptist Press 17 of the 22 persons named to the committee attended an organizational meeting in Nashville Aug. 5-6, aimed at letting committee members get acquainted and setting the course for future work.

"When we began we reviewed the assignment given to us by the convention," he said, noting the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC in Dallas created the committee to "seek to determine the sources of the controversies in our convention and make findings and recommendations regarding these controversies."

"I asked each committee member to share individually the general goals they believe the committee can and should seek to establish, and what they believe this committee can and should seek to accomplish. I also asked each of them to tell why they had agreed to serve," Fuller said. "It was my attempt to try to jell the group into a unit and a fellowship."

Fuller said the committee decided to begin its work by dealing with theological issues and differences. "The committee concluded that political and structural problems invariably related to theological issues. Therefore, that is where the committee wants to begin."

"The agenda for the next meeting (scheduled in Nashville in early October) will begin focusing on an analysis and definition of the theological issues which must be discussed and confronted before we can pursue any other matter," he said.

Fuller added committee members are "not oblivious" to the political and structural dimensions of the controversy, but said they "relate to theological differences. If you say the problem is political, you then stop one step short (of the problem)."

The committee decided, the chairman said, to begin "where the problems lie and work toward a solution," rather than seeking a solution "and working back to the causes."

"The political and structural differences are important," he said. "We judged that the basic problems are theological and the other problems have sprung from that seed."

He said committee members "had difficulty" planning how they would approach such a broad area, and told of one member who likened the matter to "picking up an elephant; you don't know where to get ahold of it."

But Fuller commented: "We must get 'ahold' of it. Even though we may go about it in several of the wrong ways, we believe eventually we are going to come across the right way."

He said the committee was unanimous in its decision to begin by dealing with theology. "There may have been different degrees of unanimity, but when we finally came to the point where we said the problem is theological, there was not a more political about it," he said.

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He said each committee member has been asked to come to the October meeting "prepared to present their own interpretation of what these theological issues are."

The next meeting also will focus on allowing the five absent members an opportunity "to do some of what we have already done...to allow them to come up to speed," he said, adding the five "were not present because of unavoidable conflicts in schedule."

SBC President Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, was scheduled to attend, but had to cancel "at the last minute" because of a "family emergency," Fuller said.

Others not present were former SBC President Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.; Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Houston; Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., and Bill Crews, pastor of Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church, Riverside, Calif.

All, Fuller said, attempted to resolve schedule conflicts but were unable to do so.

"There is no doubt that the five who did not attend were missed and would have made a very definite contribution to the balance of the group. But even though they would have benefited and we would have benefited had they been here, I do not believe their absence in any way impeded us from what we did accomplish," he said.

The committee met in "executive session," but adopted a policy statement regarding relationship to the media. Fuller said the action which created the committee gave it the privilege to conduct business "in open sessions..." but specified it may hold public hearings or may meet in "executive session."

The policy says it "is the desire of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee to keep Southern Baptists as informed as possible regarding the committee's action and activity. The committee is also greatly aware of the sensitive and delicate matters with which it must deal."

The policy says "following each meeting...a statement will be issued to Baptist Press through the committee chairman," and adds the committee will announce, "at the conclusion of each meeting, its decision on whether the next meeting, or parts thereof, will be open or will require an executive session."

Fuller explained the "committee feels executive sessions might be more necessary in the early stages. We feel openness is something for which we are responsible but sense executive sessions allow us to be free with ourselves without concern anyone might be there who might cramp any individual's freedom."

In other action the committee:

—Elected Charles Pickering, president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and a Laurel attorney, vice-chairman. Pickering was one of the state convention presidents who presented the motion calling for creation of the committee.

—Named a three-member subcommittee—Pickering, Daniel Vestal, pastor of First Baptist Church, Midland, Texas, and John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La.—to study all correspondence and "determine when and where suggestions and recommendations should be placed on the agenda." Fuller also will serve with the subcommittee.

--Decided to adopt "Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee" as its official name.

Present, in addition to Fuller, Pickering, Sullivan and Vestal, were Harmon Born, Rex, Ga.; Doyle E. Carlton Jr., Wauchula, Fla.; Jodi Chapman, Wichita Falls, Texas; Robert Cuttino, Lancaster, S.C.; Christine Gregory, Danville, Va.;

William E. Hull, Shreveport, La; Herschel Hobbs, Oklahoma City; Albert McClellan, Nashville, Tenn.; William Poe, Charlotte, N.C.; Ray Roberts, Asheville, N.C.; Cecil Sherman, Fort Worth, Texas; Jerry Vines, Jacksonville, Fla., and Winfred Moore, Amarillo, Texas.

Mug-Wielding Mom  
Foins Mexican Robber

MEXICO CITY (BP)—Southern Baptist representative Jurhee Philpot foiled an armed robber who entered her home July 30. Her weapons of self-defense: hot coffee and a coffee mug.

Philpot, a Texas native, was at home with her daughter, Jodi, when she saw a young man come in the front door. Thinking he was a utility workman, she walked from the kitchen with a mug of coffee she'd just poured and asked the man to identify himself. He pointed a gun at her and announced his intent to rob her.

Before thinking of the danger, Philpot threw the hot coffee into the man's face. When he covered his face she began hitting him on the head with her sturdy coffee mug. The robber quickly retreated, colliding with the door frame as he left. Philpot chased him down one flight of stairs in the condominium building where she lives. Jodi, 22, gave chase for another half-flight before both women realized the danger of pursuit and returned to their residence.

They later discovered the robber also had entered the home of Southern Baptist representatives David and Lorna Daniell in the same building. The Daniells' housekeeper spotted the man twice but thought he was a friend of the family.

"Just that morning in my devotional I had thanked God for being Lord of our lives, and I told him I wanted him to be Lord in all areas of my life," Philpot said. "Then he showed me he was in control. He had me in the kitchen where I could see the man enter, he gave me the 'weapon' to defend myself, and I wasn't afraid at the time."

Philpot's husband, James, is chairman of the organization of Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico. The two were appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1967. She was born in Childress, Texas. He was born in Polk County, Ark. Both grew up in Fresno, Calif.

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Church Conflicts Present  
Danger, Opportunity

Baptist Press  
8/7/85

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)—Conflict, which is inevitable in some form in any church, can represent danger or opportunity, depending on how the situation is handled.

"Conflict is not necessarily bad," Dwayne Conner, consultant in the Baptist Sunday School Board's church administration department, told participants in a session on conflict management during Bible-Preaching-Administration week at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center. "Conflict indicates there is life in the group. People don't get into conflict when they don't care.

"Every church I have known about and every pastor I have talked with has experienced some kind of conflict," said Conner, noting the best way to deal with church conflict is to confront the problem rather than ignoring it, avoiding it or attempting to defuse it.

"Confrontation is caring enough about another person to get the conflict on the table and talk about it," said Conner. "Too often in churches we are unwilling to confront problems. As a result the problem multiplies.

"The goal of confrontation is reconciliation," he emphasized. "The goal of conflict management is to grow out of the experience into more mature Christians."

If not dealt with, the negative results of conflict can include stress, fear and alienation, said Conner. On the positive side, conflict can energize a group, cause it to develop a stronger sense of identity and clarify the concern causing the problem.

He said the three most common types of church conflicts are those caused by a person in internal turmoil who projects his problems on the group, conflicts between persons and conflicts over substantive issues.

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"Interpersonal conflicts often occur when people feel their turf is being threatened," said Conner. "We have a lot of turf shepherds in our churches, and we're going to have conflict if these areas are not respected."

Substantive issues that cause conflict often relate to goals, values and directions of the church. The role of the pastor and rapid changes taking place in the church or community also often cause conflict, he said.

Conner cited six common symptoms of conflict in a church. These include increased complaints and rumors, decline in attendance and giving and "people who used to be active quit attending and withdraw."

Also, he said conflict may be indicated when people begin refusing to accept leadership positions and the pastor and staff change their behavior in attempting to cope with problems.

Finally, conflict is escalating when "instead of discussing issues, people begin to take sides and start shooting at each other."

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Church Recreation Pioneer,  
Agnes Pylant Dies

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8/7/85

NASHVILLE—Agnes Pylant, the first secretary of the Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department, died Aug. 5 in Richmond, Va.

Pylant, 85, was a graduate of Texas Christian University, Fort Worth; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth; The Curry School of Expression, Milton, Mass., and the WMU Training School, Louisville, Ky.

She taught dramatics and recreation at Southwestern seminary and was head of the department of Christian recreation at Wayland College, Plainview, Texas, before joining the board in 1954 as secretary of the church recreation department.

Pylant was the author of numerous articles on recreation and led conferences throughout the country after her retirement in 1962.

Services were Aug. 9 at First Baptist Church, Richmond.

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Ordination Of Pastor  
First-Ever For Brunei

Baptist Press  
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SERIA, Brunei Darussalam (BP)—The first ordination to the gospel ministry among evangelicals in Brunei took place this summer at Bethel Church of Seria.

More than 200 people, full capacity for the church, attended the ordination service of Geoffrey Yong. The group included church members and representatives from evangelical groups in Brunei, Singapore and Sarawak, Malaysia.

The customary questioning of the ordination candidate, which took place the evening before the service, was open to the entire congregation so that everyone could listen and learn.

Yong became a Christian about 10 years ago in the Seria church and left a job with Brunei Shell Petroleum Co. to go into full-time Christian service. His home church sent him to Singapore for theological training and invited him back to be their pastor when he graduated in June 1983.

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He has been the pastor for two years at Bethel, which has English and Mandarin congregations. His wife, Debby, was included in the ceremonies so that her role as pastor's wife could be encouraged and strengthened.

Brunei is an Islamic nation about the size of Delaware that shares the island of Borneo in the South China Sea with parts of Malaysia and Indonesia. Southern Baptist missionaries Bobby and Dorothy Evans of Georgia have lived there since 1981.

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WMU, SBC Adds  
Elder To Staff

Baptist Press  
8/7/85

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Barbara Elder will assume the position of program specialist Aug. 1 at Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to Southern Baptist Convention, in Birmingham. Elder succeeds Evelyn Blount, who recently has moved to South Carolina WMU as executive director.

Elder will preview manuscripts of magazines and other products to ensure they fall within the guidelines of WMU's base design, a document outlining the responsibilities, tasks and operations of the organization.

Elder, a Virginia native and a 1965 graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, has been Baptist Women/Baptist Young Women director at Maryland/Deleware WMU for the past eight years. Earlier, she was Girls Auxiliary Sunbeam director for Louisiana WMU from 1965-68 and assistant dean of women at Cumberland College in Kentucky from 1969-77.

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Baptist College Presidents  
Share Concerns, Hopes

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press  
8/7/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The future of the Southern Baptist Convention depends on the strength and vitality of Southern Baptist colleges, Cordell Maddox is convinced.

Maddox, president of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., was one of two college presidents who addressed Southern Baptist college admissions personnel at a workshop sponsored by the Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. "Our Baptist people must recognize and understand that keeping our colleges strong is not an option, it is an absolute essential," Maddox charged.

He told the admissions counselors it is a mistake to think the vast majority of people are "enthusiastically supportive" of Baptist educational institutions when, "The real truth is many of our people do not understand the mission and the distinctives of Baptist colleges. The good news is that once people get the information they become enthusiastic supporters."

Bill Troutt, president of Belmont College, Nashville, Tenn., shared similar thoughts with the college staffers.

"The most pressing problems for Baptist schools do not lie in demographics, government involvement or money," he contended. Our most significant problem, Troutt said, relates to the clarity of our mission, our closeness to our constituency and our commitment to action.

According to Troutt, successful colleges are dominated by a commitment to a clear mission and purpose. These schools, he said, have a strong strategic vision, a guiding perception of who they are, why they exist and whom they serve.

"Just saying you are different won't get the job done," he warned.

Despite problems facing Baptist colleges and schools, Troutt expressed optimism for the future. "Innovation always comes during the challenging times. Strong people, great institutions always emerge. The schools that have a clear mission are close to their constituency and are ready to act are going to flourish like never before," he said.

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