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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Peace Subcommittees
 To Visit SBC Agencies

By Dan Martin

ATLANTA (BP)--Five subcommittees of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee will visit 11 of the 20 national SBC agencies during the next two months as part of the effort to reconcile the controversy in the 14.4-million member denomination.

The subcommittees, each composed of four members, were appointed during the Dec. 10-11 meeting of the committee in Atlanta. They are expected to make the visits in January and February and to report to the whole committee during meetings in January and February.

Committee Chairman Charles Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., said the purpose of the subcommittees is "neither a whitewash nor an inquisition. I think the committee is genuinely trying to avoid those extremes."

Fuller added the instructions to the subcommittees are that they "go in the spirit of love and candor and with the major purpose being to sensitize agencies to convention concerns and to solicit their active participation with us in the peace making process."

"The subcommittees will state at the outset that the purpose is not to accuse but to express concerns which committee members have and which have been conveyed to the committee by Southern Baptists in general. The purpose is to establish honest dialogue and communication.

"Agencies shall be given an opportunity to express their concerns and shall also be encouraged to express what they perceive to be the greatest needs to restoration of trust in SBC life," he added.

The subcommittees--three of which will visit two seminaries each, one to visit Nashville-based agencies and the last to visit the two mission boards--will meet with the chief administrative officer, the chairman of the trustees, and, in the case of the seminaries, the chief academic officer.

Informal guidelines given to the subcommittees indicate any "faculty member or agency employee whose name enters into the discussion," may appear before the subcommittee or present a written statement if he or she wishes.

Fuller said the 11 agencies to be visited have been specifically mentioned in at least one of the more than 200 letters received by the committee.

The committees and their assignments (chairman listed first):

Midwestern and Golden Gate seminaries--Harmon Born, Atlanta; William Hull, Shreveport, La.; Daniel Vestal, Midland, Texas, and Ed Young, Houston.

Southern and New Orleans seminaries--William Crews, Riverside, Calif.; Adrian Rogers, Memphis, Tenn.; Winfred Moore, Amarillo, Texas, and Cecil Sherman, Fort Worth, Texas.

Southeastern and Southwestern seminaries--Jim Henry, Orlando, Fla.; Robert E. Cuttino, Lancaster, S.C.; William Poe, Charlotte, N.C., and Jerry Vines, Jacksonville, Fla.

Sunday School Board, Christian Life Commission and Historical Commission--Ray Roberts, Asheville, N.C.; Doyle Carlton, Wauchula, Fla.; Christine Gregory, Dayville, Ore., and SBC President Charles F. Stanley, Atlanta.

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**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
 LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
 Historical Commission, SBC
 Nashville, Tennessee**

Foreign and Home mission boards--Albert McClellan, Nashville, Tenn.; Jodi Chapman, Wichita Falls, Texas; Herschel H. Hobbs, Oklahoma City, and John Sullivan, Shreveport, La.

Chairman Fuller and Vice-Chairman Charles Pickering of Laurel, Miss., will not join the visitation teams, but will be available to fill in, if necessary, Fuller said.

Fuller told Baptist Press he had contacted each of the agency executives prior to proposing the visitation subcommittees to the committee, and said each "was positive, favorable and supportive of the idea. Several of them had certain questions mainly in regard to procedure, but in no case did I encounter anyone who felt the idea was improper or wrong."

He added a representative of the seminary presidents had telephoned following a workshop conducted for the heads of the six seminaries. "He told me the presidents had reiterated their support, cooperation and willingness. He added the seminaries did not desire to sidestep anything, but to deal with everything the committee wants to ask."

Much of the time of the December meeting was taken up with discussion of the visitation approach, Fuller said, with some members "looking at a different process, such as inviting the agency executives to meet with the whole committee, or questioning whether the committee had progressed sufficiently to be ready for the action."

Fuller described the third meeting of the 22-member committee as being "one primarily concerned with implementation (of our SBC-assigned task). The first meeting was typified by organization and identification. The second moved from identification to confrontation and the third meeting moved from confrontation to some implementation."

The chairman said the meeting--which was attended by all members--had a "quality spirit. The diversity is there; the confrontation is there; the depth of feeling is there, but I really believe there is respect for each other. Even though there may be disagreement, there is not a deterioration of the confrontation."

He added he also is pleased with the progress the committee is making, although it may appear to be slow to some outside the structure. "There may be some who say we are not moving fast enough," he said. "But that is not being said by those who have the responsibility for carrying out this responsibility. I think we (the committee) see the value in becoming a group, and that does take time," he said.

Fuller added most members are optimistic about the assignment and the progress. "I think that would be a good word, but most members probably would add a qualifier such as hopefully optimistic, cautiously optimistic or growingly optimistic. We are more inclined to be hopeful rather than pessimistic or defeated."

In addition to establishing the visitation subcommittees, the committee also:

--Allowed a representative from Baptist Press, the SBC news service, to attend the meeting. BP also has been invited to attend the January meeting in Dallas.

--Heard a devotional by Fuller, in which the chairman emphasized that the "biblical approach to reconciliation is that the Christian takes the initiative when he feels the other party is the offender" and once again encouraged Peace Committee members to "set an example by keeping the inflammatory profile of the controversy low."

--Heard four members--Vines, Carlton, Born and Hull--discuss the items which bind the Southern Baptist Convention together. Mentioned were autonomy of the local church, an "absolute belief in one God," the centrality of the Scriptures in Baptist theology, a passion for freedom and voluntary cooperation.

--Established a schedule for meetings leading up to the 1986 annual meeting of the SBC, June 10-2, in Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta. The committee will meet Jan. 20-21 in Dallas; Feb. 24-25, in Atlanta; April 3-4 in Dallas and again May 13-14 in Atlanta. Fuller said committee members felt rotating meetings between Dallas and Atlanta, rather than going to Nashville, simplified travel arrangements.

Politics, Structure
Discussions Slated

ATLANTA (BP)—Political activities within the Southern Baptist Convention will be discussed when the SBC Peace Committee meets in Dallas Jan. 20-21.

The 22-member committee, elected during the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC, voted to move from theological matters to political activities and structural matters when they continue their work to seek the causes of the controversy in the 14.4-million member denomination and to make recommendations about how to solve them.

"We said after our initial meeting we would begin with a discussion of theological matters, because we believe that is the root from which the other problems spring," said Chairman Charles Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va. "We also said we would discuss other matters such as political, structural and parliamentary. We will now begin to do that."

He added one member said the group should discuss the fact the two men most frequently mentioned as candidates for the SBC presidency in 1986 are committee members: Adrian Rogers, former SBC president and pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and Winfred Moore, current SBC first vice-president and pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas.

Moore is widely speculated to be the possible candidate for the SBC moderates. He drew 45 percent of the vote in 1985, challenging current president and committee member Charles F. Stanley of Atlanta. Rogers, who was elected president in 1979 and declined a second term in 1980, recently was mentioned by a leading conservative as his choice for president.

"The committee member did not express a view on whether the men should serve, but only said he thinks the committee should discuss all aspects of the convention politics, even those involving current peace committee members," Fuller said.

Fuller said he referred to the political activities during a devotional time when he encouraged committee members to set examples in helping lower the profile of the on-going convention controversy. He added he did not directly mention recent "theological position meetings" attended by three committee members: Rogers, Moore and Jerry Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla.

Moore spoke at two meetings in North Carolina, Rogers at meetings in Tennessee and Alabama, and Vines spoke at a meeting in Florida, Fuller said.

Fuller said the committee members—from all theological spectrums—agreed the committee should discuss the political activities and their ramifications "no-holds barred and head-on."

Other matters scheduled for the January meeting include a discussion of the SBC presidency and presidential powers. It is the election of the president and the use of his appointive and presiding powers which have been at the focus of the seven-year political struggle.

Fuller said the committee also will discuss the role of the parliamentarian—another sore point in the controversy—and the possibility of negative designation of Cooperative Program funds. Generally, undesignated funds are counted as Cooperative Program giving, but some have suggested a way around the controversy is to allow churches to decline to support causes they differ strongly with.

The chairman said the Peace Committee was briefed on a lawsuit filed Dec. 5 in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia in Atlanta, by three moderates who claim rulings and presiding at the 1985 annual meeting "violated their rights."

Robert S. Crowder and his wife, Julia, of Birmingham, Ala., and Henry Cooper of Windsor, Mo., filed the suit against the SBC and the SBC Executive Committee, seeking to have the election of the 1986 Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees set aside because of what they claim are "violations of the bylaws" of the SBC.

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Prior to filing suit, Crowder told Baptist Press he decided to press his cause in the courtroom, citing the Peace Committee's decision to discuss theological matters first as one of his reasons.

Fuller said the committee intended all along to discuss political and structural matters, and had announced that intention. "We will begin in January. That, in his opinion, might not be quick enough for Mr. Crowder, but as far as we are concerned, we are keeping the faith with what we were charged to do and with what we said from the very beginning."

The committee will meet in Dallas Jan. 20-21 and April 3-4, and in Atlanta Feb. 24-25 and May 13-14.

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Elder Expresses Optimism
On State Of Convention

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
12/13/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—"I'm not getting ready for the fragmentation or the 'ensmallment' of the Southern Baptist Convention but for its enlargement," the president of the Baptist Sunday School Board told state convention leaders in annual planning meetings in Nashville.

Lloyd Elder said despite controversy in the SBC he continues to be guided by the Bold Mission Thrust drea of 50,000 churches and 24 million Southern Baptists by 2000 A.D.

"I'm going to be speaking on the bright side of God's grace and not on the dark side of the diversity of his children," said Elder.

"There is no state convention that can do its work apart from the others. And the Sunday School Board is desperately and happily dependent on you and interdependent with you," he added.

Earlier, Elder reported on 1985 SBC statistical projections, describing them as "not greatly encouraging, but they are challenging to us." He noted 1985 marked the end of the first six years of Bold Mission Thrust and that substantial gains have been made in enrollments of Sunday school, church training and church music, three programs assigned to the Sunday School Board.

For 1979-85, the ongoing Sunday school enrollment increased by 8.4 percent of 617,950 to a projected total of 7,935,910. The 1985 projected gain is 1.0 percent or 78,573.

Church training for six years registered a net gain of 8.7 percent (155,586) 1,951,205. In 1985, church training is projected to show a slight decrease of 1.1 percent or 21,702.

Church music enrollment from 1979-85 has grown by 14.4 percent or 211,645 to a projected total of 1,677,389. The 1985 projected gain is 0.6 percent or 10,004.

"We are not finished. There is work to be done. We are not satisfied because we care about the masses of people. And we are not alone because this board and the state conventions will work with the churches to respond to the needs of people," said Elder.

In his address on the board's theme in support of Bold Mission Thrust 1985-90, "Touching Lives--Growing Churches," Elder cited a number of issues affecting the 17 convention-assigned programs of the board.

Maintaining biblical foundations in every dimension of the board's work will continue to be a key priority, Elder pledged. "We want to reach out and touch people and bring them into the family of God," he said. "We do not apologize for asking God to give us an enlarged number of people to be reached for, disciplined in our churches and involved in our mission programs."

He said Baptists will be hearing more about a concept, Toward Excellence, being implemented at the board which impacts management, employee relationships and customer service.

"We want to be our very best for Southern Baptists," said Elder. "We know there are other ways to serve Southern Baptists better and we're going to find out about them."

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Citing a major market/ministry study under way, he said, "Our goal is to learn how we can do a better job of assessing wants and needs of Southern Baptists and of channeling our resources."

Elder appealed for help by state leaders in communicating to Baptists an understanding of the financial structure of the board.

"We must serve and produce in such a way that we earn our own way and contribute back to the work of the convention," said Elder. "It is tough to do that, especially if there is a perception by some that the Sunday School Board is large and doesn't need them."

Elder said the board faces competition from profit-making outside publishers and vendors with no denominational ties. "We no longer have a monopoly. Sometimes we start out as a large underdog," he said.

"We are not neutral. We are pro-denominational," he emphasized. "We want to serve you in a way that we are partners with churches and state conventions. Please help us."

Support of the SBC Peace Committee was also listed as a key issue. Elder urged prayer for the committee.

"The Sunday School Board has tried to do its work without taking a political position on the crisis in our denomination," said Elder. "We have tried to be a stabilizing influence."

Coordinated promotion planning, cooperative work with state conventions, the development of the Baptist Telecommunication Network and the positive influence of church literature produced by the board were also listed by Elder in support of Bold Mission Thrust.

In conclusion, he said it is a critical time for denominational leaders "to state our devotion to Jesus and testify of our long-term commitment to Holy Scripture and that we have come to our positions by the call of God."

"We love the Lord. We are led by his Spirit. We have a task to do that is God-given. Let us encourage one another and build one another up as we go across this convention rebuilding trust in this denomination in order to have the privilege of touching lives and growing churches," he concluded.

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Joe Westbury Named HMB
Assistant News Editor

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ATLANTA (BP)--Joe Westbury, editor of World Mission Journal published by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, has been named assistant news editor for the SBC Home Mission Board, effective Jan. 2, 1986.

Westbury, a native of Florida, has been on the editorial staff of the Brotherhood Commission for three years, first as associate editor and recently as editor of the monthly tabloid newsmagazine for Baptist Men.

Previously, he was public relations director for seven years at Union University, and religion news editor for three years at the Jackson Sun, both in Jackson, Tenn. He is a graduate of Union University.

Westbury succeeds Michael Tutterow, who resigned to enter seminary full time and work part-time as associate editor of SBC Today, an independent monthly published and edited by Walker Knight of Decatur, Ga.

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