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86-152

Board OKs Church Growth Center
For Europe, Adds 108th Field

By Bob Stanley

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board voted Oct. 15 to join European Baptists in establishing a new Institute of World Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

The institute, already approved by the European Baptist Federation Council and the International Baptist Seminary in Ruschlikon, will adjoin the seminary structures on the campus near Zurich. It will be part of the Baptist Center facilities serving all European Baptists.

Approval of the Ruschlikon project came during the October board meeting in which trustees also approved a \$165.2 million budget for 1987, appointed 37 new missionaries and reappointed one former missionary couple. In a special service the board honored 67 missionaries retiring with a combined service of 1,962 years. Through October the board has added 363 to its missionary force, which now stands at 3,740.

Madagascar became Southern Baptists' 108th mission field with the assignment of Fred and Sami Sorrells, formerly of Burundi, to this island off the east coast of Africa. The board also authorized opening work in Lesotho, in southern Africa, but won't officially add it to its list of fields until the transfer of Randy and Nancy Sprinkle from Botswana takes effect Jan. 1.

Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian Rogers, along with his wife, Joyce, and their son, David, attended the full meeting of the board, of which he is an ex-officio member. In the concluding address of the meeting, Rogers affirmed his commitment to foreign missions as the "bottom line" of everything Southern Baptists do.

Thirty board trustees and a number of their spouses came to Richmond a day early for a prayer retreat at the Cauthen Missionary Learning Center outside Richmond. Trustees and members of the executive staff took turns praying through the night. In its business session three days later, the board issued a special call to all Southern Baptists to join in making 1987 a year-long "concert of frequent and united prayer that the world's untold billions will know Jesus."

In other actions the board authorized sale of the Baptist Hospital in Ajloun, Jordan, which has experienced a declining patient load as government hospitals have increased in that country, and gave final approval to a bylaw change which eliminates annual election of the board's president, treasurer and assistant recording secretary since this is no longer required by Virginia corporate law.

It also approved the \$2,295,000 purchase of a nearby office building containing 26,250 square feet of space, as an investment and to provide room for future staff needs. The three-story brick building, which adjoins one of the board's home office parking areas, is fully leased but eventually will provide offices equivalent to about one-fourth the board's present space.

Guidelines for development of the new European church growth institute in Switzerland will be developed by representatives of the Ruschlikon seminary, the European Baptist Federation and the Foreign Mission Board early in 1987, according to Isam Ballenger, director of work in Europe and the Middle East.

"Our desire," he explained, "is to have something to offer in these practical areas of missions, evangelism and church growth as soon as possible."

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Ballenger said missions and evangelism have always been part of the Ruschlikon seminary's curriculum. But he said this would be an effort to "expand and heighten the importance of these areas and to introduce some new trends."

The institute also will provide an opportunity "to broaden the help we can give to East European Baptists," he said. Many East Europeans already participate in the seminary's Summer Institute of Theological Education (SITE), which provides a brief introduction to theological education for those unable to enroll as full-time students.

Seminary President J. Altus Newell said in a telephone interview the institute will undergird a movement among European Baptists toward more effective missions planning. French Baptists, for example, intend to plant a church in every French city with a population of 200,000 or more by the year 2000. They will need at least 30 new pastors to complete the task.

"There is such a mission need in Europe," Newell said, noting there are as many non-Christians in Europe, percentage-wise, as on any other continent. And an influx of Muslims is "the most significant religious phenomenon in Europe today."

Cost of building and operating the new institute has not been determined, but the Foreign Mission Board motion said the board would provide "appropriate financial and personnel support to this expansion of the Ruschlikon Center's ministry."

European Baptists have been assured it will be funded separately from the seminary, which faces an end-of-year deficit because of the recent serious decline in the value of the U.S. dollar against European currencies. As part of a support agreement worked out some years ago with European Baptists, the board this year is providing \$335,000 toward the seminary's budget, in addition to missionaries assigned there.

Gabriel Marinello, a Zurich businessman and member of the Ruschlikon seminary's executive board, told Foreign Mission Board trustees that Southern Baptists have made a vital contribution to unity of European Baptists through the Ruschlikon Center and seminary. By starting the seminary after World War II, he said, "you made it possible for Baptists with different traditions to meet and find reconciliation."

He said the new institute will help European Baptists spread the gospel and "save souls for the Lord."

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(BP) map mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Midwestern Trustees Find
Sparkman's Views Acceptable

By Bob Terry

Baptist Press
10/16/86

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)—Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees Oct. 13 voted 21-11 that professor G. Temp Sparkman is teaching within the context of the seminary articles of faith.

The trustees acknowledged Sparkman's writings are controversial, but concluded that, based on written responses to specific stated concerns, Sparkman's theological views "are nevertheless within the context of the seminary's articles of faith."

Following the crucial vote about Sparkman's teachings, the trustees without opposition to request Sparkman to prepare a summary statement of his basic beliefs and affirmations, "especially at points where his published writings are perceived by some to be in conflict with the seminary statement of faith."

Sparkman also was requested to include explanatory materials about his theological positions in any future editions of his most recent book, "Salvation and Nurture."

Following the vote, the religious education professor released a written statement in which he said, "The trustees have faced extreme pressures with uncommon courage and kept faith with what has been entrusted to them. They have taken the good path, the one less traveled by, which few boards have ever done in crises of such proportion."

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He added, "The trustees who were on the down side of the vote but who voted their convictions should know that their concerns have not and will not go unheeded."

Sparkman has been under fire for more than nine years about his writings. Critics charge that in his books, "Being a Disciple," and "Salvation and Nurture," Sparkman espouses universalism, the idea all people are rightly related to God without faith in Jesus Christ. He also is charged with being outside mainline Baptist teachings related to baptism, the Lord's Supper and the age at which an individual is capable of making a profession of faith.

In presenting the matter to trustees, Midwestern President Milton Ferguson reminded the trustees this was the third time the Sparkman controversy had come before them. In 1978, following the publication of a book which attacked Sparkman's teachings, trustees were given a written response to the charges against Sparkman, as well as the professor's statement of faith.

In 1983, after the controversy flamed again, trustees voted to affirm Ferguson in his handling of the Sparkman controversy. Initially, the action was interpreted as trustee support for Sparkman but in the fall of that year, the trustees acted to explain they had only supported Ferguson and his handling of the issue. They had not expressed support for Sparkman. Since that time Sparkman has come under increasing pressure.

"It is apparent that the books are susceptible to significant misunderstanding and misinterpretation," Ferguson told the board members. "Some Southern Baptists have genuine concern about the writings being outside the 'Baptist Faith and Message.'"

He said another reason the controversy persists is because of "organized, intentional efforts to attack Sparkman's writing as evidence of liberalism in Southern Baptist seminaries."

"We didn't manufacture this controversy," he said. "We did not intend to be here but this is where we are today."

Truett Gannon, pastor of Smokerise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, Ga., and chairman of the trustees' instructional committee, explained his committee had met four times since the April board meeting to find a way out of the controversy. Two of the meetings were with Sparkman.

During those meetings, the instructional committee concluded the best solution would be voluntary relocation by Sparkman, it was reported. However, Ferguson told the board that although Sparkman did have local church opportunities, the professor feels called to a teaching ministry and had not been offered other teaching opportunities.

Because the instructional committee benefited from conversations with Sparkman, Gannon said he asked the professor to speak to the board. However, trustees were not allowed to ask Sparkman specific questions about his writings, based on the advice of the seminary's legal counsel.

"Does God save us regardless of whether we want to be saved?" Sparkman asked the board members. "No. We must make an affirmative response for salvation to be complete."

Sparkman told the trustees that for him, sin is a reality and sin separates from God. "Ever since Adam's transgression it has been impossible for creation to move as God intended. There has been a break, and the break is the result of sin and the name of the break is estrangement from God," he said. "I am a conversionist, not a universalist," Sparkman said.

The professor defended his use of the term "children of God" to apply to all men and women. He explained that all people are children of God by creation. "But created sons and daughters of God grow up and become accountable for their sin. There comes a time that if they do not embrace God, they start to turn away from the God," he added.

Sparkman also defended his position adolescence is the best time for individual conversion by pointing to quotes from W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, in which Criswell expressed concern about baptizing young children and preschoolers.

Following Sparkman's presentation, trustees discussed the recommendation for more than three hours. Seventeen trustees spoke on the issue—more—

"I'm proud of the process we used," Ferguson later told the board members. "We are part of the reconciliation process within the Southern Baptist Convention. Reconciliation is more than just smiling and saying, 'I love you.' Reconciliation is openly and honestly facing differences and working through them as Christian brothers."

Gannon told the board members that before reaching its recommendations, the instructional committee had considered every charge raised against Sparkman.

Kerry Powell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Forrest City, Ark., and a member of the instructional committee agreed. "We have faced every issue. That is right. Even though I voted against the recommendation, I agree that the trustees have faced the issues and voted to affirm Sparkman," he said.

The trustee action is not likely to bring an end to the controversy, according to trustee Sid Peterson, pastor of Stine Road Baptist Church of Bakersfield, Calif. Peterson already has asked to bring a minority report when Midwestern Seminary reports to the Southern Baptist Convention in June.

Peterson said he believes most Southern Baptists differ with the action taken by the trustees. "There are nine innings in a ballgame and this isn't the last inning," he said.

"I don't believe what Sparkman said to us is consistent with what he wrote in his books," Peterson said. "You really have to twist his writing to make his statements agree with his writing."

Powell said he thinks the controversy might die down if Sparkman doesn't write anything else. "I've always thought when the church voted on something, that settled the issue. As trustees, we are the responsible body. We have examined the issues and voted. My side didn't win but for me that settles it."

Voting to affirm Sparkman as teaching within the bounds of the seminary's articles of faith: Robert Baggott Jr. of Dothan, Ala.; Lester Branham of Lake City, S.C.; Clyde Cantley of Overland, Mo.; Si Davis of Tucson, Ariz.; Gannon; Melvin Hill of Lee's Summit, Mo.; Joseph Johnson of Knoxville, Tenn.; Graydon Kitchens of Minden, La.; Philip Lykes of Lakeland, Fla.; Lloyd Minter of Tulsa, Okla.; Robert Mullinax of Raleigh, N.C.; Timothy Norman of Richmond, Va.; Robert Perry of Kansas City, Mo.; Russell Reid of Smithburg, Md.; Marvin Rousch of Takoma Park, Md.; J.W. Simmons of Windsor, Mo.; Doyle Smith of Great Bend, Kans.; Lowell Socolofsky of Bellevue, Neb.; Paul Terranova of Lenexa, Kans.; A.C. Woodburn of Las Cruces, N.M.; and Gerald Young of Saint Joseph, Mo.

Voting against the recommendation: Richard Adams of Festus, Mo.; Jack Amis of Hopkinsville, Ky.; Jerry Davenport of Sheffield, Texas; Eugene Dempsey of Everett, Wash.; James Graves of Kansas City, Mo.; James Jones of Trenton, Mich.; James McCullen of Ballwin, Mo.; Peterson; Powell; Bill Roby of Columbus, Ohio; and David Simpson of Indianapolis.

Absent were Carolyn Snider of Pagosa Springs, Colo., and Jeanette Harlow of Oak Park, Ill.

Board Chairman Kermit McGregor of Clinton, Miss., did not vote during the roll call but later he said that if he had been given the opportunity, he would have supported the recommendation.

The trustees also unanimously voted to express appreciation and support for Midwestern faculty members for the manner in which the faculty members conducted themselves during this time of controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Southeastern Seminary Trustees
Elect Chairman, Dedicate Center

By R.G. Puckett

Baptist Press
10/16/86

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)—Trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary elected a new chairman, made changes in the process for employing new faculty members and dedicated a new student center during their October board meeting.

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Jesse P. Chapman, a deacon at First Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C., was elected chairman of the 30-member board, winning 14 to 13 over James R. DeLoach, a staff member of Second Baptist Church in Houston. One member was absent and Chapman and the current chairman of the board, O. Charles Horton of Orlando, Fla., did not vote.

DeLoach was elected vice chairman 15 to 11 over W. Jerry Holcomb of Virginia Beach, Va.

Chapman, a surgeon, said he wants to be known as a peacemaker in the present crisis in the Southern Baptist Convention. "Just describe me as an independent Baptist layman who doesn't know any theology," he told the news media. "I'm not a moderate-conservative or a fundamental-conservative. I just want to do what I can for my church and my denomination," he stressed.

DeLoach, identified with fundamental-conservatives in Southern Baptist life, described himself as not only "a representative of the 30 trustees but also of all Southern Baptists."

He expressed a displeasure at any trustees being cast as "adversarial" toward the seminary and its administration. "If someone is after a faculty member, tell us," he said to Seminary President Randall Lolley. Lolley responded that he would bring such matters to the trustees.

Several other trustees expressed their concern in the same session for the atmosphere which seemed to exist. Among them was Thomas M. Metts Jr., who "sensed politics in the board meetings. My vocational work involves politics," said the staff member of Charles Colson's ministry to prisoners. "I sometimes vote here as a conservative, sometimes as a moderate. Sometimes I am confused."

He lamented the fact that he sensed a struggle for power, "the power to control," he added.

During the two day meeting, trustees adopted a recommendation which calls for changes in the procedure used for employing faculty members. The changes were proposed by Robert D. Crowley of Rockville, Md., and recommended by the executive committee and the instructional committee.

Currently, the trustee instructional committee comes into the selection process only when a potential candidate is selected for a vacant faculty post. Under the revision, the committee will become more fully involved much earlier in the process, receiving information on the top five or six candidates the the post.

Seminary officials say that while the instructional committee still will not vote until there is a single nominee, they will have an opportunity to comment on potential faculty members early in the process. The process will continue to start with the president, the dean and the faculty. Under it, the dean will receive recommendations, and they will be winnowed by the faculty. The instructional committee will receive the information on the top five or six candidates for a vacant teaching job.

"The change means that while they are currently involved in step five of a six-step process, they will now become involved at step three," a spokesman explained.

The seminary will have at least four faculty vacancies to fill by the beginning of the 1987 school year.

The change also modifies the use of mail ballots for the election of faculty members. As reported out of committee, the action would have prohibited mail ballots, but an amendment adopted during the plenary session allows for the use of such ballots in the case of "exigent circumstances" and upon the recommendation of both the president and the instructional committee.

During the meeting, the new Ledford Student Center, which includes the Cannon Gymnasium, was dedicated. The new facilities are named in honor of the Hubert F. Ledfords of Raleigh, and Charles A. Cannon of Concord, N.C.

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The project included the expansion and renovation of what was known as the Gore Gymnasium when the facility was part of Wake Forest College (now university) before Wake Forest relocated to Winston-Salem in 1956. It was financed by gifts from several sources, including the Charles A. Cannon Charitable Trusts and the Ledfords, who created a trust fund with the North Carolina Baptist Foundation for the perpetual care of the facility which includes lounges, snack bar, recreation and exercise areas and a book store.

In other actions, the trustees established several trust funds for aid to students, laid plans for renovation and improvement of Binkley Chapel and the development of a Mackie Hall Faculty Center, and granted the city of Wake Forest right-of-way for some street adjustments.

The trustees applauded Southeastern's President Randall Lolley for his "openness and willingness to implement change."

John Cosier, a first-year master of divinity student from Jackson, Miss. brought a statement, signed by 333 students which expressed confidence, love and appreciation for the seminary, and concern for the suffering, distress and anxiety experienced by the faculty and their families in the present SBC crisis.

The statement was addressed to the trustees and all Southern Baptists. It affirmed faith in the abiding devotion to the Bible, soul-competency, the Articles of Faith of the seminary and called for love, oneness and unity without uniformity. Cosier said he felt the statement reflected the prevailing spirit of the student body and many more signatures could have been obtained if there had been more time.

Before the meeting was adjourned Dade Sherman, a new member of the trustee board and pastor in Monroe, N.C., asked to address the trustees about faculty members who he said tried to block his nomination to the board by bringing up rumors about his past.

Sherman, a recent graduate of Southeastern who was elected to the Southeastern board of trustees during the 1986 annual meeting of the SBC, said his detractors made an attempt to stop his nomination by publicly disapproving of his carrying a gun to seminary classes and by questioning former employers about his work record.

"I was a police officer, and I was responsible for that weapon (a \$500 Smith and Wesson)," Sherman said, explaining he was working for the Rolesville (N.C.) Police Department while a seminary student. "When I was informed it (carrying the weapon) bothered people, I stopped."

Sherman said Thomas Graves, a seminary professor, had asked the Rolesville Police Department about his work record.

Graves, currently on sabbatical in Zimbabwe, was not available for comment.



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