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Moderates Respond
To Peace Committee

By Marv Knox

M-CO

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Moderate-conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention have called upon the SBC Peace Committee to consider their concerns about the strife-torn denomination.

"We are putting our proposals and concerns on the table. There is nothing covert or indirect about them," said James Slatton, pastor of River Road Baptist Church in Richmond, Va.

Saying he was "speaking for moderates," Slatton added: "We feel the Peace Committee has addressed itself to the concerns of the fundamentalists. Moderates until now pretty much have been dealt out of the picture."

He contacted Baptist Press immediately following the latest meeting of the Peace Committee, which has been charged with determining causes of the SBC controversy and offering solutions.

During that meeting, the Peace Committee voted 19-0 to accept a statement of reconciliation and solution offered by presidents of the six SBC seminaries. Most notably, the presidents' "Glorieta Statement" affirms their belief that the "66 books of the Bible are not errant in any area of reality," and it pledges to enforce professors' compliance to the schools' confessional statements.

"The seminary presidents have responded to the concerns of the fundamentalists as conveyed to them by the Peace Committee and have responded as to what they would do," Slatton said. "This now will be the most revealing moment in our long and tragic controversy, for the ball is now in the court of the fundamentalists. Now we will see whether they intend to continue making a division among us or whether they will now act to respond to the concerns of moderates, who represent at least half or more of the house.

"We will see whether the intention of the other side is control through this action of the Peace Committee, or whether it is concern for the well-being of the whole body."

Joining Slatton in presenting the proposal were Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, and moderate-conservative candidate for SBC president the past two years; and Norman Cavender, layman from Claxton, Ga., who joined Slatton in presenting moderate-conservative concerns to the Peace Committee's subcommittee on denominational politics this summer.

"Now that the presidents of the seminaries have made a united effort toward peace and reconciliation, there must be movement on all sides toward peace to match that which the presidents have done," said Moore, a member of the Peace Committee. "There has to be movement; it cannot be left where it is. We must move toward a common center point."

"The seminary presidents have bent over backwards in an attempt to find authentic peace, a way in which we can have inclusion of all our people and all our sincerely held views," Cavender added. "Now we're going to find out if the other side wants peace."

Slatton said moderate-conservatives call upon SBC President Adrian Rogers and fundamental-conservatives in the convention "to show us now in the following positive ways that they intend to use this moment of opportunity for peace instead of division:"

-- "First, we call upon the Peace Committee to replace Cecil Sherman (a moderate who resigned at the latest committee meeting) with a clearly, openly and completely identified moderate leader.

— "We call for the SBC Forum and Pastors' Conference to be united into one conference, the program to be planned and carried out by an equal number of moderate committee members and fundamental-conservative committee members, with the publicly avowed intention that no one who is a spokesman for either side to be on the program and that the issues which have been in dispute between us not be addressed."

The Forum and Pastors' Conference, both of which meet immediately prior to the SBC annual meeting each summer, have been seen by some observers as politicized meetings of the convention's two polar factions.

— "We call upon President Rogers, as an act of good faith no matter what actions he may already have taken, to appoint as the SBC Committee on Committees the sitting presidents of the eligible state conventions and the sitting presidents of the Woman's Missionary Unions of the eligible state conventions."

SBC bylaws require the Committee on Committees to be composed of a layperson and pastor from each eligible state convention. Since the WMU presidents would comprise the laypeople on the committee and some state convention presidents are laymen, Slatton suggested the pastors who most recently served as presidents of those conventions represent them on the committee.

On this topic, Cavender noted: "When Adrian Rogers was elected president, he said his presidency would be characterized by fairness, love and joy. We're going to find out if he meant what he said and if his appointments as president will be balanced with moderate representation in fairness, or whether he will do as recent presidents have done and continue stacking appointments with fundamentalists."

— "We call upon the fundamental-conservatives to stand down on political organizing and that each side refrain from sending an emissary around the country to organize politically and to promote a partisan agenda for the annual meeting.

— "We call upon the Southern Baptist Advocate to cease publishing attacks on Southern Baptist institutins and their employees." The Advocate is a newsjournal supported by the fundamental-conservatives within the convention.

— "We call for a joint committee of moderate-conservatives and fundamental-conservatives, selected by their respective sides and consisting of equal numbers from both sides, to meet to choose a candidate for convention president in San Antonio, Texas, in 1988 or sooner if Dr. Rogers chooses not to run again next year, with both sides being pledged to support the mutual candidate.

— "We call upon the Peace Committee to convene a true and actual peace conference between equal numbers of moderate-conservative and fundamental-conservative leaders to refine the details of this proposal. We propose that the presidents of the seminaries and the Peace Committee join in a joint release affirming this further step toward peace.

— "We call on the fundamentalist leadership to respond to this now, not at some distant future time."

Describing the challenge as a proposal to get the Peace Committee next to consider moderate-conservative concerns, Slatton said: "The proposal goes even beyond the steps taken by the seminary presidents. It goes to the heart of the issues at stake before us."

Speaking of his hope for peace and willingness to be a reconciler, Moore, said, "If concrete movement is made in that direction (toward peace, as initiated by the seminary presidents), I would request permission to nominate for the presidency Dr. Rogers or somebody else, if there is movement toward peace."

"The burden now is on the Peace Committee," Cavender added. "They have in hand half the solution for peace. The other half will have to come through the Peace Committee as they deal with the fundamentalists' stacking of boards and attempted fundamentalist domination of everybody."

Copies of the challenge are being sent to members of the Peace Committee, members of the SBC Executive Committee, the six seminary presidents and fundamental-conservative leaders Paul Pressler of Houston and Paige Patterson of Dallas, Slatton said.

Moderate-conservative leaders are attempting "to make this as clearly as possible a formal moderate-side proposal" for denominational peace and reconciliation, Slatton said. "We intend to be back as a group in 10 to 14 days to make a public response concerning whether we have been heard. We are going to stick with this."

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Brotherhood Commission OKs
Korea Seminary Agreement

N-B'hood

Baptist Press
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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission trustees approved a covenant relationship between the commission and the Korea Baptist National Brotherhood Convention during their meeting in Memphis, Tenn., Oct. 25.

They also agreed to underwrite a laity-centered educational program at the Korea Baptist Seminary for three years at a cost of \$20,000 per year.

The agreement came in response to an invitation for assistance from Korea Baptist Seminary President Kin Huh and Sam James, area director for East Asia at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

"Because of our mutual desire to involve all Baptist men and boys in missions through their local church and because of our concern for all lost people throughout the world," the agreement reads, "we covenant to pray for one another and to help in every way mutually agreed upon for spreading of the work of Baptist Brotherhood throughout the world."

The trustees also elected new officers for 1986-87, reviewed a variety of Brotherhood program projections and agreed to have their 1988 spring meeting in Richmond, Va., in conjunction with Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union's Centennial Celebration in that city, where WMU was first organized.

Les Albro, president of an automobile dealership in Jeffersonville, Ind., was elected chairman. Billy Summerlin, director of Baptist Health Services Foundation in Gadsden, Ala., was elected vice chairman, and Tom Browning, a Social Security administrator from Prairie Village, Kan., is secretary. Commission President James H. Smith was re-elected treasurer.

Acting on matters referred to the Brotherhood Commission from the 1986 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, the trustees approved acceptance of youth as space permits in the Brotherhood-sponsored day camp at the SBC meeting each year and agreed the agency will pay expenses of employees attending the SBC annual meeting to do work of the commission.

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(BP) photo of new officers mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Brotherhood Commission

Women In Ministry
'Grieved' By HMB

N-CO

By Marv Knox

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ST. LOUIS (BP)—Leaders among Southern Baptist Convention women ministers have expressed alarm concerning a decision by the SBC Home Mission Board not to fund the ministries of women pastors.

The board voted Oct. 8 not to give future financial support to any woman who is pastor of a local church.

The steering committee of Southern Baptist Women in Ministry has followed with a statement of response "concerning personnel policies regarding ordained women."

"We are deeply grieved to learn of the decision of the board of directors of the Home Mission Board to reject future requests for church pastoral aid from local Baptist congregations with women serving as pastors," the statement said.

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It called the Home Mission Board action "an obvious affront to Christian women and men who understand pastoral leadership as a gift given by the Holy Spirit not according to gender." It added the action "is an even greater affront to the autonomy of the local church and to the Good News of the gospel, which declares that there is neither male nor female in Christ."

"We further express concern about the impact of this decision upon our denomination's evangelistic efforts because of what it communicates about division among Christians and because it eliminates women pastors as a potential personnel resource for certain bold mission endeavors," the statement continued.

The women ministers charged the board's action "hinders the goal of peace and unity" called for by the SBC Peace Committee, the group charged with offering solutions to theological/political strife within the 14.5-million-member denomination.

"While some may hope to discourage women from pastoral leadership by this (the board's) action, women will continue to answer God's call," the statement asserted. "And God will continue to choose whomever God wills—regardless of the vote of a board of fallible human beings."

The Women in Ministry's action was historic, said Susan Lockwood Wright, pastor of Cornell Baptist Church in Chicago and co-chair of the steering committee's resolutions committee.

"This group has never done this before; we have never issued an official statement," Wright said, explaining the committee developed "a pure consensus that this is what we should do."

"We don't have an official voice in the convention. Right now, there is no way to speak through an official channel, and there is no one to speak for us," she explained. "We have no voice. We are not represented in any group in the convention. We're not fundamentalists, and we're really not part of the moderate group. We're not on any boards, and we're the last people who would be put on them."

Nevertheless, committee members "feel like we need to raise a prophetic voice," she said. "Because of how we interpret the inclusiveness of the gospel, we feel we should raise this voice."

Despite their action, committee members "don't expect a policy change" at the Home Mission Board, Wright said. She added, however, "We're not going to be heard if we don't speak."

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Senior Adults Ministry
Termed 'Coming Of Age'

By Terri Lackey

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10/29/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Older adults soon may be able to kick off their climbing boots, stake a flag and claim what's rightfully theirs. The trek to the top of the mountain is almost over.

It's been a long climb. For years, senior adults practically have been ignored by churches that have not realized they are a special type of people, a leader in the field insists.

But the number of senior adults has increased significantly, and with the increase has come a realization by Southern Baptist churches that senior adults deserve their own special type of ministry, says Horace Kerr, supervisor of the senior adult section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department.

"There are so many of us now," says Kerr, 62, "that more Southern Baptist churches are doing something about it. For so long, senior adults were ignored until we started increasing in numbers, and now churches are showing a greater awareness of the potential of senior adults.

Kerr suggests senior adults—those who are 60 and over—statistically have come into their own or "come of age."

"Coming of Age: Senior Adults and the Churches" is the 1986-87 special emphasis of the family ministry department and will be the featured theme of a Southern Baptist Senior Adult Convention to be held April 27-29, 1987, Kerr reports.

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Today, 27.5 million Americans, or 12 percent of the population, are age 65 or older, Kerr says. Sixteen percent, or 37.5 million Americans, are age 60 and older.

"More persons are living to an older age. The fastest-growing segment of our population is the 85-plus age group," he says. "And more people are living to the old-old age of 100. We are rapidly approaching the time when 50 percent of the population will be more than 52 years of age. The median is now age 30 plus.

Kerr says the fact senior adults traditionally have not been a targeted group for ministry by churches is not the fault of the churches but of the Southern Baptist denomination as a whole.

"The Southern Baptist Convention itself did not take any significant action concerning aging until 1973," he notes. On June 14 of that year in Portland, Ore., the convention adopted a resolution urging churches to "creatively seek and meet the needs of senior adults in our churches and communities" and requesting the convention's Executive Committee do a feasibility study on the need for a major survey of present and future ministry with senior adults and "to take appropriate action."

The family ministry section of the board was then established in 1975. Kerr says both the family ministry department and the churches are "learning as we go along," about the ministry needs of senior adults. Recently the ministry emphasis is focusing more on the psychological and spiritual needs of seniors, rather than just the physical or activities needs of older persons.

"Programs for senior adults seem to be changing in nature," Kerr says. "Most churches began with an activities program for seniors, but they are now beginning to add programs that offer learning and service activities."

Seminars and workshops which focus on physical fitness, money management, self-esteem, continued learning and spiritual growth are all now being offered to senior adults by churches. Other seminars the family ministry department suggests churches conduct include achieving wholeness in later life and enriching marriages in senior years.

"There is a real need for many senior adults to achieve a feeling of self-worth after they have been separated from their work, careers and children," Kerr maintains. "They need to get to the point to where they want to work outside the home. If they are not involved, they won't get the feeling of self-worth."

Kerr suggests churches enlist the aid of senior adults by asking them to help around the church, serve on committees and participate as leaders in Sunday school classes.

"There is always a service opportunity for friendly visits to homebound seniors, helping them with minor repairs around the house or with shopping chores," he says. "What we are really after is quality of life for senior adults."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by BSSB bureau of Baptist Press