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March 12, 1987

N-HMB

87-36

**Home Mission Board Declines
To Rescind Women's Policy**

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (BP)—In a 44-24 roll-call vote, directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board defeated a motion to repeal a policy directors adopted in October that prohibits future financial support of ordained women serving as local church pastors.

There was no debate or discussion on the motion, offered by outgoing first vice chairman Marvin Prude, a retired refining company president from Birmingham, Ala.

In other actions, the directors elected new officers, tabled a new policy which would have prohibited appointment of missionaries who "speak in tongues," heard a report from a committee to search for a new president, authorized a \$10 million church bond issue and voiced concern about the effect of fund-raising efforts by Southern Baptist Convention agencies on missions giving.

The motion asking for the board to rescind its policy on ordination of women came during miscellaneous business.

Prude asked the directors to "repeal the action taken at the October 1986, meeting and return to its former policy of funding all Home Mission Board positions based on qualifications of the applicant without regard to gender or ordination." Prude added the motion "is directed toward Church Pastoral Aid support for ordained women."

It was the first roll-call vote, in which board members' votes were part of the record, in recent history of the board. No vote count was taken and recorded in the minutes in October on the new policy.

The new policy reaffirms a long-standing policy that ordination is not required for appointment as a missionary by the board. The policy permits ordained women to serve as missionaries, chaplains, church staff members or in any role other than pastor of a church.

In another action during their March meeting, Home Mission Board directors tabled a proposed new policy which would have prohibited the appointment of any missionary who "speaks in tongues" either in private or public prayer.

The policy was proposed by a personnel subcommittee appointed in August of 1986 to study the board's guidelines on appointment of people who are divorced, or who participate in "glossalalia" or "speaking in tongues." The study committee did not present any recommendations regarding appointment of divorced people.

Objections to the new policy prohibiting glossalalia were voiced by Orris Bullock, pastor of Fort Foote Baptist Church in Fort Washington, Md. Bullock said he felt the policy was too broad, and might "step on someone's private rights."

The recommendation would have prohibited appointment of "any person who is actively participating in, promoting or condoning the modern charismatic movement, including its 'private prayer language.'" It also said "continued participation in the modern charismatic movement" by missions personnel already serving could "result in termination."

After discussion, directors adopted a motion expressing reservations about fund-raising efforts among churches and individuals by other SBC agencies. The board warned of damage such fund raising does to the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget and to authorized mission offerings.

Rudy Hernandez, an evangelist from San Antonio, Texas, and co-host on several televised programs on the ACTS TV network sponsored by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, opposed the motion. Hernandez said he felt it would be interpreted by some as being critical of fund-raising efforts by the Radio and Television Commission, which have been authorized and approved by the SBC Executive Committee.

Several other board members, most of them pastors of local churches, supported the motion, saying it voices concern about other fund-raising efforts by seminaries, colleges, children's homes and others who are trying to compete for special gifts.

Directors authorized a request to be submitted to the Securities and Exchange Commission that would enable the board to issue \$10 million in church bonds for sale starting sometime in May of 1987. Proceeds from the sale of the bonds would be used to finance loans for new church buildings and sites.

Last year, the board issued and sold \$7.35 million in two church bond issues and received requests for purchase of another \$2 million in bonds, said Bob Kilgore, director of the board's church loans division.

Board members unanimously re-elected Clark G. Hutchinson, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., as chairman. Other officers elected by the board were William J. Viel, pastor of First Baptist Church of Essex, Md., first vice chairman; Lawson Schroeder, Atlanta dentist, second vice chairman; Barbara Fain of Dunwoody, Ga., secretary; and Paulina Brown of Shelbina, Mo., assistant secretary.

Acting on a study committee report, board members voted to keep the board's interfaith witness department within the missions ministry division where it is structured organizationally but to review the department's materials and activities to make sure a clear emphasis is given "to winning persons to faith in Jesus Christ." The board also authorized creation of a new staff position in the evangelism section to develop materials and provide leadership in personal evangelism among persons of other faiths.

Board members also heard a progress report from the search committee assigned to nominate a new president of the board to succeed William G. Tanner who resigned last June, but no action was taken.

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

Search For HMB President
'On Schedule,' Committee Says

10-HMB

Baptist Press
3/12/87

ATLANTA (BP)—The chairman of a committee to nominate a new president for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board reported the committee's search is "right on schedule," but the committee has "not yet reached a consensus" on a presidential candidate.

Troy L. Morrison, chairman of the eight-member committee and director of church-minister relations for the Alabama Baptist Convention, reported to directors of the Home Mission Board during their March meeting that the committee has considered 64 candidates for the position. The committee is looking for a successor to William G. Tanner of Oklahoma City who resigned last June.

Although Morrison did not say when the committee would be ready with a nomination, he added "we will not pressure ourselves, or be pressured, into moving too hastily. Neither shall we take more time than necessary. We feel we are right on schedule."

"In spite of anything you might have heard, our committee is not deadlocked," said Morrison. Although the committee has not yet reached a consensus, "we believe we can and will." He insisted "there is a sense of togetherness on our committee."

Morrison added that no one has dominated the committee. "We have not been intimidated or pressured in any way. We have been permitted to pursue our work in total freedom and confidentiality."

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The search committee has met nine times in the last five months, and has read, studied and considered more than 100 letters recommending 64 persons for the position. Each person nominated was asked to submit a resume. Some have declined to be considered, he said.

Although Morrison would not say how many candidates the committee has interviewed, he added the committee plans to continue the interview process "until we find the person whom we believe God would have us to recommend to this board. We would not dare to recommend any person until we have a clear direction from God."

Morrison expressed appreciation to all who have prayed for the committee and asked for continued prayer and patience as the committee continues its work. He also expressed appreciation for the staff and for the interim leadership of Bob Banks, executive vice president and interim chief executive officer.

In his report to the board, Banks said he believes the interim period could not have gone any better than it has. "When I announced months ago that we would not go into a holding pattern, but would move forward, little did I realize that God would lead us to move forward so positively," Banks said.

Banks said he rejects the kind of pessimism that says moving forward during these days of controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention is not possible. Banks said such pessimism leads to cynicism and lack of vision. "For those of us engaged in the mission enterprise, this must not be."

"There is no place in the Christian life for cynicism," said Banks. "Cynicism is the direct contradiction of the spirit of Christ."

Banks also expressed concern that a few Baptist churches might lessen their giving to home missions through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering "because of their disagreement over the action of the board regarding the appointment for women to pastoral positions."

Banks said he had confidence most Southern Baptists will not allow their disagreements to affect the work of 3,637 home missionaries, or lessen their vision of an increased missions program.

In announcing the resignation of Frank Crumpler as director of specialized evangelism to become pastor of Brainerd Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tenn., Banks denied a perception that the staff of the Home Mission Board "is bailing out." He said there has been only one resignation from the board's staff related to the theological controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention, and that all other resignations in the last few months have been the normal process of staff members being called to other positions.

In his annual report, Banks reported the board currently supports 3,637 home missionaries serving in all 50 states of the nation plus Canada, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands. These missionaries last year started 1,872 new missions and 652 new churches.

In addition, there are 1,831 Southern Baptist chaplains who have been endorsed by the Home Mission Board, and 51,895 volunteers who served last year in short term projects sponsored by the Home Mission Board.

Banks said these missions personnel, chaplains and volunteers last year reported 71,734 professions of faith as a result of their ministry. In addition, there were 145,000 professions of faith as a result of the "Good News America: God Loves You" simultaneous revivals promoted nation-wide last year by the Home Mission Board.

Banks challenged board members to move forward in missions and evangelism with a spirit of enthusiasm and excitement. "My hope and prayer is you will feel that you are involved in something vital, essential, great ... something which is of the first priority of our Lord."

Southwestern Trustees Elect 4;
Commend Dilday For Statement

By Mark Wingfield

N-20
(SWBTS)

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary elected four faculty members, adopted a record \$18.79 million budget and approved a two-track master of divinity degree program at their spring meeting March 9-11.

The board also unanimously commended seminary President Russell Dilday for his role in the "Glorieta Statement" issued by the six Southern Baptist Convention seminary presidents Oct. 20, 1986.

Trustee James T. Draper Jr. introduced the resolution expressing "appreciation to the president for his leadership in the Glorieta Statement." Draper said Dilday had been instrumental in presenting the statement and has "not equivocated from it."

In the Glorieta Statement, the six presidents pledged to help bring an end to the current controversy in the SBC.

New faculty include James C. Dennison, instructor in philosophy of religion; Raymond E. Higgins II, instructor in Christian ethics; James T. Spivey Jr., instructor in church history; and Dennis K. Parrish, instructor in communications.

Dennison, 28, is pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Mansfield, Texas. He earned the bachelor of arts degree from Houston Baptist University, the master of divinity degree from Southwestern and is currently finishing his doctor of philosophy degree at Southwestern.

Higgins, 31, is pastor of Purlmela Baptist Church, Purlmela, Texas. He was previously a special project coordinator for the SBC Christian Life Commission and Home Mission Board.

He earned the bachelor of arts degree from the University of Arkansas and the master of divinity degree from Southwestern. Baylor University will award him the doctor of philosophy degree in August.

Spivey, 36, is associate pastor of Morningview Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala. He spent six years in the U.S. Army and was later an Army Reserves chaplain.

He holds the bachelor of arts degree from Auburn University, the master of divinity degree from Southwestern, and the doctor of philosophy degree from Oxford University.

Parrish, 30, is producer/director of on-air promotion for the ACTS network of the SBC Radio and Television Commission. He has been an adjunct teacher at Southwestern since 1985.

He earned the bachelor of arts degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and the master of arts in religious education and master of arts in communication degrees from Southwestern.

Changes in the master of divinity degree plan create three new courses, increase requirements in three others and establish an optional non-language track.

New courses are "Biblical Hermeneutics," a two-hour course for first-year students; "Use of Biblical Language Tools," a two-hour course for the non-language track; and "Pastoral Care of Grieving Persons," a two-hour course.

Requirements in both church history and systematic theology will increase from four hours to six. Also, a two-hour foundations of education class will be required.

MDiv students will complete 92 hours of requirements for a degree, an increase of four hours. Students in the new track will replace language classes with 10 hours in designated electives and the two-hour course on using biblical language tools.

Dilday told trustees the non-language option "is not an easy track. The other courses they will substitute are very demanding.

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And in the standard MDiv program, "we still have the heaviest requirements in biblical languages of any seminary within our convention," he said.

John Newport, vice president for academic affairs and provost, said the new track was necessary because the school of theology trains "a very diverse group of people, not all of whom are going into pastoral ministry."

The 1987-88 budget of \$18.79 million is 2.5 percent larger than the current year's budget of \$18.33 million. It includes a 1.5 percent salary increase for faculty and staff.

Gifts through the SBC Cooperative Program will provide 42 percent of the total budget. Other sources are student fees, 19 percent; gifts and endowment, 21 percent; and other operating sources, 18 percent.

In the action the board:

-- Named one of the new preaching chapels in Scarborough Hall in honor of Herman and Patsy Smith of Hurst, Texas;

-- Named the B.H. Carroll Parlor in the president's office suite, the result of a gift from Cora Maud Oneal of Fort Worth;

-- Approved a new lectureship in gerontology given by Frank and Joy Kellogg of St. Louis;

-- Honored three long-time trustees whose final terms expire this summer: Ralph Pulley of Dallas; Robert Potts of Columbus, Ga.; and W.J. Smith Jr. of Charlotte, N.C.; and

-- Approved new master of arts in religious education concentrations in adult education and gerontology.

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Veteran Northwest Pastor
Convicted Of Killing Wife

By James L. Watters

N-CO
(Northwest)

Baptist Press
3/12/87

PORT ANGELES, Wash. (BP)—A veteran Northwest Baptist pastor, Grady Young, was convicted March 4 of first degree murder in the death of his wife of 38 years.

An eight-woman, four-man jury in Port Angeles' Superior Court No. 2 deliberated 12 hours before finding that Young, a native of Texas, shot Elva Mae Young, 55, to death at their Port Angeles mobile home Aug. 9, 1986.

The judge has ordered a presentencing report and has set sentencing for April 1. Young remained in Clallam County jail pending sentencing. Under Washington law, the minimum sentence on a murder conviction is 20 years in prison.

Young, who has been a pastor in the Northwest Baptist Convention since 1954, has been pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church of Port Angeles since 1983. Previously, he was pastor of churches in Leavenworth, Everett and Lacy, Wash., and Madras, Ore.

The prosecutor asked the jury to "apply common sense" to the circumstantial evidence in the case. He cited physical evidence that indicated one of the three bullets which hit Mrs. Young was fired from Young's rifle and that the pastor's fingerprints were found on a plastic bag in which the rifle later was found hidden under the mobile home.

The defense cited the lack of conclusive evidence as well as the absence of clear motive.

Young was arrested about a week after his wife was shot to death. The police investigation first speculated she had been shot by an intruder, but "suddenly" arrested Young and charged him with killing his wife.

While he was awaiting trial, Young resigned the pastorate of the church, but lived in the home of Fred Jewell, a retired pastor. Jewell later became interim pastorate of the small congregation.

According to officials of the Northwest Baptist Convention, a decision has not been made as to whether Young will appeal the conviction. One official said he had been told the cost of further legal processes may be prohibitive.

Though Young's attorney asked for restraint on media coverage during some pretrial procedures, the media was well represented throughout the trial, with satellite transmissions giving television viewers in Seattle on-the-spot impressions from those attending the proceedings in Port Angeles' packed Superior Court No. 2.

However, local media has expressed the opinion that the verdict, like the trial, leaves lingering feelings of uneasiness in the idyllic and out-of-the-way Olympic Peninsula community disturbed by the tragedy.

Bob Dove, pastor of the neighboring Southern Baptist church in Sequim, agrees. "I think the community at the moment is unsettled about the verdict. One of the big factors is the feeling that there is more yet to be made known, much yet to be learned."

Dove says that he agrees with the opinion that there were facts in the case never brought before the jurors. "I think there are factors being weighed by people who know Grady that may ultimately bring new support to his defense. There are mystifying occurrences that were never clearly explained, and there are issues being pursued that were possibly not even known at the time of the trial," he says.

Jewell, also a former pastor of the Hillcrest church, said the congregation has been at the center of the tragedy. The experience for his parishioners, he said, has been "very rough, but the people are holding together real well."

Young attended Sequim's First Baptist Church during the months leading up to the trial, and also temporarily taught a Bible study class at that church. Defending this action of his church, Pastor Dove said earlier that even if the verdict were guilty, he would not regret the invitation to teach that his congregation gave Young. "After all," Dove says, "we Christians are all sinners saved only by God's grace. The church gives us the opportunity to do something about our sinful condition."

Weldon Stevens, director of missions for the Olympic Baptist Association, says that the Port Angeles congregation has held up extremely well considering the trauma it has experienced. He cites the steady attendance at worship services and notes an increase in attendance for some church activities.

"While individual members have undoubtedly had their own opinions about the innocence or guilt of Grady Young, they have not let these feelings cause the church to fail in its work," Stevens says. "The congregation has had a very positive commitment to prayer for Grady Young and his family, as well as to the ministry of the church during this period."

Hillcrest church leaders have arranged for a Christian counselor to be invited at an appropriate date in the near future to assist the congregation and individual members in working through their own feelings caused by the events of the past few months.

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(Watters is editor of the Northwest Baptist Witness, newsjournal of the Northwest (Washington and Oregon) Baptist Convention.)

1960s Campus 'Stew' Gave
Baker 1st Taste Of Ethics

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
3/12/87

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Black power. Vietnam. New Morality. The Battle of the Sexes.

Graffiti and protest posters listed the menu of ethical stew served to students nationwide when Larry Baker led the Baptist Student Union at Texas Woman's University in the 1960s. But while the hippies and students who kept the fires hot have gone on to Yuppie quiche, that ethical stew has fed Baker for life.

Baker, the new executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, recalls his first taste of Christian ethics:

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"It was the early 1960s, and lots of ethical issues were boiling. The race issue was intense. It was an issue for the churches, an issue for individuals, an issue on the campus, an issue in BSU programming. That was also the time when issues related to the Vietnam war were really boiling. It was the time of the so-called 'New Morality' and the so-called 'Sexual Revolution.'

"In that setting -- on the university campus dealing with students -- ethical issues came often and intensively. It was out of that situation that I determined I ought to give my primary attention to them. So I made the decision to go back and do advanced study in ethics."

Baker, who joins the Christian Life Commission March 15, returned to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to complete a doctor of theology degree in Christian ethics.

His doctoral studies at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas -- under noted Southern Baptist ethicist T.B. Maston -- continued a spiritual journey that began in Caddo Heights Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., when Baker trusted in Christ as an elementary schoolboy. He committed his life to ministry in that congregation, and he entered the pastorate while still a student at East Texas Baptist University.

Pastorates affirmed his commitment to ethical issues, particularly race relations, Baker notes: "When I was in the pastorate, both in Hamilton, Texas, and Monroe, La., there were some very traumatic events, related in one instance to a group of young people and in the other to a congregation. These undergirded for me the importance of my commitment to the field of ethics and my involvement in it."

Later, "the doors of opportunity opened for me," he recalls. He has taught Christian ethics at Southwestern Seminary and at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., where he eventually became academic vice president and dean of the faculty.

Along the way, both while he trained seminary students and ministered in churches, he stayed involved in grassroots application of Christian moral concern. He served on Baptist associational Christian life committees, the board of Texas Alcohol and Narcotics Education Inc., the Southern Baptist Resolutions Committee, the Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, the Missouri Baptist Christian Life Commission, the Center for Urban Church Studies, the Urban Training Cooperative and a variety of civic improvement organizations.

Baker's inclination toward hands-on involvement in Christian ethical issues grows out of his experience. But it is buttressed by his Southern Baptist background, he says. His family had been Southern Baptist for at least three generations before he was born. A fifth generation of the family, his son-in-law, is preparing for ministry at Southwestern Seminary.

The new Christian Life Commission leader credits Southern Baptists for shaping him. He notes an SBC congregation was "the only church I knew" during the formative years when he learned what it meant to be a Baptist and committed himself to minister among Southern Baptists.

With that background, Baker notes he brings to the commission a commitment to help Baptists deal with social and moral issues that confront them every day of their lives: "A primary goal will be to help Southern Baptists take hold of the challenge for Christian ethical living and moral standards in our society -- to recapture a sense of excitement about implementing the gospel in our society. I think we have lost some of that. The complexity of the issues that we face often discourages us from being excited about the possibility of doing something."

The commission can help generate that excitement again by "finding ways to provide handles and approaches for individuals and churches," he explains. "Most of our churches, about 65 percent of them, have less than 300 members. The feeling that many of those pastors and churches and church members have is, 'We can't really do much because we're not very large.' So we must think in terms of helping them implement the moral visions where they are and provide them with resources, programs and encouragement. That is the challenge and the opportunity."

Baker lists six major social/moral issues confronting most Baptists:

— Family "continues to be the primary issue and area of need."

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-- Racism, or "human rights or concerns for persons without regard to race, is a basic issue. ... What we've seen recently in New York and in South Carolina and in Georgia are but dramatic evidences of a problem that is widespread."

-- Hunger is a problem "where we've done a good bit, a significant amount really, but there is still a great deal more to be done and a good deal more that can be done."

-- Responsible citizenship is an issue often misunderstood. "We still tend to think that voting either in the primary or general election is the primary way we express our citizenship. That's a significant way, but there are other ways that need to be implemented."

-- Personal morality, or individual ethics, "is an important dimension that we need to look at and deal with. ... There is a lot of pressure on Christians to adopt the lifestyle that is prevalent in our society and a lot of pressure that would say, 'It really doesn't matter whether you have a high personal moral standard or not.' One of the things we can do is address that issue and encourage people."

-- Abortion is "the issue that is the most immediate and in that sense the most pressing. In terms of sequencing the flow chart, the commission simply will have to take assertive action with reference to the abortion issue. The distance between the polarities on the abortion issue is so great that we never will be able to have universal agreement, but it is possible to develop an approach that will have broad agreement and represent adequately Southern Baptists and their concerns."

During the January commission meeting when he was elected by a 16-13 vote, Baker acknowledged he is assuming the helm of a divided agency. Commissioners are divided over whether the CLC should take more conservative positions on ethical issues, a situation that roughly parallels the theological-political controversy within the entire convention.

In the face of that challenge, Baker pledged to the commissioners to be a "team player."

"My judgment is that you may be more united than divided," he told them. "As executive director, I would attempt to lead this body. I have never claimed to have all the wisdom on all the issues. Disagreement on some issues does not preclude us from being sensitive and open."

Firing Threats Circulate
As Baker Takes CLC Helm

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
3/12/87

F-CD

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Larry Baker may have only a six-month tenure as head of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, according to commissioners on the short end of a 16-13 vote to hire him earlier this year.

That vote was taken during a special called meeting of the commission Jan. 15. That meeting was marked by criticism of the process by which Baker was nominated and his ethical views, particularly on abortion.

In fact, several commissioners have told reporters Baker might be unseated at the next full commission meeting in September. At least five seats on the commission 31-member will change hands in June, when messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting elect trustees for all SBC agencies.

Baker is to join the commission March 15. He has been academic vice president and dean of the faculty of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He was nominated for the CLC post by a seven-member search committee appointed by and including then-chairman Charles Wade, a pastor from Arlington, Texas. Commissioners who wish to see the CLC take a more conservative position charge the search committee was stacked to favor a more moderate candidate.

"It's a very unfortunate situation that has occurred," said Hal Lane, pastor from Eutawville, S.C. "I felt we had not been included in the search process. It seemed obvious they (supporters of a moderate candidate) had an agenda they wanted to continue, no matter what."

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"I assume that my colleagues on the board who supported Dr. Baker's coming are reasonably intelligent and therefore that their ruthless exercise in hardball politics was deliberately provocative," added James Paul Wood, pastor from Atlanta. "The trustees were promised several things by the search committee, including advanced information regarding any candidate's positions. We also were told there would be a good-faith effort to bring someone who would be acceptable to most of the board. These promises were not kept."

Wade defended the nomination process: "It was comprised of the executive committee, which was elected by the board. Then I added to that committee a layman from the East Coast, a laywoman from the West and a pastor from the Midwest. Not a person on the list is a liberal. Every one is biblical, conservative and had good experience of service on the commission."

"Nine new members have come on the commission since the search committee was appointed," he added. "Up until this year, when we would have votes on issues, we didn't have divisiveness. I wasn't trying to appoint from one group; we all felt we were one group."

Wade said he could understand the frustration of commissioners who said they felt left out of the selection process, but he said they "weren't even on the board" when the search committee was appointed. He also contended commissioners were sent notice of Baker's nomination in advance of the called meeting to elect him.

Beyond his nomination, commissioners opposed to Baker's election cite problems with his position on abortion. He has described four situations in which he believes abortion "may be allowed as an exception." They are threat to the life of the mother, rape, incest and "perhaps in the case where catastrophic deformity to the fetus is involved."

While commending Baker for ranking abortion as one of the "certain moral issues (that) have priority over others in terms of their urgency," Wood said Baker holds "essentially a pro-choice position, and therefore, I could not endorse him as head of the Christian Life Commission and will not be able to support his continuing."

Lane noted Baker must be the "point man" for presenting ethical issues for the commission. "His view always would be linked synonymously with the CLC position," the trustee added. "If he's going to be the point man on this, no matter what the (CLC) literature says," his position will be seen as the position of the commission.

Wade said Baker has taken "a strong stand against abortion." He described Baker as "someone out of the heart of Southern Baptist life. This is not an extremist, not someone who has taken radical positions on ethical issues that would offend significant areas of our convention. We found someone in the mainstream by training, church experience and service through the seminaries."

But Baker's position on abortion is built upon unacceptable "situation ethics," said Rudolph Yakym, a commissioner and layman from South Bend, Ind. Baker insists "'abortion is never justified, but excused,'" Yakym quoted, adding: "If you apply this to all areas of ethics, it's situation ethics, which he (Baker) denies, but his words belie his position. Any way you read that, it's situation ethics."

Given the circumstances, Baker's administration may be in danger when commissioners meet in September.

"From my own personal point of view, I still find Dr. Baker unacceptable," Lane said. "My own personal feeling is that he probably will be replaced at the September meeting."

Baker "has accepted what is clearly a setup for a position as a high-paid martyr," Wood added. "He knew that he was not acceptable to nearly half the board, and clearly this did not deter him. Having heard him express his views on a number of issues, I lack confidence in his leadership. That will be hard to change. I have no plans to move for his dismissal in September, but I anticipate being one of those who would support such a move."

However, not all of the trustees who voted against Baker's election will vote to ouster him, Wade predicted: "Some of those who voted against him will vote to sustain him if he gives strong leadership to the commission. There are fair-minded members of the commission who will give him a chance to give leadership. I don't believe they will fire him in September."

However, "given the current status of affairs, anything is possible," Yakym noted. "I know of no plans to terminate him. One thing that is really important for all Southern Baptists to be aware of is that conservative or moderate or liberal, left or right, we're all concerned about the will of God being performed by the Christian Life Commission and in our own lives. That's our paramount concern."

Speculation about Baker's tenure has moved beyond the CLC commissioners. Paul Pressler, the Houston appeals court judge who has been active in the movement to direct the Southern Baptist Convention toward a more conservative position, was quoted by the Atlanta Constitution as saying, "Baker will be fired in September."

Pressler told Baptist Press the Constitution article did not include all his statement, but he offered a clarification: "The process by which Baker was hired was extremely faulted. Conservatives were excluded from the selection process, not allowed to ask questions of Baker before the meeting of the board and given very little time during the meeting."

"Such actions by the liberal militant temporary majority do not promote harmony and are disruptive to cooperation within the convention. I would be very surprised if the trustees of the Christian Life Commission did not correct this injustice which has been done to Southern Baptists."

With controversy as a backdrop, Baker said he plans to spend the early months of his administration building relationships. A priority item will be visiting commissioners in their own homes and churches. Another will be setting a broad agenda representative of the entire convention.

"I am committed to being the commission's leader for all Southern Baptists," he stressed. "I believe our common faith in Christ can bind us together, and I believe the tie that binds us together rises above all of our differences and everything that would divide us. My commitment is to do my best to make it possible for all of us to work together in this strategic cause."

"People have asked me about the matter of division, and I have said to them, 'Well, I believe the Christ who brought Simon the zealot and Matthew the publican into the same disciple band can unite us in his service.' I'm committed to working toward that and for that."