

**- - BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 20, 1987

87-58

Midwestern Trustees
Elect Vice PresidentBy Don McGregor *Co-N*

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--M. Vernon Davis, associate professor of Christian theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has been elected by the seminary trustees as vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty.

He succeeds N. Larry Baker, who was elected executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and assumed the post March 15. Davis, who has been acting dean since March 15, assumed office immediately. He was nominated by seminary president Milton Ferguson and elected by a vote of 21 to 4.

J. Truett Gannon, pastor of Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Stone Mountain, Ga., was elected chairman of the board, succeeding Kermit D. McGregor of Clinton, Miss., public relations director for Mississippi Baptist Children's Village.

Trustees elected Graydon K. Kitchens, of Minden, La., a district judge, first vice chairman and Kerry Powell of Little Rock, Ark., second vice chairman. Powell is associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Little Rock.

Named as secretary-treasurer was Robert L. Perry of Kansas City. Perry is director of missions for Clay-Platte Association.

In other actions, the trustees approved the establishment of a fund for supporting religious liberty studies at the seminary and approved the announced intent of the seminary to establish a master's degree program in the field of church music.

The religious liberty studies fund will be known as the G. Hugh Wamble Fund for Religious Liberty Studies. A \$23,000 residue from another church-state separation fund was made available to the seminary and it will be used to initiate the Wamble fund. It was pointed out that no other Southern Baptist seminary has such studies. Wamble is professor of church history at Midwestern seminary.

Trustees heard plans for a regional conference on evangelism Oct. 14 to 16 on the campus. The purpose of the conference would be "to involve students, pastors, laypersons, and denominational workers in a major focus on the needs and resources for evangelism today."

The trustees also heard the details of a cooperative program between the seminary and the Foreign Mission Board that will allow seminary professors to visit mission fields on a short-term basis. Funding for the project was initiated by V. Lavell Seats, professor of missions at the seminary. The fund was named in honor of Seats.

Also, Jo Ann Butler of Kansas City was named visiting professor of music; Dwight A. Honeycutt, missionary to Colombia, was named visiting professor of missions during the 1987-88 academic year; and Robert Canoy, a teaching fellow at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., was named visiting professor in New Testament for 1987-88 and 1988-89. Butler will be employed for a contract period of Feb. 1, 1987 to July 31, 1989.

An increase in the matriculation fee from \$325 to \$350 per student per semester was adopted. Other fees were increased accordingly.

The budget adopted for 1987-88 projects an income of \$3,346,730 and expenses of \$3,245,163.

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Davis' election was preceded by a long discussion, mostly revolving around questions concerning the lack of time available to consider the election following receipt of material on Davis and his involvement earlier on the board of directors of SBC Today, an independent, moderate-oriented newspaper. He resigned his position on the board of the publication in 1986. Trustees received material on Davis the week before the meeting.

Jack Amis, trustee from Hopkinsville, Ky., said he felt trustees should have informational material on major board decisions a month in advance. Kansas City trustee Robert L. Perry countered that in this case the nominee was already on the faculty and was simply being considered for promotion on recommendation by the president.

Sid Peterson of Bakersfield, Calif., noted the vice president would be responsible for proposing other faculty additions, and Doyle Smith of Great Bend, Kan., asked Davis if he would be impartial in his nominations. Davis answered in the affirmative.

Jerry Davenport of Sheffield, Texas, said he wished there could be more time and proposed a substitute motion that would have continued Davis as acting vice president until the next meeting in October, when the vote would be taken. The substitute motion failed 17-5.

Davis joined the faculty in 1983. Previously, he was pastor of First Baptist Church of Alexandria, Va.

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200 Large Evangelistic Churches
Report 11 Percent Of SBC Baptisms

By Joe Westbury

HMB-N

Baptist Press
4/20/87

ATLANTA (BP)—Eleven percent of Southern Baptist baptisms in 1985 were posted by 200 large evangelistic churches which averaged 100 or more baptisms for the year, a study from the research division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board shows.

The 200 churches baptized 38,000 individuals during the 1984-85 church year, up 2,000 or 5.3 percent, while the denomination total declined from 372,000 to 351,000, a drop of 5.6 percent. Although they represent only one half of one percent of all SBC congregations, the churches reported enough baptisms to equal the addition of 100 average size SBC churches to the denomination.

The statistics were compiled from the 1985 Uniform Church Letter and reflect the most recent church-by-church breakdown on baptisms, said Orrin Morris, director of the HMB's research division.

While the churches "should be applauded for their outstanding outreach," Morris was quick to caution smaller congregations from setting unrealistic baptism goals to mimic the success of these churches.

"These are a metropolitan phenomenon and are not likely to occur unless they are located in the vicinity of a fast growing Sunbelt city," he warned. "There are a dozen cities that account for 86 of the 200 churches. The largest concentrations are found in the Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston areas with 17 each while Tulsa (Okla.) and Atlanta tied for second with eight each."

The aggressive evangelism of the large churches was reflected in significant gains in resident members, Morris said. The 200 churches increased 5.1 percent while all other churches averaged less than 1 percent increase. A total of 28,000 of the 82,000 SBC gain in resident members was reported by the 200 churches.

The large churches in the study averaged more than 4,000 total members with 3,000 resident members and 2,800 enrolled in Sunday school. The congregations were generally ten times larger and baptized 20 times more persons than the average SBC church.

Morris observed that the most successful of the churches were located in small and medium-sized cities within metropolitan areas that lie beyond the central city suburbs. The inner city churches with strong evangelistic outreach had to work "twice as hard as suburban counterparts to overcome the out-migration of the population."

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Although the 200 churches were located in metropolitan areas, Morris said the congregations grew because they possessed leadership with vision and the skills to make the vision a reality. But they deserve the sympathy and understanding of denominational leaders as well as their applause, he added.

"The unique growth of these congregations are difficult to maintain and, as a result, church staffs have much pressure on them to make each church year better than the one before."

However, the greatest danger the churches face is to assume that the successes can take the place of starting new churches, he added.

"Granted, these churches reach ten times the number of people the average SBC church reaches, but these churches must be equally concerned about those persons who are flowing out the backdoor. Many of their losses are persons who transfer to churches in suburban areas, but a surprisingly large number become inactive as evidenced by the net increase in nonresident rolls.

"There are probably another 100 or so SBC churches that should set their goals to model their ministries after these churches. They are situated in the correct metropolitan setting to achieve similar growth. To do otherwise would be a tragedy to the expansion of the kingdom."

"Few churches with less than 1,000 members should ever attempt to model activities after these unique 200. Few churches outside large metropolitan areas should harbor aspirations of duplicating these types of congregations," Morris said.

He added the greatest danger the other 36,000-plus SBC churches face is the expectations of emulating the successes of the large evangelistic churches.

"Faithfulness is the key to ministry," he stressed. "The Lord never asked his servants to be successful, he only asked them to be faithful in all that they do."

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Sidney Smith Named Manager
Of Black Church Development

Baptist Press
4/20/87

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Sidney Smith Jr. has been named manager of the Black church development section in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's special ministries department.

Smith, 43, has been a consultant for Black church development at the board since 1979.

The appointment is a step in the expansion of efforts to reach unchurched people in the Black community, said Bill Banks, director of the special ministries department, in announcing the appointment. He said two Black church development coordinators will be added to the section later this year.

The expanded role for Black church development will provide a linkage between Black Southern Baptist churches and the Sunday School Board programs of Sunday school, church training, church administration and church music, Smith said.

Banks said he selected Smith from a field of 15 candidates in a year-long selection process.

"Sid was the most frequently recommended person. Selecting Sid in the beginning would have been the easy answer. Now he has been selected as the best candidate after careful consideration of a field of candidates," Banks said.

Smith, native of Texas, is a graduate of the University of Corpus Christi and holds an M.R.E. degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., and a Ph.D. degree from the California Graduate School of Theology.

He is the author of "Reaching the Black Community Through the Sunday School," "Ten Super Sunday Schools in the Black Community," "Working with Black Southern Baptists" and "An Introduction to the SBC for the Black Southern Baptist."

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SBC's 'Golden Age' Ended
In 1979, Fields Claims

By Jim Newton

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ATLANTA (BP)--Describing the 30-year period beginning in 1949 as "the golden age of the Southern Baptist Convention," W. C. Fields told SBC communicators the era ended in 1979 when "tragedy" struck the denomination.

Fields, who retired March 31 after 28 years as vice president for public relations for the SBC Executive Committee, lamented the end of the denomination's "golden age" during the keynote address of the Baptist Public Relations Association's annual workshop, in Atlanta.

Fields described the period from 1949 to 1979 as a time when the denomination experienced rapid growth in all directions.

"Those were the boom years following World War II, the explosive growth of the '50s and '60s, coping with a rapidly changing world, and gearing up in the '70s for the most massive and most comprehensive plan in our history — Bold Mission Thrust, a strategic effort to culminate in the year 2000," said Fields.

"Then, tragedy," he noted. "Arising like an evil force right out of the abyss: dissention, discord, disagreement, disruptions, disputations and divisions" struck the denomination in 1979. "Never in our history has the devil won such a clear and sweeping victory," Fields said.

The denomination's Bold Mission Thrust plan to present the gospel to the entire world by 1990 is being "short-circuited by political intrigue," he charged. The denomination's organizations "are being kept in turmoil and disarray by an unrelenting, shameless takeover by a narrowly-partisan political group thinly disguised now and then by pious phraseology."

"May God in his wisdom have mercy on all who have a part in perpetrating this tragedy and on all whose misguided zeal causes it to continue," Fields said.

The former director of the Baptist Press news service said he has never liked the labels "fundamental-conservative" and "moderate-conservative" used by Baptist Press to describe the factions involved in the denominational controversy. "I really think this is a clash between the iconoclasts and the anti-disestablishmentarians."

He offered words of advice to Baptist communications professionals attending the workshop on working within the controversy in the SBC.

He urged workshop participants to "hang heavily on your own strong sense of God's will ..., " to "perform at your professional best" rather than always trying to succeed and to maintain "a modicum of modesty and humility about your dogmatism and keep a proper sense of humor about yourselves."

"The most frightening thing about the so-called 'new right,'" he said, "is the absolute humorlessness of their crusade. There is something scary about the crusader who is never for a moment aware of his own shortcomings, the partiality of his insights, the finitudes of his being, the actual narrowness of his angle of vision.

"In all these years of working with all kinds of people, I have learned one thing for sure," he quipped: "You never win an argument with a fool. He never knows when he has lost."

Fields warned against a shallow approach to theology and against those who seem to have "a chatty relationship with God" who tells them what socks to wear for the day.

"A shallow and unbiblical theology, as well as a shortage of Baptist and Christian history, can end up trivializing the gospel, and unchecked, can turn the Southern Baptist Convention into a monumental irrelevancy," he said.

Fields urged the Baptist public relations people to be "people of faith and fortitude to carry through with your part of the vision, refusing to be sidetracked on secondary matters."

IRS Agrees To Review
Proposed Regulations

By Kathy Palen

B J C N

WASHINGTON (BP)—Following opposition from a number of groups including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Internal Revenue Service has agreed to reconsider proposed regulations that would affect the lobbying rights of non-profit organizations.

Although not offering to withdraw the proposed rules, IRS Commissioner Lawrence B. Gibbs announced his agency "will consider whether it is appropriate to re-propose part or all of the regulations." He said the IRS also will include "interested parties" in future discussions on the proposed regulations.

The rules were proposed by the Treasury Department in an attempt to interpret a 1976 law that guarantees charitable groups the right to lobby within limits. Non-profit groups contend the proposed regulations include an expanded definition of lobbying that would allow the IRS to re-classify many of their research and educational activities as lobbying.

In written testimony filed with the IRS, Oliver Thomas, BJCPA general counsel, voiced concern about the regulations' "expansive definition of lobbying," which he said "could imperil some of our nation's finest charitable organizations." Noting religious organizations currently are exempted from the proposed rules, he said several provisions could affect religious organizations in the future.

Congressional leaders also have called for withdrawal of the regulations until they are rewritten to reflect more closely Congress' intent in passing the Tax Reform Act of 1976.

"The original regulations were a draconian overreaction to the whole issue of lobbying by public charities," said Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., who organized a protest by members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Similar protests were mounted by members of the Senate Finance Committee and leaders of the House Ways and Means and Government Operations committees.

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CORRECTION: In the program for the annual meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers, released 4/16/87, please delete the listing, "6:30 Photo," listing from the Monday evening schedule.

Thanks,
Baptist Press
