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87-80

**Parks Foresees Tough Times
But Says Results Worth Risks**

By Bob Stanley

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The man who leads the world's biggest program of overseas Christian missions said May 20 he foresees some tough, risky times ahead for missions but believes the potential results are worth the risk.

R. Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, told trustees the board is in no way suggesting its missionaries should court martyrdom. He noted, however, that in every enterprise there is a measure of risk.

"The rule of thumb is that we limit our risks according to the results that might come," he said.

At any given time missionaries in some countries are working with a degree of risk, and occasionally the missionaries have no choice but to leave. However, when the missionaries feel led of God to stay, concerned Southern Baptists sometimes question whether the board should allow its missionaries to remain in places of risk, Parks said.

He pointed out governments continue to risk the lives of their finest young men for the sake of their country. "I simply come this morning to remind us that the stakes we are seeking to gain are more valuable than anything else God has created," he declared. "Jesus defined one soul as of greater value than the entire created universe."

Southern Baptists have committed themselves to Bold Mission Thrust, a program through which the 14.6-million-member denomination is seeking to do its part in sharing the gospel with all people by A.D. 2000. Through the Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptists have about 3,800 missionaries at work in 110 countries worldwide and plan to have 5,600 missionaries in 125 countries by the end of the century.

He reiterated the board has a policy that it will not pay ransom if any of its representatives are taken hostage -- "not because we do not value the individual taken hostage but because we do value all of our missionaries so much that we would not dare to jeopardize all the rest in trying to save one."

With more of the world's nations becoming hostile toward Christianity, the mission executive said, "I can't help but believe there will be some tough times ahead -- that we will face crises we've never faced."

When and if such times come, Parks said, his prayer is that "we can be prepared to react from a sound biblical basis and from a solid policy posture, rather than being driven to react from an emotional level that might have serious repercussions in all that we try to do."

Missions research indicates there are between 60 and 70 nations inaccessible to traditional missionary approaches today, he said. If trends continue, he added, by the year 2000 there could be as many as 100 nations hostile toward the gospel. Their populations would include about 83 percent of the unreached world that Southern Baptists are committed to reach.

"We're talking about penetrating hostile societies with the gospel," he continued. "We cannot do that unless we are willing to take risks and to be responsible for running those risks."

In the same board meeting, trustees voted to study the need for a vice president of communications and public relations, elected three new area directors, appointed 32 new missionaries and reappointed two, and honored Winston Crawley, who is retiring after 40 years' service.

Crawley and his wife, Margaret, worked as missionaries to China and the Philippines before he was elected secretary for the Orient in 1954. From 1968 until 1980 he was director of the overseas division and since 1980 has been vice president for planning. During his first year of retirement, he will teach missions courses at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, with tentative plans to teach at two other seminaries in the following years.

Studying the need for a vice president for communications and public relations came as a final recommendation from the trustees' transition committee, which has worked closely with Parks in a major staff reorganization this year. The action instructed the communications and public relations committee "to give attention to this matter in concert with the strategy committee."

From 1980 to 1985 the board had a vice president for communications, but beginning in 1986 the unit became the office of communications and public relations and was placed under the board's executive vice president, Bill O'Brien, for a closer relationship to the executive office. An associate vice president and two assistant vice presidents have assisted O'Brien in the daily supervision of this area.

The three new area directors elected in May complete the board's new team to direct work in the nine geographic areas set up in the reorganization. They are Joe Bruce, Middle America and Canada; William Richardson, Brazil and the Caribbean; and Jerry Rankin, Southern Asia and the Pacific.

Bruce, a native of Clarkton, Mo., and his wife, the former Shirley Plumlee of Clarendon, Ark., have been missionaries in Central America since 1971. He became associate to the area director for the former Middle America and Caribbean area in 1981. In his new role he will direct the work of 300 Southern Baptist missionaries in seven Central American countries and in Canada from a home base in Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Richardson, from Tulsa, Okla., has been associate director for Eastern South America since November 1986. He will live in Brazil and coordinate the mission work of more than 400 missionaries in Brazil and the Caribbean.

He and his wife, the former Kathryn Mallory of Springfield, Mo., were appointed in 1964. Following language study they lived for 20 years in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, where he directed the department of evangelism and missions for the Minas Gerais State Baptist Convention, was president of the Baptist Theological Seminary of Minas Gerais and was professor of New Testament at the seminary.

Rankin, from Clinton, Miss., most recently has been administrator for Southern Baptist mission work in India, working out of Bangkok, Thailand. He and his wife, the former Bobbye Simmons of Lincoln County, Miss., became missionaries in 1970. Rankin was first assigned as a field evangelist in East Java, Indonesia, where he worked with new groups of Baptist believers. He worked in Surabaya, Indonesia, from 1979 to 1981.

From 1982 to 1986 Rankin was associate area director, acting as a liaison between the board and missionaries in India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Brunei.

The board reappointed Earl and Jane Martin, 26-year veterans of mission work in eastern Africa. Martin, missions professor at Southwestern seminary since 1982, will direct a new Institute of World Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

At the close of the meeting, trustees approved a motion by outgoing trustee Mary Strauss, a homemaker from Hagerstown, Md., expressing "regret" that no women have been slated for nomination for election to the Foreign Mission Board. The motion asked the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee to "note this inequality in future years" and address it. With Strauss rotating off, the board has 10 women members out of a total of 85.

Senate Panel Approves
Civil Rights Measure

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)—The third time was the charm for a Senate committee attempting to vote on the proposed Civil Rights Restoration Act.

Although the vote was scheduled twice before, committee opponents of the legislation used procedural maneuvers to delay the process.

Finally — after almost three hours of debate over proposed amendments, none of which was approved — the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee voted 12-4 in favor of the legislation, which now goes to the full Senate. Three of the panel's seven Republicans joined the nine Democrats in approving the measure May 20.

The Civil Rights Restoration Act would have the effect of overturning the Supreme Court's 1984 Grove City College decision that narrowed application of four federal civil rights laws. The high court held an education anti-discrimination ban applied only to the "program or activity" receiving federal funds, not the entire institution.

Although the ruling directly applied to Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, it also affected three other civil rights statutes that contain the same "program or activity" language.

Supporters of the legislation — sponsored by Sens. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., and Lowell P. Weicker, R-Conn. — say it would restore the civil rights laws to the scope they had "the day before the Grove City decision."

But opponents argue the bill would broaden the anti-discrimination laws' scope, especially in the areas of abortion rights and government intrusion into religious institutions. Disputes over those issues stalled similar legislation during the last two Congresses.

As during past committee meetings on the legislation, debate prior to the final vote often was heated. The bill's sponsors accused opponents of using "scare tactics" and a "parade of horrors" in their effort to defeat the measure, while the opponents charged the supporters with misleading the American public about the bill's purpose and effects.

Although all of their amendments were rejected by the committee, sponsors of proposed changes promised to introduce similar amendments to the legislation during debate by the full Senate.

No date has been set for Senate consideration of the legislation, but sources report 58 senators already have indicated they plan to vote in favor of the measure.

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Church Immunity Gone,
Conference Speakers Say

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—The law of the land that has kept churches immune from liability no longer applies, pastors and church leaders were warned during a church and law conference at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., May 11-12.

"Charitable immunity is gone," said James Guenther, a Nashville attorney and chief counsel for the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

"The end of charitable immunity means that if you slander someone in a public prayer, or a child is hurt in a tug of war or you are negligent in counseling, you and the church can be sued for damages," Guenther said.

Guenther and other program personnel cited numerous court judgments — some involving millions of dollars — that have been leveled against religious organizations. More than 2,000 cases involving churches and their leaders are before the courts this year.

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The conference, entitled "The Legal Threat," was sponsored by Samford's Center for the Study of Law and the Church. During the conference, center director Chriss H. Doss announced a hotline available for use by pastors and others who seek information from the center. The telephone number is 1-800-468-6726.

Participants expressed concern after being warned churches are liable if a pastor, church staff member or volunteer is involved in a vehicle accident while on church business. In one such case, plaintiffs are seeking a \$6 million settlement.

"Liability insurance must be in place, and church staffs should be sensitive to selection of drivers," Guenther stressed. Accidents related to church-sponsored recreational activities rank second in number to incidents involving vehicles. Many of these are the result of negligence, he added.

"Use common sense and gumption when planning activities, particularly those involving children," he said, citing negligence shown in a California case in which a girl was paralyzed following an injury at a church outing. She was awarded \$2 million.

Guenther observed two types of cases "waiting to happen": those resulting from children running in church hallways and those resulting from church kitchens which fail to meet health codes.

He also pointed out churches are liable for violation of statutory duties, such as state and federal securities laws and copyright laws. "Songs can be sung during a service, but not broadcast. Copyrighted material may not be copied," Guenther reminded the audience.

The participants also were warned "the clergy will be the newest group of professionals sued for malpractice," by Roy and Nancy Herron, both Tennessee attorneys and ordained Methodist ministers. The couple spelled out the dangers related to malpractice.

Breach of confidentiality is a growing problem, and pastors should be careful about telling stories and giving examples from the pulpit, they said.

The flip side to confidentiality is that pastors often have a duty to warn a third party when that person might be in danger. Many states, for instance, require that any knowledge of child abuse be reported to authorities.

"It is important that a pastor know what his or her limits are in counseling. Many are not equipped to deal with certain mental illnesses. They should refer people to other professionals when over their bounds of expertise," said Mrs. Herron.

Arthur Walker, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Education Commission, and a parliamentarian, noted the convention "has spent \$300,000 defending itself against suits based on parliamentary procedure."

"Using proper procedure is important. It gives structure and provides a beginning place. It is important for a group to know that there is a pre-determined authority and that everybody's rights will be observed," said Walker. However, he cautioned, when parliamentary procedure is used to thwart participation, its purpose is being misused and abused.

Insurance representatives advised the group to carry adequate and proper insurance.

"The legal explosion we are seeing today has caused insurance premiums to skyrocket," and Dave Smith, an independent agent who specializes in church liability insurance. "If we don't stop this trend, church insurance premiums will escalate to unprecedented heights.

"You can be a part of the solution through an awareness of problem areas, proper planning and implementation and a board of deacons that will be willing to face the problems," he said.

His advice included obtaining written parental consent for each specific event a child participates in and making certain that supervisors are qualified.

Also, cases involving sexual misconduct, most often committed by church employees, are on the increase, he said, noting, "Claims involve high emotional feeling, and awards run high."

"Insure church property to value and be sure you can replace it at today's prices," he said.

Addressing the topic "Baptist Polity and the Law," former Southern Baptist Sunday School Board President Grady Cothen observed early Baptists did not plan for today's litigious society.

"The founders faced other problems, and lawsuits were very low on their list of priorities," he said. However, the convention has emerged into a part of the establishment, into a complex society and a fragmented pluralism.

Although traditional churches have been separated from an association's legal problems, and associations from legal problems of state conventions and the SBC, not one of these units will be protected from the vulnerability churches are increasingly experiencing, he noted: "Individual units will not be protected from their problems because of congregational polity. The church can be expected to be challenged at many points."

Former Alabama Gov. Albert Brewer, attorney and layman in Decatur, Ala., encouraged pastors to not be alarmed by the fear or threat of lawsuits: "You be God's person in your ministry to human need. You use discretion, good judgment and sound business practices in your administrative responsibilities, and you will free yourself to respond to these human needs."

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Moderate-Conservatives
Criticize Appointments

Baptist Press
5/22/87

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Nearly two-thirds of the members named to a key Southern Baptist Convention committee by SBC President Adrian P. Rogers are aligned with the denomination's fundamental-conservative faction, three Southern Baptist moderate-conservative leaders have charged.

The 1987 Committee on Committees includes only one identifiable moderate-conservative, but 43 identifiable fundamental-conservatives, one leader claimed during a news conference in Richmond, Va., May 20.

James H. Slatton, pastor of River Road Baptist Church of Richmond, and the recognized leader of moderate-conservative political coalition since 1985, told reporters the 66 persons appointed to the Committee on Committees include one moderate-conservative, 43 fundamental-conservatives, 11 "non-aligned" members, six persons the group was unable to check and five persons who reportedly are unknown to leadership in the state from which they come.

Slatton, was joined in the news conference by Norman Cavender, a layman from Claxton, Ga., and John H. Jeffers, retired pastor of First Baptist Church of Auburn, Ala., in announcing the results of an informal survey of the 66-member committee, an essential element in the process which culminates in the election of trustees to the SBC's 20 national program agencies and theological seminaries.

The Committee on Committees, which consists of two representatives from each qualified state Baptist convention, is appointed by the SBC president. It nominates the Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees, which, in turn, nominates trustees to serve the 24 national entities of the SBC. The Committee on Committees is appointed by the SBC president, "in conference with" the two vice presidents and does not require convention action, but messengers must elect the Committee on Boards and the persons they nominate to serve as agency trustees.

The appointment-election process has been at the center of the eight-year controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., named the 1987 Committee on Committees May 29.

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Slatton told the news conference: "We had been hoping against hope that there would be in Dr. Rogers' appointments this year a move away from politics, a move toward including people rather than trying to shut them out. We expected a preponderance of fundamentalists, but not a committee with only one identifiable moderate."

Slatton said information was gathered on 60 of the 66 committee members, as moderate-conservatives in 30 state conventions inquired concerning the two appointees in their respective states, adding that state executives, editors and "people who knew the nominees" provided the information.

Cavender noted the survey reflects a "multiplicity of sources" and "not just one person giving his opinion of someone else."

To determine the theological/political position of each committee member, two questions were asked, Slatton said: "First, are the appointees identified with a particular faction in the present controversy? Second, to what extent have the nominees been involved in Baptist life in the state level, so as to know the state Baptist fellowship well enough to make representative nominations for national office?"

In addition to the ideological slant of the committee, Slatton said the survey reveals 36 percent of the committee members have been uninvolved in state Baptist activities and 19 percent have been marginally involved. Only 42 percent are considered active in their states, he said.

To avoid dealing in "personalities," the three men refused to identify their sources of information or to categorize committee members by name. "We are scrupulously avoiding talking about personalities," Slatton said. "We have just counted it up and are talking in terms of totals and percentages."

Rogers told Baptist Press, "These appointments have been carefully selected from loyal, active, and qualified Southern Baptists.

"The churches from which they have been selected have an average Cooperative Program percentage of over 12 percent and the pastors have an average tenure of over 11 years," he said. "Many of these selected are direct recommendations of state executive secretaries, and many others have been approved by these executive secretaries. Still others were chosen from recommendations that came from the broad spectrum of denominational life.

"These appointments have been made in consultation with the two vice presidents. I have every confidence that these good and godly people will serve Southern Baptists well," Rogers added.