



- - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300

RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Stan L. Hestey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

July 31, 1987

87-115

HMB Directors Establish
New Doctrinal Guidelines

By Dan Martin

ATLANTA (BP)--Policies governing the employment of elected staff members and missionaries were established during the July 29 meeting of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The new policies are part of a "Resolution of Response to Southern Baptist Convention Action Approving the Peace Committee Report," approved without discussion and only a few "no" votes.

In the resolution, directors "instruct our administration to review the theological positions of our present professional staff and appointed missionaries to assure their theological stance is in harmony with and not in any way contrary to the Baptist Faith and Message statement."

The directors also "instruct our administration to assure that in the future we only employ professional staff and appoint missionaries whose theological positions 'clearly reflect the dominant convictions and beliefs held by Southern Baptist at large' as illustrated in the findings section of the committee report."

HMB directors, in taking the action, become the first SBC agency to make official response to the report of the Peace Committee, adopted during the 1987 annual meeting of the SBC.

The Peace Committee, created in 1985 and charged with discovering the sources of controversy in the convention and making findings and recommendations of ways to bring about reconciliation, reported it discovered the source of the controversy is primarily theological differences. It said, however, "most Southern Baptists" believe in direct creation of man, the supernatural nature of the miracles in the Bible, the historical accuracy of the Bible and the stated authorship of the books of the Bible.

It called on trustees of the six SBC theological seminaries to determine the theological positions of staff members and on all SBC institutions to build professional staffs from those people who clearly reflect the dominant theological position of Southern Baptists at large.

Although the recommendation to review the theological position of staff members appeared directed at the seminaries, the HMB action extends the action to include its 138 elected staffers.

Larry Lewis, the newly elected HMB president, praised the work of the Peace Committee, and said: "It speaks well of the work of this committee that both the findings and the recommendations were approved by the convention in annual session without amendment and with a strong 90-plus percent vote. Apparently our constituency of Baptist people agree with the findings and overwhelmingly approve the several recommendations. I take this as a clear mandate.

"I believe it behooves each and every agency and institution of our convention to cooperate fully with the Peace Committee and with our convention in its efforts to restore harmony to our denomination. We must stand ready and willing to do everything within our power to implement these simple recommendations. Let us lead the way in assuring our constituency that we intend to do everything within our ability to comply with each and every recommendation."

He added if every one of the 20 national agencies would comply and cooperate with the Peace Committee report: "There will be peace in the valley again. To fail to do so would be an affront and something of an insult to the convention."

--more--

In an interview following the board meeting, Lewis said he was not trying to set the agenda for other national agencies or to exhort them to follow suit: "Each agency must deal with this in the way they feel proper and best. My remarks are more of a statement of my own opinion, but I feel if we are seeking peace seriously in our convention we should cooperate and comply. If we want the war to continue and the strife to go on, then the way to do that is to refuse to cooperate and to refuse to comply."

He added he "is sorry" his remark concerning administrators and trustees published in a news story June 29 "were misinterpreted and misunderstood."

In that story, Lewis said he believed trustees and administrators who were not responsive to the wishes of the convention "will be replaced."

"I never meant to suggest that I was going to make any kind of effort to have trustees replaced. I have no authority to do that," he said. "There is no veiled threat, but simply an observation that if a board does not respond to an exact and explicit mandate, then the convention will replace those trustees."

"It is my observation that that is what has been happening across the past few years. There has been a general perception that the agencies were not responsive so the convention has begun the process of replacing those trustees."

Lewis also clarified his position on the continued employment of HMB elected staffers: "I have never said I was going to replace any staff member. I simply have said we are going to ask them to reaffirm that which they have affirmed already, their belief in the Baptist Faith and Message statement."

During the board meeting, directors were given a copy of a form used by prospective staff members for at least the past six years. The form, titled "Belief Statement," asks prospective elected staffers nine theological or doctrinal questions, including belief about God, the inspiration of the Bible, personal salvation, the person's own conversion experience, call to Christian service, the church, participation in a local congregation and relationships with other Christians and non-Christians.

Lewis added staff members have been asked to affirm the Baptist Faith and Message Statement since 1976.

In discussing how the instructions of directors will be implemented in regard to checking the theological positions of current staff members and appointed missionaries, Lewis said he has decided on an approach concerning staff but is "still working on the logistics of dealing with the missionaries."

"The staff members are primarily employees of the board, but the missionaries often have major funding that comes from others, and we have to work out a system with the state conventions. It would be premature to suggest any approach to missionaries until we have had an opportunity to meet with state convention people in September."

For employed staff, however, Lewis said he will "send a copy of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement to each staff member with a cover letter. We will simply ask them to study and review the statement and if they have any problems endorsing or concurring with any part, to contact me and we will discuss it. If we do not hear from them, we will assume they are in agreement."

He added if any staffer has a "little problem" with the statement, it does not mean the person will be terminated. "If, on the other hand, somebody has serious problems about, say, the divinity of Christ, especially if that person is in a position with a great deal of exposure, then we would be very concerned."

In such a case, Lewis said, he "can see a possible termination."

He added, however, that as far as current staff is concerned, he will "grandfather" them in, and not require that they adhere to "any particular interpretation," of the doctrinal statement. "We are just asking them to reaffirm their commitment to the statement," he said.

However, he noted, "When we talk about hiring future employees, or promoting present employees, it will be a different policy" and will include "asking them what they believe about some basic, fundamental doctrines of our faith."

He said asking denominational employees about their doctrinal beliefs is not unusual: "It seems it is the content rather than the process which is controversial. Affirming a statement of faith is a historic process in Southern Baptist life. What is unprecedented is asking them in that process whether they believe the Bible is without error."

He said each new employee or person up for appointment will be asked the four questions from the Peace Committee: direct creation, the miracles, the historical narratives and the stated authorship of books of the Bible. "We may even read them to the candidates," he said.

Another issue not included in the Peace Committee findings also will be included in the questions, Lewis said: "We will be asking them to affirm that Jesus was the virgin-born Son of God, that he died on the cross for our sins, that he rose bodily from the dead, that he ascended physically into heaven and that he literally and physically will be coming again."

Lewis added the the questions will be "informal but rather standardized so that the same questions are asked of all potential staff."

"The convention gave a clear expressive order telling the agencies what we have to do. In order to comply, we simply have to ask these questions of prospective employees," he said.

--30--

William Crews Resigns
From Peace Committee

Baptist Press
7/31/87

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--William O. Crews, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, has resigned from the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee.

Crews resigned in mid-July in a letter to Charles Fuller, chairman of the 22-member group that was elected in 1985 to discover the sources of the controversy in the 14.6-million-member SBC, and to make findings and recommendations on ways to bring reconciliation.

The committee made its final report at the 1987 annual meeting of the SBC in St. Louis but was continued for up to three years in order to monitor the response of the 20 national agencies to the report and its 10 recommendations.

"I had fully expected that the (Peace) Committee would be dismissed following the report," Crews wrote to Fuller. "However, with its continuance, I have had to weigh my position as a member of the committee and my responsibilities as president of Golden Gate Seminary."

When the committee was formed in 1985, Crews was pastor of Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church in Riverside, Calif. He was elected president of Golden Gate Seminary Oct. 13, 1986, but was asked to remain as a member of the Peace Committee until it completed its final report.

"With the extension of up to three more years, the Peace Committee entered a new stage," Crews told Baptist Press. "I feel that both the Peace Committee and Golden Gate Seminary will be better served if I resign."

Crews told Fuller he has "absolutely no regret" that he continued in his dual role as committee member and agency executive during the final months of the Peace Committee's work. "However, I do have some serious questions about my continuing, now that the committee has a somewhat different assignment."

He is the third original member of the Peace Committee to resign. In October of 1986, Cecil Sherman, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, resigned in disagreement over the direction of the committee. Following the report of the committee at the 1987 SBC, W. Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, resigned in disagreement with the continuation of the committee.

--more--

Crews, however, specified: "I want it to be clear that I am not unhappy with the work of the committee, nor its continuation. I simply feel that it would be in the best interest of my position as president of Golden Gate to relinquish my place on the committee."

He told Baptist Press: "I have not been pressured to resign, and I am not unhappy with anything. I just felt it was the best part of wisdom to resign."

Under the action that created the Peace Committee, the SBC Executive Committee is required to elect replacements for people who leave the committee. Following Sherman's resignation, the Executive Committee named Peter James Flaming, pastor of First Baptist Church of Richmond, Va., to fill out the term.

It is expected that replacements for both Crews and Moore will be named at the September meeting of the Executive committee.

Fuller told Baptist Press he acknowledges Crews letter and added it would be awkward for him to serve in both capacities. "I greatly appreciate the time and effort Bill Crews put into the committee, but I also understand that because of his position, the resignation was a good choice," Fuller said.

--30--

Richmond's Banks Retires,
Citing Health Difficulties

Baptist Press
7/31/87

RICHMOND, Va.--(BP) Samuel A. Banks, the first non-Baptist president of the University of Richmond, resigned abruptly July 30, citing health problems.

The surprise announcement followed a closed door meeting of the Baptist-affiliated university's board of trustees.

In a written statement, University Rector Joseph A. Jennings said: "Banks discovered recently that his physical condition would not warrant his continued tenure as president ... and upon advice of his physician, he has requested permission to retire. Recurring heart disease ... would limit his energy and time available for the presidency."

Banks, 59, suffered a heart attack nine years ago, but apparently has been in good health until recently.

Banks' early retirement will be effective Aug. 15. A search for his replacement will begin "as soon as possible," said Evelyn Fouraker, the university's communication director.

Banks, an ordained Methodist minister, was president of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pa., until his election as UR's sixth president in July 1986. He assumed office last December and was to have been formally installed Oct. 23.

The University of Richmond was founded by Virginia Baptists in 1830 and about 80 percent of its current trustees are members of Southern Baptist churches. The Baptist General Association of Virginia nominates 20 percent of the board.

--30--

Annuity Board Projects
25 Percent 'Plan A' Hike

By Tom Miller

Baptist Press
7/31/87

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist retirees who receive pension payments from the Formula Benefit Plan, commonly referred to as Plan A, are in line for a 25 percent increase in benefits beginning Jan. 1, 1988.

Trustees of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board approved the increase July 28 in Oklahoma City and sent the recommendation on to the state Baptist conventions, all of which must approve it.

--more--

Meeting at the Oklahoma Baptist Building in the traditional away-from-Dallas summer session, the trustees unanimously voted the pay increase for Southern Baptist annuitants. They also approved a 25 percent increase in the formula benefit for annuitants who retire Dec. 31 or later.

The increases, if approved by the state conventions, will be only in the Formula Benefit Plan and not in any other part of an annuitant's total retirement income, said Doyle Maricle, senior vice president and director of the retirement administration division. "If an annuitant receives benefits from more than one plan, the 25 percent increase will apply only to that portion that comes from the Formula Benefit Plan," he said.

Also excluded from increase is any temporary income benefit or education benefit that is being paid under provisions of the Formula Benefit Plan.

Retirees affected will see the increase in their January checks, which are issued at the end of the month. Non-retired members with accumulated benefits in Plan A will see an increase in projected benefits in the first member benefit statement based on 1988 accumulations or in retirement benefits, whichever comes first. Plan A will close to additional contributions on Dec. 31.

Board President Darold H. Morgan told trustees the second quarter of 1987 saw consistent, strong growth in assets for the Annuity Board in spite of sharp breaks in the bond market during the three months.

Total assets grew from \$2.09 billion at the end of March to \$2.12 billion at the end of June, reported Morgan. Treasurer Harold Richardson reported a 12-month increase in assets from \$1.86 billion to \$2.12 billion, or 13.76 percent.

Morgan spoke of the "great significance" of the projected benefit increase for many of the 11,800 retirees in line for a raise. He cited the earnings record of the Formula Benefit Plan fund, which made the increase possible. Cost to the plan for the raise will be \$113 million.

Morgan also noted a probable 4.5 percent raise in Social Security benefits in 1988 for many of the same annuitants.

In other business, trustees had questions about a projected increase in Church Comprehensive Medical Plan premium rates for 1988.

John Dudley, senior vice president and director of the insurance services division, told trustees the plan is running a \$5 million deficit at the end of six months, a result of rising medical and hospital costs and increased utilization.

The increase that must come in 1988 is the first in three years, he noted. Dudley assured the board that losses in the plan did not result from the 1985 open enrollment campaign, when almost 10,000 people signed up for medical insurance without the requirement of underwriting.

Dudley said pre-existing conditions were excluded from claims for one to two years, and separate tracking of claims experience showed the open enrollment members actually had a utilization experience below that of prior members.

Church treasurers were advised early in July to expect a premium increase of 15 to 20 percent.

In other matters, trustees elected Sam Peters of Boca Raton, Fla., to the endowment development council; heard reports on preparations to administer the expanded Church Annuity Plan on Jan. 1, 1988; and welcomed new board members elected at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in St. Louis.

The board heard of the resignation of A. George Avinger, senior vice president and director of the operations division, who has re-entered private business.

The next trustee meeting is Oct. 26-27 in Dallas.

Hunger Gifts Continue
Sharp Decline In 1987

By Tim Fields

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist giving to world hunger relief during the first six months of 1987 plummeted for the second consecutive year from record giving set in 1985.

Figures released by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board show gifts to its overseas hunger relief program during the first half of 1987 are 22 percent below the six-month total for 1986 and more than 51 percent below the six-month total for 1985.

Through June, the Foreign Mission Board received \$2.6 million, compared to almost \$3.4 million in the first half of 1986 and \$5.5 million through the first half of 1985.

In contrast, gifts of \$570,363 given through June 1987 for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board domestic hunger relief program were more than 10 percent above comparable figures for 1986 and nearly 15 percent above the 1985 six-month total.

Annual Southern Baptist gifts to domestic and overseas hunger peaked at more than \$11.8 million in 1985 and fell to about \$9.1 million last year.

John Cheyne, director of the human needs department of the Foreign Mission Board, said if giving to overseas hunger during the remainder of 1987 continues to decline at its present rate, FMB hunger receipts for 1987 could fall below \$6 million. Giving to overseas hunger has not been that low since 1983.

The decline in giving is disheartening because chronic hunger continues to plague millions of people throughout the world, he said.

"One of the great tragedies of facing the continuing hunger crisis in Third World countries such as Mozambique, the Sudan and the region called Sahel is that it apparently takes a horror film to make people aware of the scope and severity of the problem," Cheyne lamented.

"The problem of hunger will continue to get more severe from now until the turn of the century," he said. "Unless Southern Baptists can develop some major strategies in the context of our whole mission strategy, we will not be able to deal effectively with the hunger problem."

Cheyne said the Foreign Mission Board is meeting with area directors around the world to develop mission strategy papers that will be used to develop a global hunger plan.

According to Cheyne, the Foreign Mission Board is giving special attention to Mozambique, which is now the No. 1 country on the human suffering index. "Distributing food to the hungry in Mozambique is complex because of internal conflicts and severe drought in the country," he said. "An estimated 4.5 million people in Mozambique are at risk to hunger out of a population of 11 million, and 2.2 million people have already been directly affected."

The Foreign Mission Board's missions hot line includes a request for a convention-wide prayer alert for drought-stricken Mali, where the Islamic president of the country has made an unprecedented request for evangelicals of Mali to pray for rain.

Robert Parham, associate director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission responsible for world hunger concerns, said although the increase in gifts to domestic hunger is encouraging and greatly needed, Southern Baptists need to reverse the steep two-year decline in total hunger gifts.

"An estimated 700 million people suffer from hunger day-in and day-out. Unfortunately, chronic hunger now fails to make the evening news," he said. "Southern Baptists need to remember that worldwide hunger continues to claim the lives of millions of people each year despite the lack of television and other media coverage."