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Home Mission Board Employees To
Affirm Baptist Faith And Message

By Joe Westbury

ATLANTA (BP)--Professional-level employees of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board have been asked by President Larry Lewis to affirm the Baptist Faith and Message statement.

Lewis made the request Sept. 22 in a one-page memo to the board's 138 elected staff members.

The memo, which was accompanied by a copy of the doctrinal statement, calls on employees to read the item carefully "and if there are areas you cannot in good conscience affirm, make an appointment with my secretary so we can discuss the matters of concern."

"If I do not hear from you," Lewis concluded, "I will assume you are in full agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message statement and will report so to the Southern Baptist Peace Committee."

The move reflects action taken by board members during their July 29 meeting as they forged new doctrinal guidelines for employing elected staff members and missionaries.

In his memo, Lewis referred to that board action by saying the directors also had instructed the 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."

Following the July board meeting, Lewis told Baptist Press if any staffer has a "little problem" with the statement, it does not mean the individual 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," he explained.

Lewis has gone on record as saying current staff members will not be required to adhere to any particular interpretation of the Baptist Faith and Message, which was adopted by Southern Baptists in 1963.

"We are just asking them to reaffirm their commitment to the statement," he said, which elected staff members have been asked to affirm for the past 11 years.

The board became the first SBC agency to make official response to the report of the committee, which was adopted during the 1987 convention session in St. Louis.

The request by Lewis reflects his view of the Peace Committee report as being "a clear mandate" to "each and every agency and institution of our convention to cooperate fully" with the recommendation.

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Senate Panel Questions Bork
About Abortion, Pornography

By Kathy Palen

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WASHINGTON (BP)--During a record five days of questioning, U.S. Supreme Court nominee Robert H. Bork fielded questions from members of the Senate Judiciary Committee concerning his views on the constitutionality of abortion and pornography.

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In response to questioning by Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah -- a leading supporter of Bork's nomination and an opponent of abortion -- Bork said he has never taken any public or political stance on abortion except his opposition to a proposed Senate bill that would have stripped federal courts of jurisdiction over abortion cases.

In 1981, Bork, then a Yale Law School professor, testified against the Human Life Bill before the Senate Subcommittee on Separation of Powers, questioning the bill's constitutionality, as well as its potential effectiveness.

Although he opposed the congressional effort to nullify the Supreme Court's decision in Roe v. Wade, Bork, who for the last five years has been a judge on the Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, told the Judiciary Committee the 1973 abortion decision "contains almost no legal reasoning."

When asked by Hatch if he would reverse Roe v. Wade, Bork said if he were on the Supreme Court and a similar case came up, he would ask the attorney arguing the case if he could do any of three things:

- Derive a general right of privacy from the Constitution.
- Derive a right to abortion from the Constitution.
- Argue Roe v. Wade is the kind of legal precedent that should not be overruled.

Bork said he then would listen to the arguments and try to determine if they were constitutional.

During questioning by Sen. Howell Heflin, D-Ala., Bork said he does not know if a general right to privacy can be found in the Constitution. The Supreme Court based its decision in Roe v. Wade on such a right.

Bork said he thinks it might be "easier to argue a right to abortion than a right to privacy," pointing to a possible argument based on gender discrimination. He said he also has heard some "fairly strong moral arguments for abortion" that might work if rooted constitutionally.

When questioned about his views on the issue of free speech, Bork said he does not have a "narrow view of First Amendment freedom and protection of speech," but added, "I am less willing to say obscenity in public is protected."

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., asked Bork about Jenkins v. Georgia, a Supreme Court case that dealt with whether a state may set its own standards as to what is pornographic.

"The Supreme Court has to apply its own definition of pornography," Bork replied. "It doesn't have to accept a state's definition." He said a state's definition could allow materials that are not pornographic to be banned.

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Conference Center Attendance
Drops with Conference Decrease

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9/24/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--Combined summer attendance at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist conference centers dropped by about 5,000 in 1987 due to a change in conference scheduling, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board records show.

The combined 1987 attendance at Glorieta and Ridgecrest was 55,641, a drop from 60,676 the previous year.

One Sunday school leadership conference and one church music leadership conference were dropped at each center in 1987, when the schedule returned to that of pre-1984 times in which all conferences began on Saturday evenings and ended Friday at noon. For three years, conferences had been on a rotating schedule, beginning and ending on different days. That scheduling allowed for 14 summer conferences at each center rather than 12.

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At Ridgecrest, 1987 attendance was 28,840, down from 32,183 the year before. The Glorieta total was 26,801, only slightly lower than the 28,493 registrants in 1986.

A total of 16,531 attended seven Sunday school leadership conferences, down from 19,945 the previous year, when nine conferences were offered.

Two church music leadership conferences attracted 6,286, about 2,600 less than the previous year, when four conferences were scheduled.

Two student conferences recorded an attendance of 4,725; and two Bible preaching and church media library conferences counted a total attendance of 3,797, both of which are higher figures than in 1986.

Foreign missions, Brotherhood and home missions conferences registered about 10,000, up by about 1,300 over last year, while almost 4,000 attended Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union conferences.

The conference centers are operated by the Sunday School Board.

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Youth Spiritual
Decisions Tabbed

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9/24/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--A total of 4,201 public decisions concerning personal relationships with Jesus Christ were made through Southern Baptist Centrifuge camps and church recreation conferences during the summer.

At Centrifuge youth camps, a total of 4,073, or about 16 percent of participants made public decisions. These included 623 professions of faith in Christ, 2,681 rededications, 304 church-related vocational decisions and 466 other decisions. More than 26,000 young people attended Centrifuge camps this year.

Centrifuge, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department, was held at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Centers; Mobile (Ala.) College; North Greenville College, Tigerville, S.C.; and Union University, Jackson, Tenn. Two traveling staffs conducted Centrifuge camps on the East and West Coasts. Camps also were conducted in Korea and Hawaii.

Also at Centrifuge, a missions offering of \$63,581 was contributed by youth and their sponsors and will go to five mission points across the United States.

At church recreation conferences, also sponsored by the SSB church recreation department, a total of 128 decisions were made among the 1,481 young people who attended the sessions held at Ridgecrest and Glorieta. Twenty-nine youth made professions of faith, 87 rededicated their lives to Christ and 12 made church vocational decisions.

More than \$800 was given to the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget during the church recreation conferences.

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Senate Committee Approves
Revenue Foregone Subsidy

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
9/24/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee has approved a level of federal funding that would keep postal rates for non-profit publications, including Baptist state newspapers and some church newsletters, at current levels through September 1988.

The committee included \$517 million for revenue foregone, which subsidizes reduced postal rates for non-profit mailers, in its Treasury-Postal Service appropriations bill. A Postal Service spokesman said non-profit rates could go up before September 1988 if a general rate increase is instituted.

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The subsidy approved by the Senate panel matches that included in the House-approved Treasury-Postal Service appropriations bill. Although that bill contained \$556.5 million for the Postal Service, only \$517 million was designated for revenue foregone.

The appropriations bill now must be approved by the full Senate.

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College Student Spends
Final Summer In Missions

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9/24/87

ATLANTA (BP)--Flynt Jones, a college student at Mississippi College in Clinton, spent the last three months of his life as a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board summer missionary for the Northwest Baptist Convention.

Jones, who died Sept. 15 of leukemia, was the vocalist of a four-member student revival team. The group traveled throughout Idaho, Washington and Oregon leading revivals for local churches.

Jones, from Griffin, Ga., originally was scheduled as a member of a Georgia team, but before the summer began, the other members cancelled. Jones requested he still be assigned to the Northwest Convention.

"He pleaded with me to arrange for him to come. He felt like this was where God wanted him to be," recalled Adrian Hall, associate evangelism director of the convention.

Hall assigned Jones to another three-member team from Mississippi. "We had felt something was missing from our team, but when Flynt joined us, he filled the gap," said Grace Burton, a Mississippi College junior from Evansville, Ind., who was a vocalist with Jones.

Throughout the summer, Jones shared in about 15 decisions, made mostly by young people. "He was very bold in his witness. I saw him single out young people to talk with them about the Lord. He was one of those rarities -- a 19-year-old who had it together," said Hall.

Bill Berry, director of the Home Mission Board summer missions program, said: "Flynt spent his summer sharing the gospel out of an urgency, not from the knowledge he was going to die, but out of a compassion and caring rooted in God's love. In this he was a living example of the commitment the mission of Christ demands from all of us."

Although Jones became ill a few times during the summer, leukemia was not suspected until his second week at Mississippi College. He was flown immediately to Emory Hospital in Atlanta, where doctors discovered the terminal illness. He died there three days later.

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Sports Evangelism
Fellowship Organizes

By Jim Burton

Baptist Press
9/24/87

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The National Fellowship of Baptists in Sports has been organized by a strategy steering committee of the National Fellowship of Baptist Men.

The new fellowship is the first Southern Baptist effort to organize laypeople from throughout the Southern Baptist Convention to use sports for missions and evangelism, said Larry Cox, associate director of the Baptist Men's group.

"The idea has been around a long time," said Cox. "A lot of missionaries have used sports people to involve the nationals in missions. This is the first time ever we've brought them under the umbrella of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The purpose of the fellowship is to present the gospel of Jesus Christ in the United States and abroad through sports. Strategies will be developed to use sports in missions to present the gospel and provide a network for matching resources with requests, Cox said.

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Strategy steering committee member Lee Nelson of Tallahassee, Fla., is in his first year of retirement after spending 11 seasons with the St. Louis Cardinals of the National Football League. This his first opportunity to be involved with a denominational sports evangelism/missions effort. He said: "For me, just to be able to get to a group like this and see something grow is neat because here are a lot of opportunities out there. Sports has been my life, and it is an opportunity to spread the word."

Organizers of the Kentucky Baptist Sports Crusaders, which recently sent a basketball team to Kenya on a mission trip, attended the strategy steering committee meeting.

"We played 13 ball games and put on about 15 clinics, all used to share our faith in Jesus Christ with the people of the nation of Kenya," said Larry Pursiful, minister of activities at Carlisle Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., and co-director of the Kentucky group.

"We saw wonderful results. There were about 600 decisions for Christ while we were there, and it did wonders for our guys that went," added Pursiful, who was captain of the 1962 University of Kentucky basketball team.

"Sports is a nationwide language," continued Pursiful. "Everyone loves sports, everywhere. Why not use it to witness?"

A softball team also has been organized in Kentucky and has played at prisons and colleges, Pursiful said, adding a full schedule is slated for next spring.

"We're just a new organization. We think the potential is tremendous. We've gotten several requests from churches and towns that are having crusades to come and do a weekend clinic/revival situation," he said. "We just almost don't have time to fill all the requests."

Pursiful and co-director Robby Speer, minister of activities at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, Ky., plan to organize a state fellowship for Baptists in sports in connection with the national effort.

Rick Mitchell, Southern Baptist foreign missionary to the Philippines, said sports is already an important aspect of evangelism and missions there. "We have four or five different strategies for reaching young people and students," said Mitchell, director of Baptist student ministries in Davao. "One of them is sports. I see the fellowship as being able to provide resource people who can come from the States and do things that we as missionaries or as nationals are not at present able to do."

The success of the sports fellowship in overseas missions will depend upon the evangelism experiences that take place, Mitchell said: "As long as Christ is kept first, we'll see results for the harvest. If we put sports first, we'll see a lot of sports, but we'll not see the spiritual results."

Mitchell, who currently is on furlough, believes there are many opportunities for sports evangelism overseas. He plays for and coaches several teams in the Philippines and has been able to lead players to Christ. Sports is a point of contact -- not an end result -- to meet youth.

"Pastors can bounce a basketball behind their house, and then after 20 minutes they'll have 10 kids there, and they can have Bible study," said Mitchell.

Mitchell also serves on the Davao City Sports Council, the regional council for the Philippines Olympic Committee.

National Fellowship of Baptist Men is a ministry of the adult division of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, and is responsible for organizing and enlisting laypeople for volunteer missions according to their skills, interest and occupations. Fifteen fellowships have been organized.