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October 15, 1987

87-154

Southeastern Trustees Change
Faculty Appointment Process

By Marv Knox *CO-N*

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees have altered the way the school chooses its teachers, ensuring the addition of biblical inerrantists to the faculty.

"Future faculty appointments will embrace biblical inerrancy," said W. Randall Lolley, president of the Southern Baptist Convention-related school in Wake Forest, N.C.

The new faculty selection process places more responsibility with Lolley, who is accountable directly to the conservative-dominated trustee board. It also dictates that temporary faculty appointments, which had been the prerogative of the president and the dean of the faculty, must be approved by the trustee instruction committee.

The trustees met Oct. 12-14. In other actions, they also:

-- Met behind closed doors with Lolley for more than an hour.

-- Postponed their response to the SBC Peace Committee's report until March.

-- Elected conservatives to all four trustee offices and adopted an alternate slate of committee appointments, proposed by an ad hoc group of conservatives.

The change in the faculty appointment process was suggested by William D. Delahoyde, an assistant U.S. attorney from Raleigh, N.C.

The changes make procedures conform to seminary bylaws, Delahoyde said. The bylaw provisions "clearly direct that the president proposes changes in the instructional staff and that the (trustee) committee on instruction considers the president's proposals and makes recommendations to the board," he noted.

Under the new procedures, the president will take the lead role in selecting nominees for faculty vacancies. That responsibility had been delegated to the dean and to faculty members in the area where the vacancy existed, following Lolley's "participatory management" administrative style.

The new procedure makes the person directly accountable to trustees -- the president -- responsible for nominations for faculty vacancies, Delahoyde said: "The president, not the faculty, is responsible to the board of trustees. ... You want to have the person who is responsible to you exercise his responsibility."

Lolley pledged to administer the new selection process according to trustees' wishes. But he also promised to maintain faculty involvement in the process: "This procedure certainly invests the president with more power than ever before. This president intends to share that power because of his commitment to participatory management."

The end result of the new selection process -- approved 15-10 -- will be the selection of biblical inerrantists to the Southeastern faculty, he said.

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The SBC Peace Committee -- which offered its report this summer after two years of studying sources of and solutions to strife within the convention -- recommended trustees of SBC seminaries build their faculties from teachers who "clearly reflect such dominant convictions and beliefs held by Southern Baptists at large." Most notably, those convictions include belief in the inerrancy -- or literal truthfulness -- of Scripture.

Given that framework, Lolley said he is committed to "find the best people in the world. I am not committing myself to lessening the quality by broadening the spectrum."

The focus on future faculty should alleviate the fears of faculty and students, who expressed concern that current professors will be fired or that their academic freedom will be stifled, leaders said.

"This meeting has shown the immediate intention of these trustees is that they don't want to eliminate present faculty," Lolley said.

New trustee Chairman Robert D. Crowley said the idea that the seminary will not change at all is ludicrous, but he added trustees do not want to terminate teachers or shackle their freedom. "I have heard of no trustee who has said anything about firing anybody," said the pastor from Rockville, Md. "I don't know who started these rumors about academic freedom. This is fantasyland. We're not going to fire anybody."

The exact nature of the trustee's relationship to the president and the impact of that relationship on education at Southeastern remains somewhat mysterious, due to the closed-door session the trustees held with Lolley.

James R. DeLoach, new vice chairman of the trustees and an associate pastor from Houston, moved that the board enter executive session "for the purpose of clarifying how our roles are to interface and to consider how we can improve this relationship."

After trustees voted 14-10 to close the meeting, a group of about 30 students initially refused to leave. But they complied when Lolley, who had spoken against closing the meeting, asked them to leave. During about half of the meeting, they stood outside and sang hymns.

When observers re-entered the room, Lolley told them: "The nature of the executive session is that it really is confidential. Please do not ask any of us. We've pledged to keep it confidential."

Trustee Chairman Jesse P. Chapman later describe the session: "It was a very harmonious meeting, no anger, no hostility. It was all done in a very peaceful spirit. ... The people who requested the executive session, I think, did so with the very highest of motives."

The move to postpone the response to the Peace Committee until the board's March meeting followed a 45-minute meeting with Peace Committee Chairman Charles G. Fuller, a pastor from Roanoke, Va. Questioned about the application of the committee's report to the seminary, he said, "By no means are we trying to dictate to trustees who they should employ."

Trustee Christine Gregory, a layperson from Danville, Va., and a member of the Peace Committee, supported Fuller's presentation: "Some are interpreting the report as a statement to which all must adhere, but the Peace Committee never, never intended it as a creedal statement, or if they did, there was a hidden agenda which the full committee did not understand."

Faced with the question of how they should apply the peace plan to Southeastern, trustees eventually voted 20-7 to accept the Peace Committee's report and refer it to the trustee executive committee for study and recommendations. That 12-member group is expected to report to the full board in March.

James W. Bryant, a pastor from Fort Smith, Ark., who offered the initial motion to delay action, said the decision is necessary and proper: "We need due time for response and time to sit down with President Lolley and discuss our response. ... Whatever our response is, President Lolley will have to implement it, so we must take our time to study this matter in great detail."

Lolley said the seminary community would be more at ease if trustees had handled the matter during the fall meeting: "Ambiguities traumatize a campus. This is disturbing when you work for a sense of community, which we try to do here."

"We want to fairly consider the peace plan, as the convention has asked us to do," said Crowley, who also chairs the executive committee. "We have not discussed a methodology. I have no preconceived ideas of what we will do."

Leadership of the trustees now comes from conservative members. Crowley described himself as a conservative and an inerrantist. He was nominated by DeLoach. DeLoach was nominated as vice chairman by Arlie McDaniel, a pastor from Moscow, Idaho. McDaniel was elected treasurer.

Crowley defeated incumbent Chairman Jesse P. Chapman, a surgeon from Asheville, N.C., who has avoided affiliation with any SBC political group, 15-13. DeLoach won a second term as vice chairman over W. Jerry Holcomb, a pastor from Virginia Beach, Va., 17-11. McDaniel was elected treasurer by acclamation, as was Ralph E. Holt Jr., a pastor from Wilmington, N.C., who was re-elected to a second term as secretary.

The alternate slate of committee assignments was presented by Cecil D. Rhodes Jr., a retired physician from Wilson, N.C. He later explained: "Our feeling was that the committees -- for example, the committee on instruction -- was very heavy on those members that have moderate viewpoints. ... Since all new faculty members will be chosen with greater input from the committee on instruction, we felt it was important to have a balanced committee. ... We are committed to hiring professors who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible."

Rhodes deferred to Crowley on the specific nature of the instruction committee's balance. Crowley told reporters the instruction committee that was initially nominated had four moderates and one conservative. Asked if the new instruction committee has four conservatives and one moderate, Crowley said, "It could break that way. ... This is a very, very subjective thing."

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(Contributing to this story were R.G. Puckett, editor, and Larry E. High, associate editor, of the Biblical Recorder, newsjournal of the North Carolina Baptist Convention.)

Faculty Will Not Sign
BFM, Professor Says

By Larry E. High and R.G. Puckett

Baptist Press
10/15/87

N.C. CO-N
SEBTS

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--The faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary will not sign the Baptist Faith and Message statement if instructed to do so by seminary trustees, according to Professor Richard Hester.

"Our faculty is united in standing by the current established documents of this school. We won't sign it," Hester, president of the seminary's chapter of the American Association of University Professors, said in a news conference following the fall trustee meeting Oct. 14 in Wake Forest, N.C.

"We have already signed the Articles of Faith, which is part of the seminary charter. That's part of our contract, and that's what we understood when we came here. Those are the terms under which we have taught since we came, each one of us, and those are the terms that we intend to teach under. It (signing the Baptist Faith and Message) would be a violation of the contract under which we began to teach here," Hester claimed.

"The chances are very good" that AAUP would become involved if faculty were asked to sign such a statement, he said.

The professor's comments came after he read a prepared statement following adjournment of the trustee meeting. In his statement, Hester said:

"I want to reflect with you on the images that come to my mind as I think about the last three days on this campus. Who can ever forget the rally where a thousand people gathered in the Alumni Chapel to say, 'We want to sustain the 37-year tradition of powerful, free theological education at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary?'

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"Who could forget the image of a courageous president who has stood tall throughout this entire meeting and spoken the truth again and again?"

"Who will forget the courage of this faculty that has stood together solidly, every single one, saying we stand for the most responsible course and that is to maintain and protect academic freedom at all cost?"

"Who can forget the courage of a new generation of young people -- seminary students -- who have sent this week a powerful message to Southern Baptists that there is on the way to you a new breed of people, a new breed of ministers, who are never, never going to give up the fight for the truth and for openness and for multiplicity of a point of view? Who can forget that -- a group of seminary people who have not learned the meaning of giving up?"

"Who can forget the press who has been on this campus every day, all day, making sure the shades are pulled up and the work of the fundamentalists is done under the careful scrutiny of the public eye?"

"From this point forward, it will become increasingly difficult for the present leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention to do their work in the dark, and I think the press is going to make this so."

"Who can forget that people have stood together? Nobody broke ranks, nobody gave in, nobody compromised, everyone was united, and we have a president who can sing bass."

"When you look back, the images are unforgettable. They are images of courage, they are images of strength, they are images of determination and they are images of a group of people who are saying, 'No matter what happens here in the terms of the structures of this school, we have a mission. We know what theological education is really about, and we are going to keep doing it and, we're going to keep telling our story.'"

In response to a question, Hester said he did not know the motives behind the decision of seminary trustees to study their response to the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee report for the next five months.

"The trustees were perhaps uncomfortable to move forward with their plan any further under the scrutiny of the public eye that is now before them," he said.

Hester also said the ideological New Right is able to ingraft itself on a theological school in order to propagate its particular view: "I think that is what is happening here. You saw it happen here this week."

Concluding the press conference, Hester praised seminary President W. Randall Lolley for the way "he has stood tall in this situation. I am proud of him."

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Southeastern Students,
Alumni Back Faculty

SEBTS C.A.N

Baptist Press
10/15/87

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--A sign hung from dormitory windows at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary declared in foot-high letters: "Welcome trustees. We love our faculty."

Bedsheet banners and yellow ribbons of solidarity symbolized student support for faculty when trustees convened their fall meeting on the Southern Baptist Convention-related school's campus in Wake Forest, N.C., Oct. 12-14.

Prior to the meeting, rumors circulated that President W. Randall Lolley or Dean Morris Ashcraft or some faculty members might be fired. Some Southern Baptists have charged the faculty with liberal teaching. And with the balance of trustees tilted in the conservatives's favor for the first time this fall, some faculty supporters feared reprisals.

In that context, students and alumni rallied to support Southeastern faculty and administrators.

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During the opening session of the trustee meeting, Student Council President Beverly Hardgrove presented a resolution supporting the faculty that was signed by 411 students, or about half the campus population. It says in part, "We have experienced our professors and administrators to be persons of deep Christian commitment; dedicated, responsible, biblically based scholars; and persons of high integrity."

Speaking personally, Hardgrove told trustees: "In all of my classes, I have been presented with a variety of theological interpretations and theories. ... In no area of theological education ... have I been forced to accept or ridiculed in any manner for holding a belief opposite or in contrast to my instructor. Rather, my questions and those of other students have been accepted and answered in an honest, open and theologically grounded response."

Following Hardgrove's presentation, trustee William D. Delahoyde, an assistant U.S. attorney from Raleigh, N.C., moved to express "thanks and appreciation" for the Student Council, especially the council's pledge of prayer for trustees.

Later that evening, about 1,000 alumni, students and local laypeople gathered in the seminary chapel for a rally in support of the school.

Atlanta pastor William L. Self, an 1957 Southeastern graduate, spoke to the rumors of firings: "If the trustees of this institution touch one professor, one administrator, one dean or the president, you can have my degree back any day. I invite every alumnus to join me. We ought to put 1,000 degrees back into this institution if they touch one professor or one administrator."

Self noted he spoke with emotion when he discussed his alma mater. He described how Southeastern professors deepened his Christian faith and strengthened his love for the church.

William J. Furr, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Raleigh and chairman of the committee that organized the rally, said the group did not expect the rally to "have a great impact on the trustees."

"Hopefully, it says to the faculty and staff, who are under a lot of stress worrying about this meeting, that there is a lot of support for them," he said. "Hopefully, it will inspire the trustees to realize there is a great tradition here and they should tamper with it only with caution."

Throughout the trustee sessions, students crowded meeting halls to view the proceedings. Most wore yellow ribbons to symbolize their support for faculty. A minority wore red ribbons, indicating they feel some professors are liberal.

During a discussion of a closed-door executive session between trustees and Lolley, trustee Walter R. Lonis, a retired policeman from Morrison, Colo., noted the "atmosphere on campus" and especially a "spirit of intimidation" had not been conducive to business.

"I don't want boos and hollering and screaming," he said. Students twice had been quieted by trustees for clapping and cheering during the meeting.

Lolley said the problem was not one of intimidation but of communication. "The trust level on this campus is zilch," he said. "The reason is there are people on this campus who don't trust you, and you don't trust them."

That lack of trust was evident shortly following the meeting, when a small group of students burned a copy of the SBC Peace Committee report, approved at the SBC annual meeting this summer, which they indicated they believe will be used to purge the faculty.

Lolley said such action is not imminent. "This meeting has shown that the immediate intention of these trustees is that they don't want to eliminate present faculty," he noted.

New trustee Chairman Robert D. Crowley, a pastor from Rockville, Md., agreed: "I have heard of no trustee who has said anything about firing anybody. ... We're not going to fire anybody."

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(Contributors to this story were R.G. Puckett and Larry E. High of the Biblical Recorder, newsjournal of the North Carolina Baptist Convention, and Marv Knox of Baptist Press.)

FMB Reaffirms Policies
On Divorce, Seminaries

By Bob Stanley

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A 142-year-old rule against appointing divorced people as foreign missionaries and a 6-month-old policy opening up appointment to graduates of any regionally accredited seminary were reaffirmed during the Oct. 12-14 meeting of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Both actions were voted by the board's Mission Management and Personnel Committee, the 42-member group that also gives preliminary approval to all candidates appointed by the board.

In other actions the board approved a lean \$167.8 million budget for 1988, endorsed missionary John David Hopper as president of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and said "no" to a Southern Baptist Convention messenger who wanted it to publish 10-year statistics and reasons why people are turned down for missionary appointment.

Responding to a 1987 motion made at the SBC that the statistics and reasons be published in the convention's annual report, the board said it did not view the material on non-appointment as suitable for the report "due to limited space, multiple assignments and other important and exciting items to report." The board motion added, however, that anyone interested in such statistics may make a personal request to the board for the information.

After the board received information that its Europe, Middle East and North Africa Committee had approved Hopper's election to the Ruschlikon seminary presidency, trustee Ron Wilson of Thousand Oaks, Calif., later asked that the board go into executive session to discuss the action. But after the board's morning break, Wilson came back to the microphone. He said he had received information from board President R. Keith Parks on what the board was being asked to do in approving Hopper and there was no need for executive session.

Under an agreement with European Baptists, the executive board of the seminary chooses the president but its action must be ratified by the European Baptist Federation and by the Foreign Mission Board. The board has representation on the seminary governing body.

In this case, the European federation already had given approval to Hopper, a veteran Southern Baptist missionary working with Baptists in Eastern Europe. Since Hopper was not a new missionary who would have had to be elected by the board, the action was taken by the regional committee of the Foreign Mission Board but reported for information to the entire board.

Parks noted that the board relates to international and national seminaries that it has helped start in many parts of the world and in most instances has no official say in selection of their presidents except for missionaries who may be members of their boards of trustees.

In reaffirming its stand against considering divorced people for missionary appointment, the board was reinforcing a stand it has followed since the board was founded in 1845. Last April, a trustee asked questions about the policy, and the board spent considerable time in dialogue about it in August but took no vote.

On Oct. 13 the committee considering personnel matters, which includes half the membership of the board, briefly discussed the divorce issue again and then voted to reaffirm its official policy on divorce.

Despite the frequency of divorce in this country and the fact that some Baptist churches today have divorced people in leadership positions, the board noted that in addition to the biblical concerns about divorce there are distinctive elements overseas that justify great care in dealing with this question. These include the need for a clear presentation of the Christian ideal in marriage, convictions among national Christians in other countries, and stress factors overseas that require missionaries to be unusually strong in personal qualities, emotional maturity and family life.

A few exceptions have been made for Mission Service Corps personnel based on careful study of individual circumstances and the fields where they would be serving.

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The action reaffirming the new policy on seminary requirements was taken because trustees, when they took the action last April, voted to review it every six months for two years.

Also, during the 1987 Southern Baptist Convention messenger Presnall H. Wood, editor of the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, moved that the board reinstate its previous requirement that career missionary candidates attend one of the six Southern Baptist-owned seminaries for at least part of their seminary preparation. This motion was referred to the Foreign Mission Board for study.

In the past the board had required that career missionary candidates attend one of the six seminaries for at least a year. The action in April dropped this requirement, which opened the door to qualified candidates from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., and other accredited seminaries without further attendance at a SBC seminary.

Before this decision, the board had appointed Mid-America graduates as well as graduates of other accredited seminaries but had stipulated they must take 26 hours, or one year's study, at one of the six official SBC seminaries.

In April, Parks said the new policy "grew out of a desire on the part of growing numbers of board trustees" to appoint graduates of Mid-America without requiring this additional study. In an overview study of the whole appointment process, Parks said, the board's staff agreed upon "appropriate Southern Baptist identity" as the crux of the matter.

In defining this identity, the board requires that candidates give evidence of "meaningful membership and participation in a Southern Baptist church." But in the new guidelines the board added the concept of: "commitment to and identification with Southern Baptists through fellowship, prayer support, giving, cooperation and service."

Under the new policy, the board may consider qualified candidates from any seminary whose accreditation is "commensurate with that of our Southern Baptist theological institutions."

During action on the 1988 budget, Parks noted that the \$2.6 million increase is one of the smallest in recent years -- only 1.55 percent. He noted that the total available for capital expenditures (such as homes, cars and church buildings) is only \$9.8 million.

"I know of single buildings that we build in this country that cost two or three times that amount of money," he said. He lamented the fact that Southern Baptists as a whole "haven't yet decided to get serious about funding Bold Mission Thrust."

Trustees also approved a recommendation transferring relationships with Cuban Baptists from the Home Mission Board to the Foreign Mission Board. The HMB passed an identical resolution at its meeting earlier in October. Relations between the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba will become the Foreign Mission Board's responsibility Dec. 31, 1988. The shift is the result of years of cooperation between the two boards in finding the best way to relate to Cuban Baptists.

During the meeting the board appointed 54 new missionaries and reappointed two. It also honored 53 retiring with a combined 1,618 years' service.

Trustee Eddy Hallock of Kansas-Nebraska was appointed to serve in Brazil and Dee Bryan, a Virginia trustee, resigned because she and her husband are moving to Waco, Texas. The two vacancies, which will not be filled until the convention next June, leave the board with 82 members and one ex officio member, SBC President Adrian Rogers.

The reappointees were Bob and Eddie Fields, natives of Covington, Ky. He was named associate to Dale Thorne, area director for the Middle East and North Africa. The couple was missionary student workers in the Middle East from 1963 to 1971 and later served a volunteer stint in that area. Fields will begin his work Jan. 1 in Cyprus.

One couple was employed for work with Cooperative Services International, through which Southern Baptists respond to requests for specialized personnel in countries where a traditional missionary approach is not possible.

Virginia Baptist Board
Discusses BJCPA, PAC

By Robert Dilday

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Virginia Baptist General Board dealt with two matters concerning the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee during its pre-convention meeting in early October.

The 68-member board unanimously approved a motion opposing the "recent action of the Southern Baptist Convention Public Affairs Committee in its public endorsement of a nominee to the Supreme Court."

The board also "received as information" a report from the Baptist General Association of Virginia budget committee which includes a line item in the proposed 1988 budget appropriating \$3,000 for the BJCPA.

The motion regarding the action of the SBC-PAC says: "Our Baptist heritage is to avoid official support of a political candidate or nominee to the judiciary and we affirm that heritage. We further note that no committee can speak for all Baptists because of our belief in the priesthood of the believer and freedom of conscience."

The SBC Public Affairs Committee urged the confirmation of Robert H. Bork as a U.S. Supreme Court justice during its meeting Aug. 20-21 in Nashville.

When Anne P. Rosser, associate pastor of Hampton Baptist Church in Hampton, made the original motion to the general board, some members expressed concerns over the motion's specific mention of Bork's name. Others wondered if Bork were in fact a "candidate for political office" or if the PAC action were a "violation of the constitutional principle of separation of church and state," as her motion stated.

Amendments to delete Bork's name and to change "candidate" to "nominee" passed easily but members soundly defeated an effort to refer the motion to the resolutions committee of the Baptist General Association of Virginia, parent body of the general board.

Ted W. Fuson, pastor of Lake Ridge Baptist Church in Woodbridge, then made a substitute motion, which incorporated the earlier amendments and which passed on a voice vote with no opposition.

The PAC's endorsement of President Reagan's nominee to fill a vacancy on the nation's highest court has heightened controversy surrounding the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a coalition of nine Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada.

The Southern Baptist Convention participates in the Washington-based BJCPA through its Public Affairs Committee, whose members serve as the Southern Baptist representatives on the BJCPA's board. Traditionally, the PAC has met only in conjunction with the BJCPA and only in recent years has it met separately.

During the PAC's October 6 meeting in Washington, the committee voted 8-4 to suggest the SBC sever ties between the BJCPA and the SBC after a meeting in which the full BJCPA board repeatedly overturned SBC-PAC supported initiatives.

The BJCPA has been under fire from some Southern Baptists during the past few years and has survived at least one effort at the annual meeting to withdraw funding. Many of the critics have charged that some positions taken by the BJCPA are unrepresentative of the denomination. The criticisms culminated in the forming a fact-finding committee of the SBC Executive Committee, which spent a year studying the relationship between the SBC and the BJCPA.

The report of the fact-finding committee, approved by the convention last June at its annual meeting in St. Louis, left the SBC portion of the BJCPA's funding intact, but did not specify how the monies were to be channeled. It also revised PAC membership and gave it permission to function as a separate committee of the SBC.

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In November 1986, before the recommendations of the fact-finding committee were known, the Baptist General Association of Virginia voted to escrow \$75,000 from its Cooperative Program budget to be given to the BJCPA in the event that the SBC reduced or omitted the agency's funding at the St. Louis meeting.

Following SBC approval of the recommendation, Virginia Baptist leaders agreed the conditions of the escrow motion were satisfied and last July the funds were released.

However, questions concerning the BJCPA's funding apparently are unresolved, and this November the BGAV, which includes 600,000 Southern Baptists in Virginia, will be asked to approve a line item in its proposed 1988 budget appropriating \$3,000 to the BJCPA.

The budget was presented to the general board during its October meeting. Although the board may act for the BGAV between its annual sessions, it does not approve the general association's budget, which was received as information.

However, the budget recommendations, attached to the financial document, provoked some discussion by board members.

Recommendation 7 urges the BGAV Budget Committee to "keep under review the financial support of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs by the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee" and gives the budget committee authority to "recommend appropriate action to the Virginia Baptist General Board to assure reasonable financial support" of the BJCPA if its funding is "significantly altered during the 1987-88 budget period."

When asked by a general board member what was meant by "reasonable financial support," Victor E. Mantiply, budget committee chairman, implied the phrase is subject to flexibility when he commented, "You will have a say-so as to what is 'reasonable' if you attend the next General Board meeting."

Mantiply, pastor of Moffet Memorial Baptist Church in Danville, also said the BGAV is being asked to endorse the concept of a line item for the BJCPA in the budget. Some observers believe the \$3,000 figure will be altered, since BGAV guidelines permit messengers at the annual meeting to adjust the budget.

Fuson, a budget committee member, explained the amount is not higher because although the general board may act "ad interim for the general association if deemed necessary by the officers, ... we could not see ourselves acting before something had happened."

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Seminary Trustees
Meet And Retreat

By David Wilkinson

S B T S
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Baptist Press
10/15/87

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Blending business with pleasure, trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary followed a meeting of their executive committee Oct. 12 with a day-and-a-half retreat aimed at building relationships among trustees and between trustees and faculty.

In a two-hour business session, the trustee executive committee approved without dissent a series of recommendations from the trustee financial board. The committee authorized:

-- Purchase or lease of new vans for the seminary's Bold Mission Thrust ministry which sends students to churches in Michigan and Ohio.

-- A one-time salary bonus equal to the dollar value of one step on the seminary's salary scale for all regular full-time and part-time faculty and regular full-time staff members. Employees will have the option of receiving the bonus, recommended by trustees in their annual session last April, in either December or January.

-- A \$65,000 increase in the seminary operating budget for the current fiscal year, taking funds from plant facilities reserves.

-- Application for membership in the Kentucky Employers Safety Association Selective Self-Insurance Fund, a move to cut premium costs for workers' compensation coverage.

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-- A policy that will continue contributions to seminary employees' retirement accounts regardless of age, in compliance with 1986 amendments to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). The action had been recommended by the SBC Annuity Board.

Following the meeting, trustees joined seminary faculty members for a three-hour steamboat cruise on the Ohio River. The next day's agenda included a session led by Nashville attorney James P. Guenther on the role of trustees, attendance at a worship service as part of the seminary's week-long campus revival, a picnic lunch with students from the trustees' respective states and a panel-led discussion among trustees focusing on possibilities for the seminary by the year 2000.

A total of 42 of the board's 63 trustees participated in the retreat.

Trustee chairman Perry F. Webb Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Baton Rouge, La., said the business-retreat combination -- held for the second consecutive year -- has "made a significant contribution" the board's deliberations within an atmosphere of denominational strife that often has focused on the Southern Baptist Convention's seminaries.

"Trustees come from all sections of the country and we're together only a brief period of time," Webb noted. "Most of that time is spent in meeting our obligation in caring for the business affairs of the seminary. The two retreats have served as a bridge from the heavy schedule of business into a more relaxed atmosphere of fellowship."

Trustees, he said "have been drawn close to one another, which makes it easier when we face difficult decisions where there is honest division among us."

Time spent with faculty, Webb added, also has "deepened our appreciation for each other."

Trustee Wayne Allen, pastor of Briarcrest Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., echoed Webb's assessment of the retreat's value. "If all you do is relate on issues and you disagree, then you sometimes transfer your feelings to persons rather than issues," he said. The retreat "enabled us to step aside from the pressures of making decisions to get to know each other and to build a foundation of trust."

Asked whether the retreat is too costly in terms of finances, Allen responded: "I think it costs a lot more not to invest in developing relationships. This is the best kind of investment we could make."

In his presentation, Guenther outlined the legal responsibilities and liabilities for trustees in their role as "corporate directors." He urged them to be faithful stewards of their authority, counseling them "to temper your considerable power with wisdom, understanding, humility and grace."

"The mere knowledge of the power you have should lead you to humility," he said.

Guenther, who serves as legal counsel to the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee, encouraged trustees not only to represent the opinions of Southern Baptists but also to resist "pack thinking" that leads to poor decisions.

"I have discovered that sometimes a trustee will do things that otherwise -- as an individual -- he would not ordinarily do," Guenther said. "God's will, in my judgment, is not found by a show of hands. Be statesmen; don't simply 'go with the flow.'"