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88-29

Trustee Actions Focus
On Sunday School Work

N-SSB

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE (BP)--Sunday school work in Southern Baptist churches was the focus of actions Feb. 15-17 by trustees of the convention's Sunday School Board. They affirmed a progress report on upcoming improvements in Sunday school literature, approved a reorganization of the Sunday school division and adopted plans for dated and undated lessons on sanctity of human life.

During about an hour of discussion, board trustees and administrators unanimously spoke in favor of the need to forcefully support sanctity of human life and oppose abortion through Sunday school and other literature produced by the board.

Gene Mims, chairman of the church program organizations committee and pastor of First Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tenn., said in introducing the committee recommendation, "There is no question on the staff's part, the committee's part or your part that abortion in our country is wrong, a sin."

Differences of opinion centered on whether undated lessons or dated lessons in Sunday school quarterlies would be the best approach. Undated lessons are published separately for use at any time, while dated lessons in quarterlies would be for use on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, scheduled in January each year on the denominational calendar.

After two substitute motions failed, trustees adopted a recommendation from the church program organizations committee to publish annual undated lessons for older children, youth and adults beginning in October 1989 and annual dated lessons for all three groups in all curriculum lines on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday beginning in January 1991. The recommendation was adopted in a voice vote with about 12 negative votes.

Concerning treatment of sanctity of human life in board literature, President Lloyd Elder said, "We have done too little in this area, and we can and will make a large contribution from a Bible study approach to application."

Supporting the original administration recommendation for annual undated Sunday school lessons on sanctity of human life, Elder said the board "has documented records of our constituents who do not want to turn aside from a series of Bible studies to occasional topics. The issue hinges on the time-honored expectation of our churches."

A substitute motion by Joe Courson, director of missions for the Gulf Stream Baptist Association in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., would have given churches the material for use on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, but would have offered congregations the option of continuing with the ongoing study unit.

Opposing the motion, Joe Knott, an attorney from Raleigh, N.C., said: "I think the method we are addressing is how we can be most effective in getting out the message. I think we should make it as difficult as possible for churches to avoid the issue."

Courson's motion was defeated 33 to 25.

A second substitute motion by Bill Anderson, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Clearwater, Fla., would have adopted as guidelines for dealing with sanctity of human life in board literature five criteria cited earlier by Elder, such as highlighting the issue anytime it relates to a Bible text or is appropriate to program assignments. The motion failed 30-27.

In discussion on the issue, Piland told trustees that in addition to the dated and undated Sunday school lessons on sanctity of human life, the board already is committed to supporting the issue through curriculum units on critical issues, application of relevant Bible passages, curriculum support on special days such as Sanctity of Human Life Sunday and channeling of articles through non-curriculum publications. For example, he said 67 board periodicals will include support for 1989 Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

In another matter, three groups in the Sunday school division were elevated to departments with group directors named department directors. The unanimous vote followed August 1987 action by the trustees raising the former Sunday school department to a division.

The new Sunday school growth and administration department will be directed by Don Trotter. Max Caldwell will become director of the Sunday school youth-adult department, and Muriel Blackwell will be director of the Sunday school preschool-children department. A fourth group director, Billie Pate, will become associate director of the division headed by Harry Piland.

In a progress report on changes in Sunday school curriculum to be presented to trustees for consideration in August 1988, Piland said five areas are being addressed: increased Bible visibility, more Bible content, central focus of evangelism, simplified teaching procedures and revised formats for easier use.

Piland said some changes already being implemented as a result of research of churches using Sunday School Board curriculum and those using materials from other publishers are inclusion of quarterly plan-of-salvation features in Sunday school periodicals, beginning in October 1988; increased Bible book studies in the Life and Work Series, effective October 1990; and expanded Bible stories for children, effective October 1988.

Trustees' suggestions concerning Sunday school literature included making certain the centrality of Jesus Christ to salvation is emphasized, focusing on the biblical concept of holiness and producing materials to provide a solid biblical foundation for youth about to leave home for the first time.

B O Baker, pastor of Plymouth Park Baptist Church in Irving, Texas, said: "I think these (proposals) are miles ahead of where we've been. Everything I've seen, I like. This is what we have asked for."

At the conclusion of the two-day meeting, which dealt with a wide range of issues in addition to Sunday school, Bill Tisdale, pastor of First Baptist Church of Henderson, Texas, expressed appreciation for the cooperative spirit of trustees and administration in working together.

"They (administration) do not always represent entirely what I might think best," said Tisdale. "But I would like for the press to know I feel really good about the management of the Sunday School Board in terms of their responsiveness to trustees."

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SSB Trustees Approve Steps
To Strengthen Service Role

N-SSB
By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
2/18/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--An improved financial report for the first quarter of the current fiscal year greeted Southern Baptist Sunday School Board trustees in their semi-annual meeting in Nashville. They discussed and approved matters aimed at strengthening the agency's ability to serve churches.

First-quarter sales for Sunday School Board products were closer to sales projections than they have been in eight years, reported E.V. King, vice president for business and finance. Sales for the October-December 1987 quarter, at about \$38.5 million, are 4.7 percent ahead of the comparable period in 1986 but still 1.7 percent behind budget projections.

In a move to streamline management of the business and finance office, trustees approved a reorganization of the board's financial arm. They eliminated the management services division, effective April 1, and reduced the number of departments from seven to six, effective Oct. 1.

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The changes were intended to reduce operational costs, help the board stay closer to church leaders and reflect the board's commitment to service, said Don Mathis, chairman of the general administration committee and pastor of Central Baptist Church in Corbin, Ky. David Turner, director of the management services division, was reassigned as director of administration and audit in the office of business and finance.

With the retirement of procurement department Director John Jackson in October, the procurement and administrative services departments will be combined under the leadership of Jim Shull, presently director of the administrative services department.

Product changes also were approved, including an average price increase of church literature items of 5 percent, effective April 1989, because of increases in the costs of printing and production, paper and postage.

Trustees received an update on the new multi-volume Bible commentary planned by Broadman Press from James W. Clark, senior vice president for publishing and distribution. The six consulting editors have met with General Editor Michael Smith and are selecting and enlisting writers for the 40-volume commentary, he said.

Writers who have been suggested by the consulting editors include four people from Criswell College, Dallas; four from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis, Tenn.; seven from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; and four from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., Clark said.

Additional schools from which writers likely will come include Denver Baptist Seminary, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., and several others. Each of the volumes will measure about five inches by seven inches and be about 300 to 400 pages long.

As a cost-saving move, trustees voted to fund placement of the King James Version and the 1960 Spanish translation of the Bible into the board's text-management system. The business and finance committee estimated that after an initial expense of \$50,000 to establish the computer database, the board would realize an annual savings of about \$100,000.

One new product approved was "The Baptist Study Leader," which will contain content with study questions to enhance group discussion and participation in church training activities. Several other minor and technical changes in products also were approved.

Three actions related to the book store division also were approved. Effective Oct. 1, the Memphis, Tenn., mail order center will close, and a second store in Memphis will be opened to maintain adequate service to Baptist Book Store customers.

Also approved was the opening of a test store in Nashville June 1 to provide a site for various research and development tests of products and promotion of materials.

Trustees received a report from the office of church programs and services that described actions taken during the past nine months to improve the quality, effectiveness, efficiency and attractiveness of BTN, the board's telecommunication training network.

Items included the plans to feature recognized Southern Baptist Convention leaders and personalities on BTN in the near future, experiments with teleconferencing in lieu of some travel by consultants to conduct conferences, and scheduling time each month to retransmit specific programs at the request of subscribers.

A discussion about appropriate Sunday activities at board-sponsored events followed a report from the church programs and services committee about plans for a single adult conference in Nashville on Memorial Day weekend, which will include Sunday morning Bible study at the convention center followed by afternoon and evening activities at the Opryland theme park.

A motion by trustee James L. Holly, physician from Beaumont, Texas, for trustees to go on record opposing secular activities supported and promoted by the Sunday School Board on Sunday was withdrawn after staff members explained the Sunday activities at Opryland will feature four worship services and witnessing efforts on what is being promoted as Christian Singles Day.

In his report, Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder told trustees the role he sees for the agency is to be "at the heart of Southern Baptist life, rekindling the fires of faithful service. We want to be in the lead position to encourage churches."

Warren Hultgren, pastor of First Baptist Church of Tulsa, Okla., was elected chairman of the trustees as the head of a slate recommended by the trustee nominating committee and approved without opposition. Roland Maddox, a real estate developer from Memphis, Tenn., was elected vice chairman of the trustees and chairman of the executive committee; and William G. Wilson, pastor of Brentwood (Tenn.) Baptist Church, was elected recording secretary.

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SSB Trustees Approve
Expansion Of Facilities

By Linda Lawson

N-SSB

Baptist Press
2/18/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Approval of preliminary design for a nine-story office/conference tower atop the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Operations Building and approval to proceed with a \$3.9 million expansion of the Operations Building were given by board trustees during their semi-annual meeting Feb. 15-17.

Both projects are part of a long-range Nashville master properties plan developed by the board's administration in conjunction with a trustee space committee and adopted by the trustees in August 1987.

Funds for the projects will come from fixed-asset reserves.

The plan is based on projected space needs of serving a denomination of 17.5 million members by the year 2000. At present, about 14.7 million people are members of Southern Baptist churches.

The nine-story limestone, granite and glass building was designed by Hart-Freeland-Roberts architects, designers of all Nashville facilities of the board, and will sit atop the Operations Building. An elevated three-story connecting lobby will join the Operations Tower with existing office and conference space.

The tower will add 150,000 square feet and will include one floor of conference space and eight floors of office space. About two-thirds will be occupied initially, with the remainder for future expansion.

Estimated cost of the tower is \$14.3 million, with completion expected in February 1990. Trustees will be asked to approve construction drawings and bids in August 1988. Completion of the tower will enable board components presently housed in leased space to move into board-owned facilities.

President Lloyd Elder said expansion of the board's facilities is being undertaken because "we don't want to wait until something happens. We want to make something happen. We want to encourage churches."

Expansion of the Operations Building is expected to begin immediately, with completion anticipated by October 1988.

The expansion will add 105,000 square feet of warehouse space and enable the board to move its shipping and receiving docks from a busy downtown street to the north end of the Operations Building.

To make possible the expansion, trustees approved purchase in late 1987 of 2.6 acres adjoining the north end of the Operations Building and land under the west side of the building for which the board had owned only air rights.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press

Retired Editor
Hurt Dies At 78

By Toby Druin & Ken Camp

N-Texas

DALLAS (BP)--John J. Hurt, 78, longtime editor of Baptist state newspapers, died Feb. 17 at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas.

Hurt retired in 1977 after a career in secular and Baptist journalism. He was an editor and manager for The Associated Press before committing his skills to Southern Baptist journalism 30 years earlier.

During three decades as a newspaperman in the convention, he was editor first of the oldest and then the largest Baptist state papers, editing Georgia's Christian Index from 1947 to 1966 and Texas' Baptist Standard from 1966 to 1977.

He was the first layman to edit the Index. During his tenure, Hurt changed the publication's format from a clergy-oriented journal to a news magazine edited for both the laity and ministers. Consequently, he generally is credited with leading Baptist state papers to adopt the news style most of the papers follow today.

The son of a Baptist preacher who nominated six men for the Southern Baptist Convention presidency, Hurt was familiar with the denomination from his earliest years and developed a lasting love for missions and missionaries.

Missionaries and mission board leaders were frequent guests in the Hurt home when he was a child and in later life in the Hurt home in Atlanta and Dallas. He traveled to many foreign mission fields.

As a committed Southern Baptist and professional journalist, he constantly worked for openness in denominational life. When he was refused entrance to one board meeting, he carried a large blank square on the editorial page with the caption, "This is what the Executive Committee wants you to know about your business -- NOTHING."

Hurt had a reputation for not being timid about expressing his opinion, on and off the editorial page. Few convention agencies escaped his gouging; none escaped his scrutiny.

While editor of the Christian index, he urged better race relations, opposing a pro-segregation stance by a Georgia convention committee in the 1960s and bringing threats on his life.

Hurt was a reporter for the Memphis (Tenn.) Commercial Appeal and the Jackson (Tenn.) Sun prior to joining The Associated Press in 1936. He worked for the worldwide newsgathering wire service for 11 years, rising to the ranks of editor and bureau chief before entering denominational journalism.

He was a graduate of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and received an honorary doctor of laws degree from Mercer University in Macon, Ga.

He was the first president of the Southern Baptist Public Relations Advisory Committee and was president of the Southern Baptist Press Association. He also was secretary to the corporation of the Baptist General Convention of Texas; trustee of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; and trustee of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Hurt was a deacon and former Sunday school teacher at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas.

He is survived by his wife, Doris, and two sons, John Jeter III, of Newark, Del., and Robert H. of Washington; two brothers, Harry and Jim of Atlanta; one sister, Mrs. Howard C. Bennett of Marshall, Texas; and two grandchildren, Charles and Christi of Newark.

Montana Southern Baptist Fellowship
To Sponsor Yellowstone Baptist College By Lonnie Wilkey

N- CO
(Ed. Comm.)

BILLINGS, Mont. (BP)--The Montana Southern Baptist Fellowship voted Feb. 8 to accept Yellowstone Baptist College as an agency of the state fellowship.

Yellowstone is the only educational institution to enter into a sponsoring relationship with a Baptist state convention or fellowship since 1964.

The college, located in Billings, Mont., is a Bible college that offers bachelor's degrees in Bible, religious education, Christian psychology and church music. Students also may earn associate's degrees in Bible and religious education.

The college was established as a Bible institute in 1974 by Yellowstone Southern Baptist Association. In 1979 the state fellowship accepted co-sponsorship of the institution. In October 1987 the association agreed to relinquish all rights to the school upon its acceptance as an agency by the Montana Southern Baptist Fellowship.

James Nelson, director of the Montana fellowship, said the need for stability was a major factor in accepting Yellowstone as the fellowship's only agency.

Many of the state's Baptist students go to college elsewhere, and most never return to Montana, he said. The addition of Yellowstone will assist in training leaders who will remain in Montana to conduct their ministry, he predicted.

The college also will benefit from the state fellowship's decision to grant it agency status, Yellowstone President Jack Coward said: "It gives us wider acceptance with the churches. We can now say we belong to all the churches in the state, rather than one association."

Yellowstone has 37 students enrolled, 10 of whom live on the 10-acre campus. The school has 14 faculty members and six staff members. Many of the faculty/staff are volunteers with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Mission Service Corps.

Seventy-five percent of the students enrolled are from Montana, Coward said. Other states represented include Texas, Idaho and North Dakota. The college also has four foreign students.

The college is working toward accreditation with the regional accrediting association, Coward said, adding the school hopes to be able to file for accreditation by next February.

The low number of students is the one remaining stumbling block toward accreditation, he said, expressing optimism that enrollment will reach 65 students by the fall semester.

Yellowstone is the only evangelical Christian college in Montana.