



**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE  
SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #75  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2350  
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. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

March 8, 1988

88-39

Panama Missionaries:  
Their Work Goes On

N-FMB

BALBOA, Panama (BP)--Closed banks, demonstrations and growing social turmoil in Panama have inconvenienced American missionaries, but so far they have encountered little or no anti-American hostility.

Garry Eudy of Birmingham, Ala., said he and 17 other Southern Baptist missionaries now in Panama are taking a few common-sense precautions, however.

"I've felt obligated to be extra careful, but I've not felt obligated to limit my church activities or my movement about, except to avoid where there are known concentrations of people for a demonstration or something like that," Eudy said March 7. "As far as people-to-people relationships, everything is going along about as normal."

But he acknowledged anti-American sentiment could grow if U.S. government efforts to pressure military leader Manuel Antonio Noriega out of power continue to disrupt the economy and the lives of average Panamanians. Some American military personnel in Panama reportedly have been harassed.

"I'm not saying there won't be some personal (encounters) in the future," he said. "I would assume there'll be some anger. There already is. But I would see it having to get quite a bit worse to be on a personal level where (Americans) would not feel comfortable."

At the moment the missionaries' biggest problem is the same one being faced by every Panamanian: access to U.S. dollars. The dollar is the only legal tender in Panama, and U.S. moves to freeze Panamanian assets and payments in the United States have thrown Panama's banking and commerce into a tailspin.

The Panamanian government ordered banks closed March 4 to avoid a run on deposits, but by then many banks already were limiting withdrawals and refusing to cash checks.

"Right now we're on a cash basis -- no credit cards, no checks," Eudy said of local commerce. "If a missionary did not cash a check before the banks closed last week, things could get tight if the economic situation continues here as it is."

However, the treasurer of the Panama mission organization told Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials the missionaries could cope with the dollar crunch for now.

Panamanian church services and activities have not yet been adversely affected by the national situation, missionaries said.

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BJC Panel Discusses Actions  
Of SBC Executive Committee

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

Baptist Press  
3/8/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--Recent actions by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee affecting the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs received attention during a March 7 meeting of the Washington-based agency's executive committee.

In February, the SBC executive panel:

-- Agreed to cut the SBC allocation to the Baptist Joint Committee by 10.7 percent for the 1988-89 fiscal year.

--more--

-- Declined to act on a proposal by the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee -- the SBC's representation on the Baptist Joint Committee -- to dissolve SBC institutional and financial ties with the religious liberty organization.

-- Agreed to continue sending SBC funds directly to the Baptist Joint Committee, which is comprised of nine Baptist conventions, rather than through the Public Affairs Committee.

-- Refused to allow the Baptist Joint Committee to have exhibit space at the 1988 SBC annual meeting without PAC approval.

Baptist Joint Committee executive committee members said they are pleased with the action to retain SBC ties with the Baptist Joint Committee but are concerned over the reduction in SBC funding.

Voicing support for the decision not to consider severing SBC ties, John Binder, committee member and North American Baptist Conference executive director, said he thinks the concept of jointness is stronger when financial support comes to the Baptist Joint Committee through the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget rather than through individual Southern Baptist churches.

"The Executive Committee must have done an awful lot of work," Binder said. "I was pleased."

J.I. Ginnings, a Southern Baptist representative from Wichita Falls, Texas, also affirmed the SBC Executive Committee's decision that "they want us to stay together." Last October, Ginnings voted against the proposal to disaffiliate with the Baptist Joint Committee, adopted 8-4 by the PAC.

But Ginnings said he is disturbed by the possibility of having to conduct outside funding efforts because of the cut in SBC support. Such efforts might weaken future arguments for continued Cooperative Program support of the Baptist Joint Committee, he said.

Harold C. Bennett, Baptist Joint Committee member and SBC Executive Committee president, called the potential necessity for long-term fund raising "unfortunate."

To compensate for the 10.7 percent SBC reduction -- which represents \$48,400 in funding -- the Baptist Joint Committee executive committee gave preliminary approval to a 1988-89 Baptist Joint Committee budget that would require \$103,600 in outside contributions. Original budget projections called for only \$36,000 in such contributions.

Bennett told the committee he has secured approval from PAC Chairman Samuel T. Currin for the Baptist Joint Committee to have exhibit space at the SBC annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas. He said the SBC Executive Committee is to study the situation in regard to future conventions.

In addition to discussing SBC Executive Committee actions, the Baptist Joint Committee panel agreed on plans to develop a new staff evaluation process. Last October, the Baptist Joint Committee refused to give permission for the Public Affairs Committee to conduct an independent evaluation of the Baptist Joint Committee staff but agreed to conduct its own evaluation.

A staff evaluation committee is to bring a report to the full Baptist Joint Committee next October. Southern Baptist representatives on that five-member committee are Currin and Darold Morgan, president of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

Acting on other old business, the executive panel:

-- Agreed to appoint a committee to review the agency's position statement on civil religion. The full Baptist Joint Committee voted last October to refer that action.

-- Received a response from John H. Buchanan Jr., chairman of People for the American Way, concerning a Baptist Joint Committee resolution that asked the organization to withdraw a videotape that included "portions highly critical of many Christian leaders."

Buchanan said the documentary -- which he described as a "statement of concern about religious intolerance" rather than an attack on religious leaders -- was produced in 1982 and has not been in "active use by this organization for a very long time."

Patterson Suggests  
Change For WMU

By Pat Cole

M (O)  
(SBS)

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union should be given agency status and a board of trustees elected by the Southern Baptist Convention, according to a leader in the denomination's conservative movement.

Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas, told students at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary operation of the WMU within the SBC without agency status is "discriminatory toward women."

The WMU, with offices in Birmingham, Ala., is celebrating its centennial anniversary as an auxiliary to the SBC. It receives no funding through the convention's Cooperative Program unified budget.

"I, for one, would advocate that we make them a full-scale agency, and that we give them a board of trustees and that board of trustees function exactly like the boards of all the other (SBC) institutions and agencies," Patterson said at a meeting of the Student Evangelical Forum on the seminary's Louisville, Ky., campus.

Patterson's comments came in response to a question about his position on a "marriage proposal" between the WMU and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. In January, HMB President Larry Lewis proposed that the agencies work in such close partnership that their relationship would be like a marriage.

Patterson said he is not an "advocate" of a merger between WMU and the HMB, but he added he would not be opposed to it if "that's the turn it should take." He noted a possible reorganization of the WMU is not "an area I've done any study in."

Patterson also fielded several questions regarding his stance on women in ministry.

Asked whether a person could be a biblical inerrantist and believe women can be pastors, Patterson acknowledged some inerrantists believe the Bible permits women to be pastors. The question of inerrancy deals with the "theology of the Bible" while the issue of women as pastors falls within the category of interpretation of the Bible, he said.

Patterson said he believes the Bible forbids women from serving in the "pastoral ministry." The pastoral ministry involves those who are "charged with the oversight of the church" and who function as the "primary" teacher in the church, he said.

While noting Southern Baptists churches have the right to call women as pastors, he defended the Home Mission Board's decision to refuse church pastoral assistance funds to churches that call women as pastors.

Patterson said he not only agreed with the policy from a theological standpoint, but he also surmised that most Southern Baptists do not favor women pastors. "I think you can see that by the lack of general progress of women serving as pastors in the denomination today," he said.

The question-and-answer session followed an address on the priesthood of the believer, a doctrine Patterson described as both "privilege and responsibility."

The doctrine gives Christians the privileges of direct access to God and the right to interpret Scripture, but "it does not mean we have the right to interpret the Bible any way we want to and be acceptable to God," he said.

All Scripture, he said, must interpreted "by Scripture" and "under the leadership of the Holy Spirit."

WMU Members Have Role  
In Starting Churches

By Susan Todd

N-60  
(WMLU)

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--For Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union members to be actively involved in starting new churches, they must first overcome "anti-women" mindsets, according to Carolyn Weatherford, WMU national executive director.

"There are a lot of things women need to unlearn," she said in a recent address to state WMU leaders gathered in Birmingham. "The first is the anti-women's movement. Although it is denied by some men, it is very real."

She encouraged WMU leaders to combat the movement by affirming women's roles in starting and growing churches. "Women are often afraid and timid" about starting churches, she said. "More often we go to help in the small areas where we are secure, rather than the cities" which can be more intimidating.

"We need to become aggressive risk-takers -- become confident in the Lord and the gifts he has given us," she said.

Starting churches "is not new for us," Weatherford added. "Churches have often started because of a WMU ministry already in place."

While striving to provide "A Church for Everyone," the 1988 Week of Prayer for Home Missions theme, WMU needs to grow in numbers and quality; make sure every church has some form of WMU organization; teach women and girls that everyone needs a church; emphasize the role of WMU in church starting; and provide the money for church starting, Weatherford said.

"Growing churches start churches," she said.

To make sure this is true, WMU should "grow numerically in new areas and qualitatively in old areas," she stressed. She encouraged the leaders to help "old" areas get back to acknowledging the local perspective in world awareness.

"I'm not sure that we have helped them (Southern Baptists) to be aware that we have so many people in the United States who need a church," she said.

Her childhood church home, First Baptist Church of Frostproof, Fla., has embraced that local perspective, Weatherford said. Members realized their church was not reaching into all of the community, so they established churches for three unchurched groups.

To reach the isolated and unchurched in the Frostproof area, "Someone had to learn to speak French," she said. "Someone had to learn to speak Spanish. Someone had to learn to speak 'wealthy.'"

By so doing, the church used both language and lifestyle to provide "a church for everyone" in Frostproof, Weatherford said.

But "a church for everyone" has taken on more complex and controversial meanings for others, she said, referring to the issue of differing lifestyles.

Weatherford cited the recent action taken by the Southern Baptist General Convention of California's executive board in refusing to accept nearly \$800 from Dolores Street Baptist Church in San Francisco.

The California executive board declined to accept the money "based upon interpretation of biblical principles which places Dolores Street Baptist Church in conflict with and not in sympathy with the purpose of the convention," according to news reports.

"Everyone needs a church, whether we approve of their lifestyles, tolerate their differences or ignore their needs. Everyone needs a church and everyone is different. Recognize those differences.

"In everything we do, if we are reaching the unchurched, they either are going to need to be brought into our church, or they will need a church of their own -- an organized, localized family of God."

High Court Rejects Churches'  
Challenge To Disclosure Law

N-BJC

WASHINGTON (BP)--Rejecting an appeal from 13 Jackson, Tenn.-area churches, the U.S. Supreme Court has let stand a lower ruling that churches must comply with registration and disclosure requirements in a Tennessee law governing political activity in referendum campaigns.

The Jackson churches -- nine of which are related to the Tennessee Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention -- ran into trouble in the summer of 1984, when they took out paid radio, television and newspaper advertisements urging voters to reject a referendum question to allow liquor-by-the-drink sales in Madison County. The referendum was rejected Aug. 2, 1984, on a vote of 6,514-6,474.

After the vote, State Election Coordinator David Collins received an anonymous letter complaining about the churches' political activity, including the ads, and an offer by some of the churches to provide transportation to the polls for voters who were against the liquor-by-the-drink proposal. Collins referred the matter to the local district attorney, Jerry Woodall, who in turn sought a formal opinion from Tennessee Attorney General Michael Cody.

In his opinion, Cody said the churches had violated the Tennessee Campaign Financial Disclosure Act of 1980, a law requiring the registration of political campaign committees and disclosure of funds expended in political campaigns. Because the Jackson churches had raised \$5,150 to fight the referendum, Cody said, they should be required to file after-the-fact financial statements.

When Woodall demanded disclosure, the churches filed suit, claiming the law as applied to churches violated their constitutional rights of free speech and free exercise of religion, as well as the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion.

After a trial in the Chancery Court of Madison County, Chancellor Joe C. Morris upheld the law. But the Tennessee Court of Appeals reversed Morris in August 1986. On further appeal, however, the Tennessee Supreme Court in May 1987 reinstated Morris' opinion against the churches.

In rejecting the churches' final appeal, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a one-sentence order that it found no "substantial federal question" in the case. The action marks the end of the legal ladder for the churches.

Attorneys for the churches, headed by Lee Boothby of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, argued unsuccessfully in written briefs submitted to the high court that the prior registration and financial disclosure requirements in the Tennessee law violated the free speech, free exercise and no establishment clauses of the First Amendment. Further, they argued, the state had failed to prove a "compelling governmental interest" in applying the law to non-political organizations such as churches, whose political activities were limited to referendum -- as opposed to partisan election -- campaigns.

The churches' position was backed by a friend-of-the-court brief from a broad array of church groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, Christian Legal Society, National Association of Evangelicals and National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. The brief was written and filed by Loyola (Calif.) Law School Professor Edward McGlynn Gaffney Jr. and Baptist Joint Committee General Counsel Oliver S. Thomas.

In their brief, Gaffney and Thomas argued application of the law to a religious body "distorts that body's religious message by communicating to the public that it is not a religious group acting religiously, but simply another political interest group acting out of characteristically self-interested political considerations."

They argued further that the Tennessee law "has had a chilling effect on the prophetic ministry of religious bodies" in the state.

Three Musicians Honored  
At Southwestern Seminary

N-CO  
(SWBTS)

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Three Southern Baptist musicians were honored Feb. 18 by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for their contributions to church music.

The three were recognized at an honors luncheon during Southwestern's 36th annual Church Music Workshop. The honorees are Virginia Seelig, associate professor of voice emeritus at Southwestern; Clifford Holcomb, former specialist in music promotion and associational work for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board; and Mabel Sample, professor of music at Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pa.

Seelig was recognized for her 27 years of teaching on Southwestern's faculty and numerous vocal performances across the nation.

Sample was recognized for work in Southern Baptist churches as a music educator, church musician, clinician and writer.

Holcomb was noted as one of the first five state music leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention and for 21 years of service with the Sunday School Board's church music department.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Please consider adding the following graph to the BP story released 3/2/88, titled "Baptist 'Expeditors' Ship Food Worldwide." It could be added following graph 11, which begins, "The good news is when it goes ..."

(The Southern Baptist Convention, through its Foreign Mission Board, provides its own channel through which Baptists meet hunger needs around the world. Last year Southern Baptist missionaries already in place overseas administered nearly \$8 million in 190 projects relating to world hunger. Through opportunities that arise resulting from this work many people have been led to Christ and churches have been started.)

Thanks,  
Baptist Press