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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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October 14, 1988

88-165

Foreign board transferring  
seminary title to Europeans

By Art Toalston

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Steps to give European Baptists ownership of Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, were taken by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Oct. 12.

The board approved the property transfer, along with a set of recommendations to European Baptists on the operation of the seminary.

The seminary, which has weathered various budget crises and allegations of liberal theology, has trained more than 1,000 students representing every continent since it was founded by the Foreign Mission Board in 1949.

And, according to a team of five trustees from the board that met with Baptist leaders from Western and Eastern Europe, the seminary fostered healing and a sense of unity after the devastation of World War II.

The FMB team, which was in Europe Sept. 29-Oct. 4, was created during the board's July meeting to "listen and gather information" about concerns related to the seminary. It was led by board Chairman C. Mark Corts of Winston-Salem, N.C.

The property transfer initially was requested by the European Baptist Federation Council during a meeting in West Germany attended by the trustee team. The FMB team drafted a concurring statement and a number of accompanying recommendations to European Baptists at the conclusion of its trip.

In Foreign Mission Board deliberations Oct. 12, trustees cast split votes in defeating two motions to amend the proposal. The amendments were offered by Lloyd Hansen of Memphis, Tenn., and Paige Patterson of Dallas. On the final vote, eight trustees out of 67 in attendance voted against the plan.

Corts lauded the trustees for avoiding personal clashes in debating the issue, noting trustee friends were on both sides of each vote. "I think we demonstrated today that there is no such thing as a lock-step march in Southern Baptist life," he said.

The team, in its report to the board, said the property transfer is consistent with the board's historic aim of indigenous work. Seminaries, schools and hospitals founded by Southern Baptists now are owned, operated and financed by Baptist conventions or unions in numerous countries.

The transfer also will help the seminary's finances, the team said. A \$100,000 deficit is projected this year.

Much of the seminary's deficit stems from the falling U.S. dollar, which decreases the value of the 1988 Foreign Mission Board subsidy of \$345,000, they said. European Baptists plan to earn income from the seminary property by mortgaging it, a common practice in Switzerland. It is valued at more than \$17 million.

As part of the ownership transfer, the European Baptist Federation will create a legal foundation in Switzerland, which will borrow at Swiss interest rates of about 4.5 percent but will invest the amount it mortgages outside Switzerland at about 7.5 percent interest.

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The income help the seminary both in meeting operating expenses and in undertaking maintenance and renovation of its facilities, the team said. The foreign board traditionally has not mortgaged its overseas properties.

Affirming the board's action, seminary President John David Hopper, a Southern Baptist missionary, issued a statement urging Baptists to "encircle Ruschlikon in their prayers in order that it might become the kind of instrument for evangelism, church development and the training of Christian leaders which this institution can be and should be."

Among the trustee team's recommendations to European Baptists is a request that the seminary executive board "consider the possibility for a written statement of European Baptist principles common to all European Baptists which may give expression to the seminary's biblical commitment and to which seminary teachers would subscribe."

At present, the closest thing to such guidelines is the seminary's catalog, Corts said.

"I would like to see (Ruschlikon) more in the evangelical mainstream," he added. And he hopes the seminarians will receive greater exposure to conservative scholarship.

But Baptists in Europe and the United States express their beliefs in different ways, Corts acknowledged, and he noted the trustee team is not dictating specific doctrinal statements. But at least the seminary should express "what its biblical, doctrinal parameters are," he said.

Another member of the team that traveled to Ruschlikon, Dale Cain of Lubbock, Texas, said: "Did we find everything like we'd like to find it? No." But he said the team had become convinced that transferring the property to European Baptists was "what the Holy Spirit has led us to bring to you as a recommendation."

"We seek to unify the work of spreading the gospel throughout Europe," Cain said.

Questions about the seminary's theological parameters arose during trustee committee meetings Oct. 10-11. Team members said they discussed with the seminary's 10-member faculty such questions as the virgin birth, miracles and resurrection of Christ and the creation account in Genesis' first 11 chapters. Team members said a couple of faculty members gave strong affirmations of faith, but time did not allow others to share fully their views.

Half the faculty are Southern Baptist missionaries who teach there full- or part-time.

The team voiced hope that the seminary's new Institute for Missions and Evangelism and the soon-to-be-founded lay academy in Budapest, Hungary, will strengthen European Baptists' thrust in evangelism and church planting.

The team's recommendations to European Baptists also call for:

-- A seminary charter "with policies and procedures for the operation of the seminary," including a stronger role for the executive board and president in selecting new faculty members. No such charter now exists, the team said.

-- "Broader European representation in giving counsel to the seminary, demanding accountability from the seminary and reporting to the national unions on its work and needs." The seminary's former board of trustees was disbanded 10 years ago as a cost-cutting measure.

-- Efforts to expand the financial commitment of Baptist unions, individual European Baptists and "other international Baptist constituencies which benefit from the ministry of the seminary."

At present, 34.5 percent of the seminary's \$1 million-plus budget comes from the Foreign Mission Board. European Baptist unions, churches and individuals contribute about 13 percent. Other sources account for the remainder of the budget, including other gifts from the United States and conferences at Ruschlikon.

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The trustee team endorsed the Foreign Mission Board's 1982-1992 subsidy plan for the seminary, entailing a \$5,000 yearly increase starting with a \$300,000 1982 base. After 1992, the team recommended "a gradual subsidy reduction" over as long as 15 years.

The trustees also committed themselves to sending more missionaries to the seminary as requested by European Baptists.

The trustee plan also calls for the Foreign Mission Board to have advance consideration of a proposed sale or change in use of the property.

The trustees also stipulated that the board's staff provide regular communication about the implementation of the recommendations. After transfer of ownership, the board will continue to have representation on the seminary's executive board.

Several board members questioned whether European Baptists are financially prepared to operate the seminary. Hansen moved that the board delay a vote until February and, if necessary, provide interim support from funds committed to the seminary for 1992. He urged further time for planning and for European Baptist leaders to enlist the support of church members in their respective countries.

Corts urged trustees to consider when "enough is enough" in a certain mission enterprise and move on to other endeavors. Discussions of transferring the property, he said, date back 10 years.

In earlier committee sessions, the trustee team and board staff members said they believe European Baptist funding will improve once the institution is completely their responsibility. But they acknowledge that European Baptists face a stiff challenge in assuming control of the seminary.

Hansen's motion was defeated 31-24.

Patterson moved to amend the plan, proposing an annual review of the seminary subsidy from 1990 to 1992 and the creation of a committee in 1992 to determine the extent of further funding. He cautioned against making a long-term commitment to the seminary when funding and personnel needs at that time may be greater elsewhere.

Ray England of Winchester, Ky., suggested that the board soften its financial commitment by stating "up to" 15 years rather than "over a 15-year period." Patterson's motion was defeated 33-26, and England's suggestion was incorporated into the trustee plan.

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Golden Gate trustees  
authorize endowments

By Ed Oliver

Baptist Press  
10/14/88

MILL VALLEY, Calif., (BP)--Trustees of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary authorized placing funds from the development of its master plan into an endowment and heard a progress report on its request from the Executive Committee for a special financial allocation during their fall meeting Oct. 10-12.

Following an update on development of the seminary's property, trustees unanimously agreed to have the seminary administration immediately pursue the goals of the master plan housing subdivision in a way that will be "of greatest benefit for the seminary." All funds realized from the action will be placed in the seminary endowment.

The seminary's master plan for its 148-acre property includes subdivision of 24 single-family lots and one 36-unit condominium site. In addition, the plan has provisions for a new chapel, a family life center, 93 student-faculty residential units, a child-care center, an addition to the academic building and a student center.

Seminary President William O. Crews told trustees about the seminary's request for a special allocation of \$7.8 million from Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget funds.

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"I'm pleased we had a chance to be heard" by the Southern Baptist Executive Committee's program and budget subcommittee, Crews said. "We are hoping for a favorable recommendation to the executive committee next February."

If the request is approved, Crews said, Golden Gate Seminary can better accomplish its assignment in the West through its emphases on academics, practical ministry and spiritual formation.

Trustees also authorized spending up to \$86,652.65 for road repairs, following receipt of a check from the Southern Baptist Executive Committee from the 1986-87 Cooperative Program capital needs allocation.

In other action, the trustees:

-- Accepted the resignation of Thad Hawkins, trustee from Jackson, Miss.

-- Approved a sabbatical request from F. Terrell Swift, associate professor of pastoral care, for the 1989-90 academic year.

-- Voted to have their spring meeting at the new Southern California campus in Brea, April 3-5, 1989.

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SBC survey profiles  
religious book readers

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press  
10/14/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Sixty-nine percent of adult Southern Baptists are readers of religious books, according to a survey sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's research services department.

Data on people who read fairly frequently or regularly provide a picture of readers, their preferences and concerns, said Cliff Tharp, research planning specialist at the board.

In a scientific survey of 1,072 adult Southern Baptists, 34 percent said they read religious books sometimes; 17 percent, fairly frequently; and 18 percent, regularly.

Frequent and regular readers of religious books are more likely to attend religious services more than once a week, Tharp found. They are more likely to be involved in a church leadership role and to engage in a daily period of personal worship.

While readership of religious books does not seem to be affected by church size, social class, marital status or income, retired people do seem to be slightly more frequent readers than some other occupational groups, Tharp observed.

Concerns among people who read religious books regularly overlapped significantly with those of fairly frequent readers, he said:

Regular readers ranked as major concerns among a list of 23 moral or economic problems (1) use of drugs, (2) abortion, (3) drinking alcoholic beverages, (4) child abuse, (5) high divorce rate.

Fairly frequent readers cited (1) child abuse, (2) use of drugs, (3) abortion, (4) high divorce rate, and ranked equally (5) immorality in sexual relationships and (6) parental neglect of children.

Mancil Ezell, director of the board's church media library department, said he believes the survey results "will influence the book subject areas for new purchases by media libraries in Southern Baptist churches."

He cited as an example the daily personal worship of people who read regularly or fairly frequently as "an opportunity to provide new resources for enriching personal worship," and urged media librarians to talk with readers in their churches about needs for personal worship helps.

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A local survey of concerns and subjects of interest combined with topics from the national survey "could provide a media library focused specifically for the congregation it serves, Ezell said. "Media librarians should search for and select the best resources in each subject area. The interests of Southern Baptists should be matched with the best materials."

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(BP) photo to be mailed separately to Baptist state paper editors.

CORRECTION: Please substitute the following for the 10th paragraph of the 10/7/88 BP article titled "Budget, staff still problems for BJC/PAC":

BJC Executive Director James M. Dunn noted several denominations give more per capita to the agency than does the SBC. He also said that considering funds contributed for work beyond the local church, Southern Baptists "do less than their fair share" in proportional support of the BJC. Pratt took exception to that remark, noting, "Southern Baptists should not be penalized for being generous beyond their local churches."

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

Houston church ministers  
by "sending them out"

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
10/14/88

HOUSTON (BP)--An urban Hispanic congregation with an average attendance of 70 doesn't usually sponsor multiple house churches, operate an extensive ministry to street people, be designated a "Texas Baptist Key Church" and offer a wide range of social ministries.

But Templo Cristo Te Llama in Houston is not a typical congregation.

Three years ago, Templo Cristo Te Llama was begun as a mission of Manchester Baptist Church in Houston. Since constituting as a self-supporting church in June, 1987, the congregation has outgrown its facilities five or six times, said Pastor Sergio Rios.

"We commission a family to go out and start new work nearly every month," said Rios. "We tried to promote a building fund to expand our facilities, but that didn't work with our people. Most of the people we minister to are unemployed, looking for work or else they're hourly blue-collar laborers.

"The only solution we could find was the New Testament solution: Send them out."

Up to nine house churches meet at various times throughout the week to accommodate different schedules. Total weekly attendance at all Bible studies sponsored by Templo Cristo Te Llama is about 300.

As a ministry and outreach into its predominantly Hispanic neighborhood, Templo Cristo Te Llama sponsors morning and evening English classes both for Spanish-speaking people and adult illiterates. Child care is provided for working parents attending the daytime classes.

The church also has provided assistance to people applying for temporary legal residency under the 1986 Immigration Control and Reform Act.

One of the most innovative ministries of the church is its outreach program to homeless unemployed street people, which is led by a person who once lived in the streets himself.

Eferim Arvizo, a native of Mexico, now lives in modest quarters in an annex of Templo Cristo Te Llama. Arvizo spends his days walking the streets of northeast Houston, sharing Christ with the homeless and hopeless people he finds there.

"He witnesses to them in a way they can relate to," explained Rios. "He's not wearing a white shirt and tie, carrying a big Bible in his hand. He just carries the Bible in his heart."

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In one month, Arvizo -- who speaks only Spanish -- has ministered to about 50 people and has seen 25 of them make professions of faith in Christ. His approach has been built around friendship evangelism -- building relationships with the street people.

"There are people who will stand on a corner and preach to these people or hand out leaflets, but how many are willing to hug them and take them out to eat?" Rios asked. "Some of the missions say, 'We'll feed you if you'll listen to us preach.' They're willing to trade -- to exchange this for that. But that's not the way that Jesus approached people."

The ministry-oriented approach of Templo Cristo Te Llama is a reflection of Rios' personal philosophy which, in turn, developed out of his own experiences.

"I was a drug user, living out in the world, seeing my family come apart," said Rios. "But then the Lord changed my life. He gave me my family back and gave me a reason to live."

Texas Baptists share in Rios' ministry at Templo Cristo Te Llama through gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions, which provides monthly financial assistance.

In the future, Rios hopes to see Templo Cristo Te Llama enlarge its facility in order to expand opportunities for ministry in its community.

"We're reaching out to people who wouldn't come into the church for a service, but they need Jesus, too," he said. "When you think about the street people, if anyone needs help, they do. They need a friend."

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Bob Hamblin takes early  
retirement from HMB

Baptist Press  
10/14/88

ATLANTA (BP)--Robert L. Hamblin, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's vice president for evangelism, announced plans to take early retirement, effective Jan. 1, 1989, during the board's fall meeting.

Hamblin, 60, a native of Ohio with ties to Tennessee and Mississippi, said he plans to devote the rest of his life to preaching, leading revivals, teaching and writing about evangelism.

He and his wife, Ruth, will move to Tupelo, Miss., where he will direct a charitable foundation established by the founder of Hancock Fabrics.

Hamblin was pastor of Harrisburg Baptist Church in Tupelo for 22 years, 1958-80. Previously, he was pastor of Elliston Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn.

Before he became vice president for evangelism at the Home Mission Board, Hamblin was professor of evangelism at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for two years.

At a banquet during the October board meeting, HMB President Larry L. Lewis praised Hamblin for the contributions he had made to the cause of evangelism during his six years on the HMB staff. Hamblin strengthened the staff, programs and materials to assist churches, associations and Baptist state conventions in evangelism, Lewis said.

Hamblin is a graduate of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

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