



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Mary 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 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

February 20, 1989

89-28

Annuity board chairman
names search committee

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DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist Annuity Board Chairman B.J. Martin has named a presidential search committee, describing it as balanced and "representative of the Southern Baptist Convention today."

The committee is composed of four laymen and three ministers from seven states.

Martin said he used three criteria in selecting the committee. "I have attempted to appoint a committee which would be balanced between laymen and ministers, geographically representative and representative of the Southern Baptist Convention today," he explained.

George H. Balentine Jr. will be chairman. Balentine is president and treasurer of Precision Research and Development Inc. of Greenville, S.C.

Other members are Robert Bass, president of Bass Construction Company, Richmond, Va.; Jack C. Carroll, retired pastor, Littleton, Colo.; Bobby L. Eklund, an associate evangelism director for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas; Bob R. Howard, general agent, State Mutual Companies, Independence, Mo.; Gerald H. Lord, pastor, First Baptist Church, Florence, Ala.; and William (Lonnie) A. Willis, general manager, Prudential Insurance Company, Little Rock, Ark.

Martin, retired vice president of Houston Baptist University, will be an exofficio member of the committee.

Balentine said he will contact the committee members immediately and set a meeting time and place as soon as possible.

"There is no way of telling how long this whole process is going to take. We want to be expedient, but we want to find the man the Lord wants us to have," he noted.

"I hope that folks who make recommendations will look at the guidelines set by the trustees and make sure their candidate is at least in the ballpark as far as qualifications are concerned."

The guidelines adopted by the trustees Jan. 31 were recommended by the Hay Management Consultants of Philadelphia.

The guidelines state that the candidate should be an ordained Southern Baptist minister with a recognized name and lifestyle that conforms with the Southern Baptist value system. He should be a man of clear vision with outstanding communication and public presentation skills. He should have broad convention support and acceptance and be a respected and cooperative member of an SBC church, with a solid record of service.

He needs to have empathy with current and prospective Annuity Board plan members, be approachable and able to negotiate in conflict situations. Financial management experience or management potential is necessary, with exposure to insurance issues, investments or annuities on an institutional basis.

The candidate should be able to distinguish between spiritual and financial activities and be capable of assuring the pursuit of the mission, charter and intent of the Annuity Board.

He should have satisfactory educational credentials and a professional image and spiritual conviction to assure continuing positive relations with large institutions and agencies.

N-FMB

Chinese Christians consider
ending Three-Self Movement

By Erich Bridges

SHANGHAI, China (BP)--Chinese Protestant leaders might abolish their Three-Self Patriotic Movement, according to recent reports.

Leaders of the Three-Self Movement and the China Christian Council reportedly discussed the proposal at a December meeting in Shanghai. Bishop Ding Guangxun (K.H. Ting), who heads both organizations, was said to have asked if the Three-Self Movement is still needed in light of the Christian council's growth in recent years.

The Three-Self organization was formed by Chinese Protestants in the 1950s to promote self-support, self-control and self-propagation of their churches. It represents Christians in dealings with society and Chinese government authorities. The China Christian Council handles internal church relationships, theological training, Christian publishing and the like.

Three-Self has been plagued by a negative image in China and abroad because of persistent charges that it attempts to control local churches on behalf of the government. Some church leaders now believe the Christian council could carry out Three-Self's functions more effectively, observers report.

Protestant leaders also have discussed for several years the possible formation of a single, united church body with a hierarchy and approved polity. Opposition from church groups favoring local autonomy, however, has caused leaders to slow down movement toward a national church.

Chinese Protestants now count about 5,000 churches and thousands of home meeting points, attracting millions of believers. Overall religious freedom continues to grow, according to Ding, but he has been increasingly frank about disputes between churches and provincial or local government officials who refuse to recognize Christians' rights.

"Unfortunately, we still find persons here and there, mostly lower government cadres, who lack respect for the principle" of religious freedom, Ding said in a recent interview. "There is much work yet to be done."

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Controversy surrounds
Mercer's Kirby Godsey

By Audrey Post

N-CO
Baptist Press
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MACON, Ga. (BP)--Mercer University President R. Kirby Godsey, who survived an attempt to oust him 14 months ago by a group of conservative Georgia Baptists, once again is the center of controversy over his failure to alert trustees to a multimillion-dollar operating deficit.

The \$14 million deficit, which accumulated over the past five years, was revealed publicly Dec. 2, after a two-day meeting of trustees of the Georgia Baptist school, which has campuses in Macon and Atlanta and residence centers across the state.

Godsey said then that he had used "poor judgment" in not informing the board of any deficits until 1986, and then not fully informing it of the magnitude of the problem.

University officials projected that without drastic cuts, the total operating deficit could exceed \$20 million by the time this fiscal year ends June 30.

The school's vice president for finance, Robert Skelton, whom Godsey said was responsible for the accounting procedures that masked the severity of the deficits, resigned Dec. 2.

The trustees met again Jan. 27 and approved a package of budget cuts recommended by a special trustee committee as well as a set of fiscal procedures designed to give them more control over the university's finances. Edward J. Harrell, the trustee who chaired the committee, said he believes the university can achieve a balanced budget in the next fiscal year, beginning July 1.

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Godsey's critics, both inside and outside the university, have not been soothed by the budget solutions.

They say Godsey's vision for a comprehensive university, evidenced by Mercer's rapid growth and the creations of an engineering school and a medical school in the past decade, led to the financial problems.

Further, they say his failure to make the trustees, faculty and students aware of the deficits reveals that his desire for self-aggrandizement took priority over the good of the university.

Godsey's statement Jan. 27 that he, too, was unaware of the severity of the deficits has been called "an attempt to rewrite history" by faculty, alumni and even some trustees.

Unlike late 1987 -- when some of Godsey's harshest critics supported him when a group of conservatives led by Marietta layman Lee Roberts challenged Godsey's morals, his beliefs, his relationship to Southern Baptist Convention moderates and Mercer's curriculum as inappropriate for a Baptist-affiliated university -- Godsey's support appears to be eroding:

-- The faculties of the College of Liberal Arts on the Macon campus and the College of Arts and Sciences on the Atlanta campus passed resolutions before the January trustee meeting calling for Godsey to resign. The faculties of those two colleges comprise almost two-thirds of Mercer's total faculty.

The week after the trustees met, Mercer's faculty House of Delegates requested a meeting with several trustees during a meeting with the president. The Student Government Association on the Atlanta campus also asked the president to step aside.

-- The board of trustees, which unanimously gave Godsey a vote of confidence at the December meeting when the deficits were revealed, affirmed that confidence Jan. 27 with a 28-5 vote.

One trustee, a local Superior Court judge, asked that his "no" vote be announced at the press conference after the meeting. Another trustee said that even if Godsey hadn't known about the deficits, he should have.

-- The Georgia Baptist Convention appointed a Mercer Study Committee to review the financial and administrative problems at the university. Many of the financial records the committee requested were denied by Mercer trustee Chairman Robert Steed, who said the information was "beyond the scope of the committee's charge" and "an incursion into the realm of trustee responsibility."

The GBC gives \$3 million per year to Mercer -- of a total budget of \$89 million -- but the GBC's contributions are in cash.

The Mercer Committee is to give its report to the GBC executive committee March 14.

-- Both the Georgia secretary of state's office and the federal Securities and Exchange Commission are conducting inquiries into a 1985 revenue bond issue to determine whether Mercer misrepresented its financial condition to underwriters for the \$41 million bond issue.

Steed's law firm, King & Spalding of Atlanta, was the bond counsel. One other partner in that firm, former U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell, is also a Mercer trustee. In addition, the insurance company that guaranteed the bonds is investigating.

-- Alumni and supporters of Tift College, a Baptist-affiliated women's college that merged with Mercer in 1986 and which Mercer subsequently closed, say the operating deficits prove that Mercer needed Tift's assets and endowment.

The group, known as SavTift, filed suit challenging the merger. SavTift won the first round, but the Georgia Supreme Court overturned the decision.

The district attorney reviewed the transcripts of Godsey's testimony in the 1987 trial -- during which Godsey denied that any portion of the university ended fiscal 1987 with a deficit -- but the prosecutor found insufficient evidence to bring perjury charges.

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One court official said that because the operating deficits were transferred to another account used for long-range capital expenditures, they technically no longer were deficits.

-- Several alumni also have suggested that Godsey resign.

The president has held a series of informational meetings with staff, alumni and friends of the university to assure that the school's overall condition is sound.

At a mid-February meeting with about 40 Mercer graduates, several people questioned the wisdom of paying Skelton a year's salary in severance pay when university faculty and staff are being cut to reduce the deficit. Godsey responded that Skelton was being given the same treatment as tenured faculty: 12 months' notice or 12 months' pay.

However, Mercer's faculty handbook calls for following termination procedures of the American Association of University Professors, which say tenured faculty can only be dismissed if the school has declared a "financial exigency," and then review procedures must be implemented.

Not only have Mercer officials not declared "financial exigency," Godsey has criticized the use of the term "financial crisis," saying the school has budget problems but no crisis.

Skelton, who earned \$100,000 per year, has continued to draw his salary since his Dec. 2 resignation.

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Audrey Post is a staff writer for the Macon (Ga.) Telegraph-News.

Fellowship of Baptist
Men drops dues system

N-CO
(B'hood)

Baptist Press
2/20/89

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The National Fellowship of Baptist Men will drop dues as a requirement for membership.

The executive committee of fellowship, an organization of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, took the action during its semi-annual meeting in Memphis, Tenn.

"This removes a major obstacle for the growth of the national fellowship," said James H. Smith, Brotherhood Commission president. "We found that Southern Baptists were not used to contributing directly to a denominational effort with this type of financial structure."

The fellowship, a ministry of the commission's adult division, never was intended to gather funds, but is aimed at facilitating the involvement of laymen in missions through their vocational skills and avocational interests, Smith said.

"This removes a point of contention," he said. "Now we can get on with our task."

The Brotherhood Commission assumed responsibility for salary and benefits of the director and a secretary in October 1988. It also agreed to provide a travel budget for the director.

However, the organization's operating budget for items such as printing, mailing, additional travel and meeting expenses must be raised by the fellowship.

Fellowship Director Bob Salley said the fellowship can accept donations, but the primary means of fund raising is the fellowship's concert series. The National Fellowship of Performing Artists, one of 14 groups within the fellowship, is endorsing volunteers to represent the fellowship in concerts.

Churches, associations and other organizations can schedule concerts to promote volunteer missions through Agents for the Arts in New York City. More than 21 concerts have been scheduled thus far.

The performing artist's concert series may become one of the most effective means of communicating home and foreign volunteer mission needs to Southern Baptists, Salley said. Love offerings received at concerts will support fellowship endeavors.

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Salley and his wife, Jan, were the first performing artists to offer their talents to promote the fellowship through the new effort. Since October, the Salleys have raised more than \$4,600.

Formerly, when people joined the national fellowship and paid dues, their names were entered into a computer and matched with volunteer missions requests from the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign mission boards.

"Volunteers can now join the fellowship and are registered at no cost," said Douglas Beggs, director of the commission's adult division.

Fellowship members will be offered the option to subscribe to World Mission Journal, a monthly missions magazine produced by the Brotherhood Commission, which carries fellowship news.

In other actions, the executive committee agreed to join Salley in a prayer covenant for the future of the fellowship and appointed three new fellowship coordinators.

The new coordinators are Bob Saul, New York City, performing artists; Larry Cox, Clinton, Miss., agriculturists; and Don McNeely, Jackson, Miss., health-related professionals.

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Lottery unreliable revenue raiser
Texas CLC spokesman testifies

By Ken Camp

N- Texas

Baptist Press
2/20/89

AUSTIN, Texas (BP)--The lottery is an unstable revenue raiser that cannot provide a reliable source of public school funding, Weston Ware, citizenship associate with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, told Texas lawmakers Feb. 15.

Ware testified at a hearing before the Texas Senate State Affairs Committee in opposition to bills calling for the establishment of a state-operated lottery. Also speaking against the lottery were Sue Cox of Dallas, director of the Texans Who Care anti-gambling organization, and Philip Wahlberg of Texas IMPACT, an interfaith advocacy group.

Testimony by the lottery opponents followed appearances by representatives of the Texas Public Employees Association and the Texas State Teachers Association, who spoke in favor of the state-run numbers game and urged that revenue raised be earmarked for pay raises for their members.

Ware noted the legislation as proposed would direct funds into the state's general revenue coffers and that people testifying in favor of the lottery obviously did so because they felt it could be designated to benefit their own constituencies.

He disputed the notion that public education or public employees would benefit from a state-operated lottery, pointing to the experience of California. Although a lottery was passed in that state allegedly to benefit education, the California superintendent of schools recently stated that his state's schools would be better off without the lottery.

"The schools' share of the state budget actually has dropped since 1986 by approximately \$600 million -- roughly equal to the amount raised by the lottery," said Ware.

Instead of improving funding for education, the state's schools have exchanged stable tax dollars for uncertain lottery-generated dollars, he said. "Also, because people believe that educational funding is well cared for through the lottery, they become unwilling to support bond issues and tax increases for education," he added. "The lottery is a weak reed for state employees and teachers to lean upon for support."

The lottery is a regressive tax that puts the state in the indefensible position of preying upon the poor, Cox testified. "We feel that the state should not raise money on the backs of its poorest citizens," she said.

Promoting a lottery is not an appropriate function of government, Wahlberg added, noting the state must become a "pusher" of gambling in order for the numbers game to succeed.

The lottery measure, sponsored in the Texas Senate by Hector Uribe of Brownsville, was referred to a subcommittee for further consideration.

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