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April 24, 1989

89-64

PAC supports establishing  
Religious Liberty Commission

By Jack Brymer

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee has thrown its support behind the proposed establishment of a Religious Liberty Commission but has recommended a limit on funding for the new agency.

During an April 20-21 meeting in Washington, the PAC adopted two resolutions dealing with the Religious Liberty Commission and included mention of the proposed agency in the committee's annual report to the Southern Baptist Convention.

In February, the SBC Executive Committee approved the creation of a Religious Liberty Commission after a seven-member study committee recommended establishing the new entity as "an alternative to accomplish the program and funding" of the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The action, however, specified the convention "would continue its relationship with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs through the Religious Liberty Commission."

In order to create a new entity, messengers to two consecutive SBC annual meetings would be required to approve the action by majority votes. Thus, messengers to both the 1989 annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., and the 1990 annual meeting in New Orleans must give their assent for the Religious Liberty Commission to become a reality.

In one Religious Liberty Commission-related resolution, PAC members recorded their support for the establishment of the new entity.

The resolution, which was authored by Thomas E. Pratt Jr., a pastor from Brighton, Colo., cited Southern Baptists' need for a religious liberty office that would be representative of and directly accountable to the convention. The resolution also was critical of the level of financial support given to the Baptist Joint Committee by its eight other member denominations.

In the resolution, the PAC criticized actions of the Baptist Joint Committee and its executive director, James M. Dunn. According to the resolution, the Baptist Joint Committee failed to "alert Southern Baptists to the grave threats to religious liberty posed by the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988" and to "support the Armstrong amendment to the D.C. funding bill, which sought to protect the rights of religious institutions to refrain from financial support of immoral practices, contrary to their religious beliefs."

It also cited Dunn for engaging in "personal attacks" upon Southern Baptist leaders and trustees.

In addition, the resolution criticized the agency for posing "a significant threat to the (SBC) Cooperative Program (unified budget) by encouraging individuals, churches, state conventions and the Southern Baptist Alliance to send funds directly to the BJCPA." It also alleged "substantial ties" between the Baptist Joint Committee and the Alliance.

A related resolution recommended that SBC funding for the Religious Liberty Commission not exceed the "current combined budget allocations for both entities (the PAC and the Baptist Joint Committee) for at least the next four years."

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PAC members said they hoped the resolution would dispel the idea that funds for the new agency would be taken from mission dollars. Pratt, who said he had heard and read estimates that placed the Religious Liberty Commission's first-year operating expenses at \$400,000 to \$750,000, argued publicity about the new agency had "cast us in the worst possible light."

The proposed 1989-90 SBC budget calls for \$391,796 to go to the Baptist Joint Committee and \$23,704 to the PAC.

In its annual report to the SBC, the PAC concluded by noting continued "unresolved differences regarding institutional and financial ties, as well as disagreements on issues" between itself and the Baptist Joint Committee.

"This ill serves our convention at the very time we need to be restoring our nation to biblical principles," the report states. "The Public Affairs Committee, however, feels the proposed establishment of a Religious Liberty Commission -- solely accountable to the Southern Baptist Convention -- will provide the overdue solution to the current impasse."

In a related matter, Norris Sydnor, a pastor from Mitchellville, Md., introduced a request that current PAC members not be barred from serving on the Religious Liberty Commission, if it is established. No action was taken on the request.

In other action, the PAC voted to ask the 1989 SBC Resolutions Committee to consider a resolution by Albert Lee Smith, an insurance executive from Birmingham, Ala. Smith's resolution would ask Congress to repeal the Civil Rights Restoration Act and all legislation that "treats acts of immorality as 'civil rights.'"

The PAC also considered a resolution by Robbie Hughes, a homemaker from Jackson, Miss., addressing child-care legislation. The resolution was withdrawn after Richard Land, PAC member and executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, explained that child care generally comes under the Christian Life Commission's program assignment and that the PAC is empowered to speak only on those church-state issues upon which the Baptist Joint Committee cannot agree or does not support. Land pointed out the Baptist Joint Committee has advocated the position set forth in the resolution on institutional child care passed by the 1988 SBC.

A member of the PAC, Les Csorba III of Lorton, Va., announced his resignation during the meeting. Csorba explained his new position as deputy to the special assistant to President Bush for public liaison necessitated his resignation.

Csorba did arrange a White House briefing for PAC members during which his supervisor, Doug Wead, said Southern Baptists, due to their numbers and strength, deserve more representation. Wead said part of his job as special assistant to the president for public liaison is to see that Southern Baptists get their share of tax monies back to them.

PAC members also heard an address by Lynn Buzzard, law professor at Campbell University in Buies Creek, N.C. The professor/lawyer/preacher said much of the conflict between church and state is a result of the growth of both institutions. But, he said, secularism and perceptions about the moral crisis in the nation are much more critical issues.

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Mississippi picks  
Causey as exec

Baptist Press  
4/24/89

Jackson, Miss. (BP)-- William W. 'Bill' Causey, pastor of Parkway Baptist Church in Jackson, was elected executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board April 21.

The unanimous choice of the board's executive committee which served as search committee, Causey was elected unanimously during the specially called board meeting by acclamation.

He replaces Earl Kelly who retires in August after nearly 15 years as chief executive officer of the administrative arm of Southern Baptists in Mississippi. Causey is slated to become executive director-treasurer-elect July 1 and will take office Aug. 16.

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Causey, who will be 58 in May, has been pastor of Parkway Church since 1963. Prior to that, he was pastor of Poplar Springs Drive Baptist Church, in Meridian, Miss., and from 1955 to 1957, he was assistant pastor at Parkway.

A native of Greenville, Miss., Causey is a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Causey was president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, from 1979 to 1981. He has been a trustee of the Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson and Southern Seminary.

The search committee had asked publicly for recommendations, and Causey was chosen from a file of 45 nominees.

Gene Dobbs, pastor of First Baptist Church, of Philadelphia, Miss., and chairman of the search committee told board members that Causey is "a traditional, mainstream, committed Southern Baptist."

"He is theologically conservative and openly and unapologetically committed to the total integrity of the word of God," said Dobbs, who added that Causey is not aligned with or affiliated with any group or faction within the state or the Southern Baptist Convention.

Causey and his wife, Charlotte, have three adult children.

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Former businessman named  
to FMB's lay mission post

Baptist Press  
4/24/89

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A former businessman now working for a church in Texas will enlist Southern Baptist lay people to participate in global evangelization strategies overseas.

Mike Barnett, 36, has been named transnational adviser by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, effective May 1. Barnett will oversee enlistment for the "tentmaking" and "Baptists living abroad" programs.

In April, Foreign Mission Board trustees voted to approve the tentmaking program. Tentmakers are Southern Baptists and other Great Commission Christians who choose secular work overseas as their financial support system while participating in foreign missions. Since 1972, the board has corresponded with thousands of Southern Baptists interested in doing missions while living overseas. These people have come to be known as Baptists living abroad.

Barnett has been minister of missions at Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, for the past year and a half. There he has supervised a program that includes 20 mission congregations tailored to neighborhoods in the area.

Before attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Barnett worked nine years in the steel-import business as president of Specialty Forge and Machine Co. in Houston.

Barnett has received degrees from the University of Houston and Southwestern Seminary.

He and his wife, the former Cynthia Luthstrom of Houston, have two young children.

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Jim Clark faces joy, loss  
at retirement after 35 years

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press  
4/24/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Contrasting emotions of joy and loss face James W. Clark as he begins retirement after investing 35 years at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Clark, senior vice president of publishing and distribution, will retire May 31 to end a career in which he served in eight components of the board.

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Clark feels a sense of loss because he will miss old friends, but he also feels joy and satisfaction in the knowledge of contributions he has made to the organization, he said.

At the close of a lifetime's investment in Southern Baptist publishing, Clark said he believes that the board is "the most influential institution in the history of Christendom."

"I am proud to have been a part of this tremendous ministry," he said. "I am also proud to stand in the train of those who have committed their lives to this institution."

Clark came to the board in 1954 as an audiovisual aids consultant in the Fort Worth, Texas, Baptist Book Store. He moved to Nashville in 1955 and became a Broadman Press salesman. After that, he was Broadman trade sales supervisor, 1957-59; manager of the wholesale sales department, 1959-62; manager of the church literature department, 1962-71; and then director of the Broadman division, 1971-77.

He became executive vice president in 1977, where he served until 1987, when he was named senior vice president for publishing and distribution.

At age 58, Clark has several ideas about retirement and focusing on the future.

On June 1, he will become executive secretary of the Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association, a position to which he was elected March 1. He will devote about 40 percent of his time to working with 33 denominationally owned publishing houses.

He will lead seminars and board meetings, plan the biennial convention, compile industry statistics and do liaison work with government agencies all from his home in Nashville.

His joy in retirement includes the anticipation of working with his wife, Flo, for the PCPA, and traveling. She will serve with him as an administrative assistant.

He quickly added he finds joy, if not delight in not having to file reports, do budgeting, attend meetings and keep such a strict work schedule.

Over the years at the board, one of his greatest joys has been seeing people grow in their responsibilities, he said, noting, "A high point of my career has been in the selection of personnel."

He counts it a privilege to have been one of the primary people to put Southern Baptists in the business of selling Bibles through his work to purchase the A.J. Holman Bible Company.

He now is interested in doing some writing, particularly religious satire, because the denomination "has been terribly serious the last decade or two," he said. "One of Southern Baptists' problems is that they have forgotten how to laugh at themselves."

He wants to continue to grow by learning new things, like computer programming "I don't have the first notion about it" -- and further develop some skills, like photography, he said.

A key to his satisfaction at the board was being able to accept the idea of "wholesaling the gospel instead of retailing." Clark said: "There was no trauma for me because of no one-on-one relationship like you have in the local church. It never bothered me that I was putting in information and effort at one end of the pipeline, because I knew hundreds and thousands were being reached in local churches because of those efforts, even though I didn't see people reading those materials.

"I still have exactly the same commitment to Christian publishing that I have always had. I really believe every Christian is commended to be a publisher through the telling of the Word."

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

Modern-day Paul uses direct-mail,  
bivocationalism to start churches

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press  
4/24/89

SAN DIEGO (BP)--If the Apostle Paul were starting churches in sunny Southern California, he might feel right at home working with bivocational minister Phil Hester.

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In some ways, the two men's lives mirror each other, separated only by 19 centuries yet linked by a common drive to start new churches. Both had mid-life career changes, both took on secondary jobs to help them start churches and both used direct mail to spread the gospel.

"Paul was the first one to use direct mail by writing his epistles, and each one was written in a different context that was sensitive to the needs of his particular audience," Hester says. "We are learning to use that concept, known in today's business world as marketing research strategy, to start new churches in a strongly secular world."

Hester, 48, is the only known totally self-supported Southern Baptist church planter in Southern California.

That call to church starting evolved during a career in Houston as a private businessman, and culminated recently during his days as an older student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

"I had resisted my call to ministry for 20 years when a series of four family-related deaths in three months caused me to re-evaluate my life," he says. "I was the typical Yuppie, trying my best to be worth a million dollars."

That was when he and his wife, Suzanne, decided to sell the marketing services firm he had founded and enroll in seminary. It was the step of faith that changed his life, he says today.

During seminary, Hester began refining that calling. He offered his services as a church-growth communications consultant and worked as director of communications for the seminary.

Word soon spread about his marketing strategy for churches, where he adapted secular marketing principles to a Christian perspective. After graduation, San Diego Southern Baptist Association director of missions Wade McKinley and Del Cerro Baptist Church pastor Sam Williams asked him to come to California to help them start churches.

That's when he was able to put his newfound strategy to use full time. The Hesters moved to the San Diego area, where he founded North Star Communications, a one-man firm for church-growth communications, strategy and implementation.

Hester's modest income as a consultant now allows him to apply personally the principles to church starting. And his position as volunteer church starter on the staff of Del Cerro Baptist Church gives him inroads into the communities he tries to reach.

That bivocational status played prominently in the starting of one of San Diego's newest Southern Baptist churches, which held its first service Easter Sunday.

Northstar Community Church, which had 120 people in attendance, meets in Jerabek Elementary School in Scripps Ranch, an upscale community of 15,000 residents who are 87 percent unchurched. Prior to the church start, only three churches -- none Southern Baptist -- were in existence and meeting in rented office space.

"Because I'm bivocational, Northstar is able to channel what would be my salary into outreach and community ministry. It eventually will be able to provide at least \$1,500 a month for another church start," he says.

"Bivocational ministry is the wave of the future if we are to take our mission seriously. That will be the only way we can put pastors into urban areas for a long term basis. The average two-year term of a Baptist pastor will not grow a church from scratch."

Hester, who moved into a community near Scripps Ranch so he could live on the church field and serve as pastor, started the church using his marketing research strategy.

In addition to performing a demographic study on the community, he used other creative ways of reaching the unchurched population -- like placing radio ads on popular secular stations and newspaper ads in the entertainment section rather than religion pages of the newspaper.

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"This is not Madison Avenue selling, which is persuading people to do something or buy a product that they may not need," he says. "Marketing strategy is identifying people's needs and tailoring services or products to meet those needs. That's exactly what the Apostle Paul did; he identified needs and met them with the gospel."

Hester believes a strategy with demographic studies gives a pastor expanded sermon topics because he knows the specific needs of his audience. And the congregation is able to define its ministry according to the community's needs rather than the congregation's needs.

"Marketing takes the guesswork out of meeting the needs of your community," he says.

The figures bear him out. More than 600 unchurched people have been added to four Southern Baptist churches since July. One of those -- Del Cerro's Cinema 21, a church started in a popular movie theatre -- averaged 225 regular participants within three months of its first service.

"In the last decade, only two of our 98 existing churches had shown any growth. As a denomination, we've only successfully planted two churches here in the last 15 years, though we've started many that have failed within two years," he explains.

When contacted by a church, Hester first leads the congregation to conduct a self-audit. The anonymous poll provides Hester the opportunity "to know the heart of the congregation" -- its perception of itself and its vision for the future.

Next, "external-felt needs research" provides a marketing profile of the community the church hopes to reach. And it provides a means of identifying community needs before a church is ever formed.

For example, Hester says, one new church was designed for a community of young professionals who the demographics revealed "were mortgaged to the hilt and were walking on the edge of financial strain."

"They were living one paycheck from disaster," he notes. "We named the church New Hope as a means of invigorating them and providing a positive image of the gospel in their minds.

"People everywhere are looking for meaningful relationships. And by using tools such as marketing strategy, we are looking for the God-fearers in society ... those unchurched individuals who believe in God and are making an effort to find him.

"We are attempting to call out those people who have a receptivity to the gospel and to reach them before they gravitate to the cults or remain in their lost condition.

"That's the harvest the Holy Spirit has prepared for us. Our challenge is how we do the harvesting.

"The old-fashioned sickle is one way, but I'd rather have a 1989 combine that can do the job much faster with lasting results."

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