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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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September 22, 1989

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Baptist volunteers mobilize
for hurricane relief efforts By Mary E. Speidel & Joe Westbury

CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP)--As Hurricane Hugo hit the United States mainland Sept. 21 and 22, Southern Baptist volunteers headed for the South Carolina coastline and the Caribbean to begin relief efforts.

Hugo tore through the Caribbean Sept. 16-20, destroying buildings, downing power lines and leaving thousands of people homeless. With winds up to 145 miles per hour, the hurricane slammed ashore at Charleston, S.C., early Sept. 22.

Relief plans had not yet been completed Sept. 22, since needs still were being assessed, said Tim Yarbrough of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, who is coordinating the agency's Hugo relief efforts.

Relief officials could not immediately determine damage to Baptist property in the Charleston area, where Southern Baptists' oldest congregation, historic First Baptist Church, is located.

Relief projects on some of the Caribbean islands still are pending for similar reasons, said Boyd O'Neal, associate director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's volunteer department. "We're waiting on missionaries to assess the damages and tell us what the needs are," he said.

Southern Baptist disaster relief teams from Alabama and Tennessee were enroute to South Carolina Sept. 22 to feed people in the wake of Hugo, said Yarbrough. The teams will rendezvous in Columbia, where their efforts will be coordinated with those of local civil defense and Red Cross units, he said.

Meanwhile, North Carolina Baptist Brotherhood volunteers were on standby and were to be followed by disaster relief units from Mississippi, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Illinois and Missouri if needed.

Shortly before dawn Sept. 22, 15 volunteers from the Baptist Men organization in Tennessee left Nashville for South Carolina with Tennessee Baptists' disaster relief feeding unit, an 18-wheel truck equipped with a food supply unit, said Dianne Hughes of the state's Brotherhood Department.

That team was to be relieved Sept. 25 by volunteers from Knoxville, Tenn., and later by teams from Clinton Baptist Association in the state, she added.

Nine Baptist Men volunteers from Alabama's Elmore Baptist Association left within hours of the Tennessee group to transport Alabama Baptists' 18-wheel feeding truck. The unit, capable of providing 5,000 meals a day, also is equipped with a water purification unit and shortwave radio. The first Alabama disaster group was to be relieved Sept. 23 by volunteers from Birmingham Baptist Association.

Southern Baptist hurricane relief efforts in the Carribbean are being coordinated by the Foreign Mission Board and the Brotherhood Commissssion, said John Cheyne, the foreign board's director of human needs.

Six teams of 10 to 12 people each have been requested for Saba, St. Eustatius, Antigua, Guadeloupe, St. Kitts and Nevis.

A team of 10 volunteers from Gainesville and Sautee, Ga., were to spend Sept. 24-Oct. 1 repairing damages from Hugo's blast in Guadeloupe. The volunteers were to do construction, electrical and general clean-up work on Baptist churches and missionary homes, said O'Neal.

Four Baptist churches on Guadeloupe were destroyed by the hurricane, according to Southern Baptist missionary Dan O'Dell. Some areas of the island have reported destruction of 90 percent of the homes.

The team headed for Guadeloupe is coordinated by Stanley Hill, a layman at Harmony Hall Baptist Church in Gainesville. Hill, an auto assembly worker, said he had to act quickly to coordinate volunteers after he was notified of the need Sept. 19.

But Hill didn't mind the short notice. "I've always said if the Lord wanted me to go, just let me know what I need to do," said the volunteer, who helped twice with Hurricane Gilbert relief in Jamaica.

Two other Georgia groups are planning relief trips, said Bob Green, director of Baptist Men and disaster relief coordinator for the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Bo Stanley, director of missions for Rehoboth Baptist Association in Centerville, Ga., is coordinator of a team expected to go to the Netherlands Antilles island of Saba in early October. They are to repair a hospital and the house of a Southern Baptist missionary journeyman couple on the island, according to O'Neal.

A third group of Georgia Baptist volunteers is expected to travel Oct. 7 to an island yet to be decided, said Green.

Southern Baptists interested in helping with relief efforts should contact the Baptist Men's director at their state Baptist convention, Yarbrough said. Southern Baptists who want to contribute to the Foreign Mission Board's relief fund should send gifts designated to the general relief fund, board officials said. The fund is low at this time, they said.

None of the 131 Southern Baptist foreign missionaries in the Caribbean were harmed, said Bill Damon, FMB associate director for Brazil and the Caribbean. Reports on home missionaries in the region are not yet complete, according to Southern Baptist Home Mission Board officials.

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Committee changes direction
of religious liberty proposal

By Marv Knox

N-CO

Baptist Press
9/22/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Executive Committee has rescinded its recommendation to create a Religious Liberty Commission and is considering giving the convention's religious liberty assignment to its Christian Life Commission.

Executive Committee members approved the measure Sept. 18, during its fall meeting in Nashville.

Their action halted creation of the Religious Liberty Commission, which would have required approval of messengers to two consecutive Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings, held each June.

Changes in the Christian Life Commission's program assignment, which are necessary for the commission to work on religious liberty issues, would not take effect until approved by messengers to an SBC annual meeting.

The Religious Liberty Commission was proposed by the Executive Committee last February "as an alternative to accomplish the program and funding" of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The Baptist Joint Committee is a First Amendment/religious liberty organization comprised of nine Baptist denominations, based in Washington.

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The Baptist Joint Committee has been a point of contention within the SBC for most of this decade. Detractors have said the BJC is too liberal, faulting it for not supporting school-prayer and anti-abortion amendments. Supporters have said it upholds the historic Baptist belief in church-state separation and cannot get involved in moral concerns except as they deal with religious liberty.

Three special Baptist Joint Committee study committees have been appointed by the Executive Committee since September 1986. Messengers to the SBC annual meetings have turned back motions to defund the BJC.

The original Religious Liberty Commission proposal was to come before messengers to this year's SBC annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev. But SBC President Jerry Vines asked the Executive Committee to "defer its recommendation" for a year. Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., asked for the delay in order to keep the focus of the annual meeting "on presenting Christ in Las Vegas."

Meeting just prior to the Las Vegas convention, the Executive Committee concurred. Members amended their original proposal by moving all dates and references to the Las Vegas convention to 1990, when the SBC is to meet in New Orleans.

The motion to rescind the Religious Liberty Commission proposal and transfer the program assignment to the Christian Life Commission was proposed by Charles Sullivan, immediate past chairman of the Executive Committee and current chairman of its administrative and convention arrangements subcommittee.

Sullivan, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lenoir City, Tenn., told Executive Committee members he had never worked on anything which he felt was "more clearly led of the Lord" than the original Religious Liberty Commission proposal.

But he cited four reasons why such a proposal had become "utterly impossible": a widespread belief that cost of a new commission would take money from missions, and concerns about funding of the Baptist Joint Committee, selection of SBC representatives on the BJC and "dual trackism," or funding more than one agency for one task.

James T. Roach, an attorney from Albuquerque, N.M., and chairman of one of the Baptist Joint Committee study committees, expressed reservations about scuttling the Religious Liberty Commission.

"If the RLC is a better alternative, then (its creation) would be a matter of education and information -- to communicate the idea to Southern Baptists," he said.

"The danger of assigning religious liberty to the Christian Life Commission is that it's difficult for the CLC to deal with it on a long term. I'm afraid this would relegate this issue to a level of obscurity. ... Up against abortion, hunger, gambling and such issues, religious liberty would find it difficult to compete."

Walter S. Tomme Jr., pastor of Tyson's Community Church in Arlington, Va., countered: "I was concerned that religious liberty issues would lose out to more compelling social concerns, but I changed my mind. It would appear the Christian Life Commission could effectively tackle these issues with very carefully delineated roles."

Sullivan's proposal routed the issue to two Executive Committee subcommittees.

The program and budget subcommittee will work with the Christian Life Commission to revise the commission's program statement "to give it authority to act on religious liberty matters."

That subcommittee will revise the program statement of the SBC Public Affairs Committee, the 18-member standing committee through which the convention relates to the Baptist Joint Committee, "taking into consideration the expanded role of the Christian Life Commission in religious liberty matters."

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It also will propose a 1990-91 SBC Cooperative Program unified allocation budget that "takes into consideration the changes made in the program assignments to the Christian Life Commission and the Public Affairs Committee."

The administrative and convention arrangements subcommittee will study any amendments that might be needed to SBC Bylaw 18, which regulates standing committees.

The issue probably will be presented to messengers to the SBC annual meeting next summer in New Orleans, said William F. Harrell, pastor of Abilene Baptist Church in Martinez, Ga.

"The program and budget subcommittee will begin the task of studying the revision of the program statements," Harrell said. "We may have a special meeting of a study group, but we probably will expand our January meeting (in which the subcommittee annually prepares the next year's allocation budget) by a couple of sessions, but the preliminary work will be done.

"Then we will work on it some more in February (during the full Executive Committee meeting) and should have a revision ready so the convention can work on it in June."

Settle BJC 'issue,'
Vines urges committee

By Marv Knox

N-CO
Baptist Press
9/22/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention should have an opportunity to determine its relationship to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs "in a clear-cut, uncomplicated way," SBC President Jerry Vines urged.

Vines made his plea during a sermon preached to the SBC Executive Committee Sept. 18 in Nashville.

The request came just after the Executive Committee voted to rescind its proposal for a Religious Liberty Commission in Washington and to consider assigning the convention's religious liberty program to the SBC Christian Life Commission.

Last February, the Executive Committee proposed the Religious Liberty Commission "as an alternative to accomplish the program and funding" of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a nine-denomination First Amendment/religious liberty organization in Washington.

The proposal was to have come before messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., in June. But the Executive Committee honored Vines' request to defer the proposal for a year so that messengers to the annual meeting could focus "on presenting Christ in Las Vegas."

Consequently, the issue was scheduled to come before messengers to the 1990 annual meeting in New Orleans next June. Following the Executive Committee's September action, the issue still should come up, but with messengers voting on assigning religious liberty to the Christian Life Commission, the SBC's moral concerns agency.

Reflecting on those recent events and the impending decisions, Vines told the Executive Committee: "I requested that this committee defer its recommendation relative to the Religious Liberty Commission. I did it as a matter of timing. I felt our emphasis should be upon evangelism in Las Vegas. You graciously granted my request; God honored it, and evangelism was the focus in Las Vegas.

"Tonight, in that same spirit, I make another request. I believe the time has now come to settle the issue of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. ...

"I would like to request that you ascertain the facts concerning the funding of the Baptist Joint Committee and provide the same for publication in our Baptist papers, thus enabling our people to clearly understand them.

"Further, I request that this committee provide the messengers at the New Orleans convention with the opportunity to settle this issue among us in a clear-cut, uncomplicated way. Let it be done with Christian grace, denominational statesmanship and without rancor.

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"Whatever the outcome, let the majority not gloat, the minority not gripe, and let us move on."

Moderate Southern Baptists have defeated several attempts to remove SBC funding for the Baptist Joint Committee. Asked if he would encourage conservatives to "move on" should moderates sustain full support for the Baptist Joint Committee next summer, Vines told Baptist Press: "I will take no position on the matter. I'm just saying, let's take it to the convention and settle it once and for all."

James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, said the Executive Committee's proposal to move the religious liberty assignment to the Christian Life Commission ignores SBC mandate.

"Once again, the Executive Committee is ignoring the repeated, explicit and clearly understood action of the convention," Dunn said, citing a "54 percent to 46 percent vote not to tinker with the budget of the Baptist Joint Committee last summer in Las Vegas."

Of the process for proposing the program assignment change, Dunn added: "They're changing the way Southern Baptists function by making the Executive Committee a governing board or ruling body. That bodes ill for the future of a vital denominational process in the SBC."

"Secondly, if followed to its logical conclusion, this action would downgrade, obscure and confuse the Southern Baptist witness to religious liberty. It would make religious liberty nearly a cafeteria-line item in the Christian Life Commission agenda."

"Last, the current course of action rejects long-standing relationships with other Baptist bodies. It rejects the reputation and relationship of this agency that has been built over a 53-year period, which cannot be duplicated, at least not quickly."

Asked if the Baptist Joint Committee can get enough supporters to New Orleans to sustain its relationship to the SBC, Dunn responded: "I don't even think that is the question. The Baptist Joint Committee will be sustained by Southern Baptists, whatever the vote at the convention and whatever the line item in ... the budget."

Richard Land, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, said his agency would cooperate in the process ratified by the Executive Committee.

"As executive director, I and the staff will comply with the request of the Executive Committee that we work with the Executive Committee staff to prepare an amended program statement and budget figures that we feel would be necessary," he said.

"We are prepared to do whatever it is that the SBC wants us to do within the limits of our resources and abilities. If the convention wants us to take on a religious liberty assignment, we will do our best to comply with that wish. If they want us to continue as we are now, then we will do that. We have stayed scrupulously within our present program assignment."

The proposed addition of religious liberty to the commission's program assignment would make its task easier, Land noted: "Presently, we have primary responsibility for encouraging Southern Baptists in Christian citizenship. But we are limited from addressing the limitations and parameters of Christian involvement that would be dictated by Baptists' understanding of religious liberty and separation of church and state."

"The added assignment would, on the other hand, give us a more comprehensive program assignment which will include the tasks we have to perform. Whether that will be difficult will depend upon the resources we are given to take on a new task."

The charge that a focus on religious liberty would be lost among the commission's other assignments is not accurate, he said: "Presently, we have to strive to keep it out of what we do. For Baptists, when you deal with moral issues, there is a church-state, religious liberty dimension."

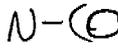
Albert Lee Smith, chairman of the SBC Public Affairs Committee, an 18-member standing committee through which the convention relates to the Baptist Joint Committee, said his group would abide by the will of the convention.

"We are a servant of the SBC and the Executive Committee, which decides the course it will take," said Smith, a former U.S. congressman and an insurance executive from Birmingham, Ala. "My only concern is that the Southern Baptist point of view on religious liberty and First Amendment issues is promulgated to Southern Baptists, to educate them and motivate them to take whatever actions are necessary.

"If that can be done in this manner, that's up to this body to decide."

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Executive Committee adopts
financial disclosure policy

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By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
9/22/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Non-Southern Baptist Convention entities which receive funds from convention sources will be required to make full financial disclosure under a policy adopted by the SBC Executive Committee.

During its Sept. 18-19 meeting in Nashville, the committee adopted a policy requiring that any non-SBC entity "requesting funds ... as part of their request, disclose all sources of income for the past fiscal year and proposed fund-raising activities."

The three non-SBC entities supported by the convention are the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Baptist World Alliance and Religion in American Life.

BWA, an organization of Baptists around the world, last year received \$387,000. RIAL, a non-denominational organization to promote religion in America, received \$12,000, and BJC, a Washington-based religious liberty coalition of nine Baptist Bodies in the United States and Canada, received \$391,796.

Although not SBC entities, for years the BWA and BJC have made direct budget requests to the convention through the Executive Committee's budgeting process.

BWA and RIAL have been funded through the SBC Operating Budget, which also funds the operation of the Executive Committee and expenses of the annual meeting. Until 1988, the BJC was funded through the Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, which provides monies to all SBC agencies. In 1988, the BJC allocation became a line item in the SBC Operating Budget, which is administered by the Executive Committee.

The BJC, to which the SBC relates through an 18-member Public Affairs Committee, has been controversial in recent years. It has survived five attempts in the last six years either to defund or to alter the method by which funding is provided.

Three special Executive Committee committees also have been appointed to study the relationship between the SBC and BJC, control of funding and, ultimately, creation of an organization to represent Southern Baptists on religious liberty/separation of church and state matters in Washington. (See separate story.)

The new policy of full financial policy attempts to deal with a sore spot with some conservatives on the Executive Committee: that the BJC receives direct funding from at least three state conventions, Texas, North Carolina and Virginia, and is supported by other SBC organizations, churches and individuals.

Conservatives have sought to determine specific sources of the income, including the names and addresses of supporters, and have alleged the BJC is involved in direct fund raising.

James M. Dunn, executive director of the BJC, has pledged to provide income data "in so far as possible." The data, he said, will be provided to members of the BJC at their annual meeting in early October, and then included in the budget request made to the Executive Committee's program and budget subcommittee when it meets in January 1990.

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Guy Sanders III, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lake Wales, Fla., told Executive Committee members the new policy was recommended "so that all people requesting funds -- whether they be agencies of the convention or non-related entities that receive funding from the convention -- should go through the same process of making requests and giving us information."

He made his remarks after committee members heard a report from the business and financial plan workgroup on a new provision in the convention's Business and Financial Plan -- adopted at the 1989 annual meeting -- which requires each agency of the convention to report on fund-raising activities.

"This is the first activity (on the new provision) ... and some refinements and fine tuning needs to be done," Sanders said.

In addition to adopting the new policy, the Executive Committee, upon recommendation of its business and finance subcommittee, also opted not to request funds in the SBC Operating Budget for the three organizations, as has been the practice for many years.

Subcommittee chairman David Hankins, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church of Lake Charles, La., pointed out the 1989-90 SBC Operating Budget is \$3,638,370, while the requested budget for 1990-91 is only \$2,401,268.

"You will note there is a drastic reduction in the amount (of the 1989-90 budget) and the amount being requested (for 1990-91)," Hankins said. "We need to explain that we are not being as generous or as frugal as it may appear, although we're being that, we think.

"We have made some changes so that no longer is the Executive Committee going to make requests for those entities and groups for which we disperse funds but which we do not make requests for officially.

"We are not including in our request funds for the BWA or the BJC or RIAL. Each of those entities can make their own requests. Two of them ordinarily have made requests, so if we do it, it is duplication.

"We are requesting only the part for which we are responsible," Hankins said.

The SBC Operating Budget request was among the requests made by the agencies of the SBC during the September meeting. More formal requests will be made during a meeting of the program and budget subcommittee when it meets in January 1990 to plan the 1990-91 budget for presentation at the 1990 annual meeting in New Orleans.

The agencies of the convention requested \$144,996,027, which is a 7.57 percent increase over the 1989-90 basic operating budget of \$134,787,543. The amount of the 1990-91 budget will be determined by actual receipts in the 1988-89 budget, which is concluded Sept. 30.

In other action during the September meeting, the Executive Committee:

-- Discussed but declined to act on a proposal presented in two of the subcommittees which would have appointed a committee to study the possibility of setting up an "operations audit" committee of the Executive Committee.

The proposal was made in the program and budget and the business and finance subcommittees, but did not come to the floor in plenary session.

Proposers of the "operations audit" said it would assist the Executive Committee to study operations of the agencies and make recommendations for more efficient and economical operations.

Opponents said it would interfere in internal affairs and supplant the role of the trustees of the national agencies, who have responsibilities for studying operations for efficiency and economy.

-- Adopted a resolution of appreciation for Darold H. Morgan, who is retiring as president of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

-- Opted to maintain the present formula whereby the six seminaries affiliated with the convention are funded. Funding through budget year 1994-95 will be based on the 1989-90 figures.

-- Expressed appreciation to Southern Baptists "for their faithful giving that has resulted in increased Cooperative Program receipts and significant gains in contributions" to home and foreign missions offerings.

The expression of appreciation came after members were told receipts through the third quarter of the 1988-89 budget year were \$103,701,108, or 3.43 percent above the the comparable period of the previous budget year.

Hankins said: "We appreciate what our Southern Baptist people are doing, especially in the light of some hard economic times in places like Louisiana, where individuals and churches are struggling because of the downturn in the economy.

"We are thankful for faithful Southern Baptists who continue to insist and encourage their churches to give through the state conventions to the national program.

"All of us need to dig deeper and sacrifice more and encourage one another to give more support to our wonderful agencies, but we are grateful to Southern Baptists for being faithful to the causes of God and our convention," he added.

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Missionary denounces board
policies on divorce, women

By Erich Bridges

N-FMB

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GREENSBORO, N.C. (BP)--A Southern Baptist missionary claims she has been victimized by outmoded Foreign Mission Board policies and ignored by mission officials after separating from her husband.

Collis Hill Charlton, 42, made her complaints public during a Sept. 20 news conference in Greensboro, N.C. Mrs. Charlton, of Trinity, N.C., said her husband, former missionary Paul Charlton of High Point, N.C. left her and their two young daughters last December, four months after the couple returned to North Carolina on medical leave from Brazil, where they had worked as missionaries since 1981.

Since then, she and her children have been forced to rely on her parents for financial support, she said. The Charltons now are legally separated and Mrs. Charlton anticipates their divorce will be final by early December.

During this ordeal, Mrs. Charlton charged, various mission board officials have ignored or dealt inadequately with her plight, refused to split salary payments between her and her husband after they parted, and declined to send her back to Brazil as a single missionary, despite formal requests for her return from Brazilian Baptist colleagues and fellow missionaries in Brazil.

In a statement, Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks said: "Those from the Foreign Mission Board involved with Collis Hill Charlton deeply regret the trauma and anguish she and her family have suffered. Unfortunately the causes for it are beyond our control.

"Our perception of events, actions and attitudes differ greatly from hers on many issues. Regrettably, many of these perceptions may remain unchanged. However, I do know that our staff and board share common desires and motives seeking to relate compassionately and fairly with her and all other missionaries."

At least thirteen staff members, trustees and others related to the mission board have communicated with or sought to assist the Charltons, according to Parks. "What Collis has described as lack of concern was due, in most cases, to lack of information provided to the staff," he said.

"There has been assistance that she has not acknowledged in her statement. Action was taken by the staff when we had information and not because of pressure from other individuals.

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"If mistakes were made or proper sensitivity not expressed by me or any other staff member, I regret it and apologize. If it did occur it was a mistake of the head and not the heart. I feel much of the problems are due to misunderstandings."

Mrs. Charlton charged at the news conference that the Foreign Mission Board treats married women missionaries as "appendages" of their husbands, and flatly refuses to consider exceptions to its policy against allowing any divorced person to serve as a missionary, whatever the circumstances of the divorce.

The board cannot continue operating under "19th century policies which are prejudiced, uncharitable and unbiblical," she said. And board staff members, she added, "are afraid of dealing with the issues because of political strife in the (Southern Baptist) convention."

Foreign Mission Board officials responded they tried to help the Charltons salvage their marriage through counseling, then "bent over backwards" to continue providing financial support to Mrs. Charlton and her children after Charlton resigned as a missionary Feb. 17. Mrs. Charlton will continue to receive a single missionary's full salary and support package through December 31, officials said, unless she finds other employment first.

As for the divorce issue, mission staff members said they have no choice but to abide by the board's longstanding policy against sending divorced missionaries overseas unless the policy is changed by board trustees.

The policy barring divorced missionaries has existed throughout the Foreign Mission Board's history. A 1980 board statement on divorce listed several reasons for the policy: biblical concerns about divorce, the missionaries' need to model the highest Christian ideals of marriage and personal conduct in foreign cultures where they work, strong opposition to divorce in some overseas churches and conventions, and the need for strong missionary marriages and families to withstand the strain of life overseas.

The policy is being studied by a board trustee committee which will deliver a report at an upcoming trustee meeting.

"This is the second in-depth, worldwide study of the matter of divorce which the board has undertaken in 10 years," Parks said. "There are many complexities in biblical teaching regarding divorce as related to those in Christian leadership roles, including missionaries. Scholars of equal devotion and intellect do not agree. Southern Baptists do not agree. This disagreement is not one of the issues in the convention controversy. It long predates that. People from both sides of the controversy have varying views about divorce."

"This matter is complicated significantly by the sending of missionaries into 116 different countries. The cultures, local laws and variety of Baptist views in these countries increase the likelihood of a decision that is unacceptable to some. We are prayerfully honestly reviewing the qualification for missionaries regarding divorce."

Brazil is heavily Roman Catholic and the Roman Catholic Church is a powerful social force. Roman Catholicism traditionally has condemned divorce.

As missionaries the Charltons lived in Recife, Brazil, where both taught music students at the Seminary for Christian Educators and the North Brazil Baptist Theological Seminary.

In January of 1988, according to Mrs. Charlton, her husband "suffered a drastic personality change and showed symptoms of emotional stress." They returned to the United States in August of that year for professional counseling at the recommendation of the Foreign Mission Board and a psychologist in Brazil.

The mission board recommended a psychiatrist, and Charlton received some counseling without the participation of his wife or children. In October 1988, the mission board notified Charlton that the Brazilian seminary had sent a letter "uninviting" him to teach there because of rumors about his relationship with a Brazilian female student, Mrs. Charlton said. In December the Charltons separated. Charlton moved to High Point and later resigned as a missionary. Mrs. Charlton eventually moved in with her parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Woodrow Hill of Trinity.

Mrs. Charlton said she received little money from her husband when he left and none afterward, and that he closed their joint bank account and had Foreign Mission Board funds sent to a new account in his name at a different bank. Foreign Mission Board officials would not divide their support into separate payments until Nancy Curtis, Woman's Mission Union executive director in North Carolina, intervened on her behalf, Mrs. Charlton claimed.

In addition, her husband obtained a loan from the mission board's credit union for which she also is liable, and returned to Brazil to sell their belongings for cash, she said. At her request, missionaries prevented him from taking the belongings by padlocking their house in Recife, she said.

In meetings, telephone conversations and correspondence with mission board officials, including trustee Chairman C. Mark Corts and board president Parks, Mrs. Charlton said she was told she could not return to Brazil as a divorced missionary, despite her unfortunate circumstances.

Mrs. Charlton concluded a lengthy statement at the news conference by saying the mission board failed her in three ways:

-- "The lack of proper concern and attention to a family in crisis. ... Paul's medical care was not handled properly and his family was ignored until too late."

-- "The status of married women (missionaries). Are they employees? If so, why do they not receive salary or social security in their name? ... There is no security for the married woman with the Foreign Mission Board for she is essentially a nonentity ... yet a married woman must be a qualified missionary who is appointed equally with her husband."

-- "The issue of divorce and treatment of situations individually, and specifically my return to Brazil. I cannot understand the biblical or moral grounds on which the board can deny my return to a God-called mission. My biblical understanding is that when a woman is abandoned by her husband, and when adultery is involved, she is perfectly free, even to remarry, and should 'retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to (her) and to which God has called (her)'" (a reference to I Corinthians 7:17 in the New Testament).

In his response, Parks said the board's policy regarding salary and social security "rather than discriminating against married women, is deliberately shaped to provide more support for the whole family. We have not felt it was fair to discriminate against the overwhelming majority who stay married in order to accommodate the two or three missionary families who experience divorce in a year.

"Once it was clear the (Charlton) family had separated, Collis was provided 60 percent of the couple's income along with medical care, housing allowance and other assistance to the family."

Contacted by Baptist Press for his reaction, Paul Charlton said he supported his wife's position that the Foreign Mission Board does not have legitimate grounds in forbidding her return to Brazil. "The missionary co-workers want her back and the Brazilian Baptists want her back," he said. "The contention that she is not fit to serve because she's divorced is ridiculous and it's an outdated and unfair policy."

But Charlton expressed regret that his wife chose to "hang all our laundry out in public." And he claimed her statement, as reported by several newspapers, contained exaggerations and half-truths "I don't think it does any good for the (mission) work. I don't think it will do her any good in the long run, and it certainly won't be a beneficial thing for our children."

In an interview, Mrs. Charlton said she did not expect the mission board would agree to send her back to Brazil, but she hoped to be "instrumental" in changing board policies by "appealing to Southern Baptist people."

Mrs. Charlton is seeking employment in music education on the college level in the United States.