



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committ:
901 Commerce #7:
Nashville, Tennessee 372:
(615) 244-23:
Alvin C. Shackelford, Direc:
Dan Martin, News Edit:
Marv Knox, Feature Edit:

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201
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

May 24, 1990

90-72

HMB cites critical need
for volunteers at SBC

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--With the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting nearing, a "critical need" for witnessing volunteers has surfaced.

"We could use as many as 1,100 to 1,200 more people" in the door-to-door witnessing project, said Howard Ramsey, director of personal evangelism for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

A pastor-teacher has been assigned to each of the 117 participating area churches. Another 400 people have agreed to be part of neighborhood witnessing teams. However, Ramsey said he had hoped for more than 2,000 volunteers.

Participating New Orleans area churches also include 16 from the Gulf Coast Baptist Association in Mississippi, 35 National Baptist churches, one French-Haitian church and five Hispanic churches.

Additional volunteers are needed to meet the requests of participating churches. Ramsey noted that one or two churches have said they will "take as many volunteers as are available."

The personal evangelism project will take place Saturday, and volunteers are asked to attend training sessions and a rally Friday.

Ramsey sees Friday's required training as one reason the number of volunteers is not what was expected. He said some people who would otherwise be willing to participate in the witnessing project could not come early.

The first meeting for the witnessing effort will be at 3 p.m. Friday, June 8, for pastor-teachers, followed by a 4:30 p.m. rally for all participants. The volunteers will visit homes of New Orleans area residents Saturday, and area churches will hold special evangelistic services Sunday morning.

Ramsey said he is not anxious about the project. "We'll just leave it in the hands of the Lord now," he said.

People willing to be involved in witnessing campaign should contact the HMB's evangelism department at (404) 898-7180 or 1350 Spring Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30309-9976.

--30--

Texas administrative committee
asks delay on Joint Committee vote

By Toby Druin

N-CO
(Texas Std.)

Baptist Press
5/24/90

DALLAS (BP)--In the interest of convention harmony and expressing fear of the potential negative impact on Cooperative Program unified budget giving, the Texas Baptist Administrative Committee has asked that a proposed reduction in the budget of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs be reconsidered by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

The administrative committee asked instead that Baptist Joint Committee funding be kept at the current level and that if messengers to the 1990 SBC annual meeting want a realignment of the SBC-Joint Committee relationship that it be phased in over a five-year period.

--more--

The request was unanimously approved by the 13 members attending the meeting of the 15-member administrative committee in Dallas May 18. The administrative committee is the budget and finance committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

A letter expressing the committee's concern was sent to Sam Pace, chairman of the SBC Executive Committee, May 22 by George Gaston, chairman of the administrative committee and pastor of Willow Meadows Baptist Church in Houston.

The SBC Executive Committee will recommend to the annual meeting of the convention in New Orleans, June 12, that the budget allocation from the SBC to the Joint Committee be cut from \$391,796 to \$50,000.

The proposal will be one of three affecting the Joint Committee. The others will recommend that the SBC Christian Life Commission program statement be expanded to also include religious liberty issues and new guidelines will be established for the SBC Public Affairs Committee, whose 18 members make up the SBC representation on the Joint Committee, a coalition of nine Baptist bodies which has spoken to religious liberty and church/state separation issues for more than 50 years.

Writing as "friends in Christ," the Texas committee noted in the letter that the SBC budget was drafted by "competent and dedicated persons" and also cited the autonomy of the Texas Baptist and Southern Baptist conventions.

It noted that a precedent was set for reconsideration of the budget when prior to the 1989 convention in Las Vegas, Nev., a move was made "in the interest of harmony" at the meeting that withdrew a proposal for a proposed Religious Liberty Commission.

"Our best evaluation of the decision to drastically reduce funds for the Baptist Joint Committee leads us to request your reconsideration," the letter stated. "We are apprehensive about the proposed budget's impact on Cooperative Program giving and on the spirit of our convention."

The letter noted that Texas Baptists have had close ties with the Joint Committee -- three of its four executive directors have been Texas Baptists -- and that in 1987 the state convention went on record as being committed to continued support of the Joint Committee should funds be diverted from it in the SBC budget process.

That 1987 action has resulted in more than \$10,000 each year being designated for the Joint Committee from the Texas convention in 1988 and 1989.

"A sudden withdrawal of support for their (the BJC's) work could cause a drain on needed financial resources for our cooperative missionary efforts," the letter stated.

"Would it not be better for your committee to reconsider the budget at your pre-convention meeting, vote to keep the Baptist Joint Committee at its current level, and then allow the convention messengers to vote on the relationship they desire the convention to have with the Joint Commission?"

Should a majority vote for a "new alignment" with the Joint Committee, the letter suggested it be phased in over five years "to better serve our long-standing ... relationship with the Joint Committee."

Texas Baptists are committed to the cooperative method of doing evangelism and missions and have backed it up with annual increases in Cooperative Program support for SBC causes in spite of economic hard times, the letter stated.

Gaston told the Baptist Standard, the Texas Baptist weekly newsjournal, the letter was suggested by A.E. Fogle, layman and committee member from First Baptist Church of Abilene. "We did not want anything to be done that would hurt the Cooperative Program," said Gaston, "and it was interpreted that the proposed action in regard to the Baptist Joint Committee could cause a potential drain on the Cooperative Program."

High court rejects disputes
involving Operation Rescue

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to overturn a federal court order that bans anti-abortion protesters from blocking access to abortion facilities and imposes fines on demonstrators who violate the order.

It was the second time in two weeks the high court rejected an appeal by Operation Rescue, an anti-abortion group.

In a one-line order May 21, the Supreme Court refused to review a 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals decision that upheld \$69,000 in fines that had been levied against Operation Rescue and its founder, Randall Terry. The fines were imposed after members of the group repeatedly violated court orders that they not block access to abortion clinics in New York.

Attorneys for Operation Rescue contended the court orders and the threat of fines violated their clients' free speech rights.

They also argued the appeals court erred in applying a 1871 federal law to the anti-abortion protesters. The appeals panel held the protesters -- under the Ku Klux Klan Act, which prohibits conspiracies designed to deprive a class of people of their rights -- interfered with the constitutional rights of a category of women.

On May 14, the high court refused to lift an injunction barring Operation Rescue protesters from holding demonstrations within 50 feet of any abortion clinic in Atlanta.

In writing for the 5 to 4 majority, Justice John Paul Stevens said the anti-abortion protesters "have persistently and repeatedly engaged in unlawful conduct" unlike other groups of demonstrators.

The Georgia Supreme Court is considering an appeal in the case, which eventually could go back to the Supreme Court.

--30--

Southern Seminary closes
Boyce center in Indiana

By Pat Cole

N-CO
(SBTS)

Baptist Press
5/24/90

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has closed its Boyce Bible School center in Indiana in response to a rift between the seminary administration and center Director Mark Coppenger.

Coppenger, executive director-treasurer of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, expressed his disenchantment with seminary policies and personnel in an article in the May 8 issue of the Indiana Baptist, the weekly newsjournal published by the state convention.

Boyce, a division of the Louisville, Ky., seminary, provides ministerial training for people without college degrees. The school's Indiana center conducted classes in Indianapolis and Kokomo during the spring semester.

In the article, Coppenger criticized several seminary professors and administrators, including the provost and president. He also accused seminary trustees of failing to deal thoroughly with concerns raised by the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee in 1986.

Seminary Provost G. Willis Bennett announced with "deep regret" that Boyce would close its Indiana center May 31. Boyce could no longer effectively function in Indiana due to the climate created by the article, he said, adding, "At the same time, we express hope that the problems may be resolved and the work resumed under a new administration and with a cooperative spirit."

In the article, Coppenger took exception to remarks made by Bennett during an April meeting of Boyce off-campus center directors. Bennett informed the directors that the seminary expected Boyce professors to be loyal to the seminary and refrain from public comments that might engender distrust of Southern, he said.

--more--

In response, Coppenger wrote: "I observed that our teachers were only contract workers, performing short-term duties for the seminary, that they didn't 'belong' to the seminary in the same way that full-time professors did. And I suggested that one could be loyal to the seminary itself without supporting its current direction."

Bennett submitted a letter to the Indiana Baptist in response to Coppenger's article. In the letter, he charged that Coppenger had set "his opinion over every board of trustees which has served each of the past 10 years."

The letter continued: "The problem is, Dr. Coppenger will never be satisfied with Southern Seminary until decisions are made his way and interpretations of Scripture are in agreement with his own views. It will serve no good purpose for me to try to address the charges he raises case by case. They have been addressed and answered, but not to his satisfaction."

In response to Coppenger's misgivings about the loyalty issue, Bennett said, "Loyalty does not rule out criticism, but it does not sow distrust."

While Bennett said Coppenger's article was the direct reason for the center's closure, he acknowledged that previous problems existed between the seminary administration and Coppenger, who became director of the Indiana center in early 1990.

Coppenger, he said, also had been critical of the seminary's policy of selecting textbooks and furnishing course outlines for off-campus courses. The requirements, Bennett said, were established to ensure the courses at off-campus centers were comparable to those taught in Louisville. Yet he said Coppenger had indicated a "preference for his own standards and perhaps his own 'training base.'"

In an interview, Coppenger said he had difficulty with the textbook for a Christian ethics course he taught at the Boyce center. The text's treatment of "liberation theology and higher criticism seemed to be much more open to those sorts of things than the typical Southern Baptist," he said. He also said other Boyce professors had informed him they disliked how the assigned texts dealt with the topics of women in ministry and the inspiration of Scripture.

Bennett also said some statements made by Coppenger in a private conversation after the April Boyce center directors meeting led him to conclude that Coppenger favored the removal of Roy L. Honeycutt as president of the seminary. Coppenger, he said, told him he thought Honeycutt's doctrinal views would disqualify the president from teaching at the Boyce Center in Indiana. At another point in the conversation, Coppenger also indicated a need for a "change in direction for the seminary," Bennett said.

However, Coppenger claimed, Bennett misunderstood the conversation, noting he never said Honeycutt would be unacceptable as a teacher in Indiana. Rather, he said, he told Bennett that Honeycutt could teach in Indiana if he would teach within the Peace Committee's four examples of "truth without mixture of error for its matter."

Coppenger said he told Bennett: "I don't know if he (Honeycutt) could sign that or not. It seems to me he ought to be able to."

Coppenger said the discussion of Honeycutt's suitability as a Boyce teacher in Indiana came up while he and Bennett were discussing faculty qualifications for the Boyce center. During the discussion, he said Bennett inquired whether Honeycutt would be acceptable as a professor.

Bennett, he said, objected to "going beyond" the Baptist Faith and Message, the statement of faith that Boyce teachers are required to sign. Coppenger said he required the Indiana teachers affirm the Peace Committee examples to avoid allowing them to use "certain gymnastics in interpretation."

Despite the disagreements, Bennett said, the two of them had prayer and Coppenger left the meeting with a list of courses and professors approved for the 1990-91 academic year. Bennett expected the Indiana Boyce center to function next year until he read Coppenger's article, he said.

--more--

Coppenger reported that faculty selection for the Indiana center was the crux of the dispute between him and the seminary administration. He decided after his meeting with Bennett that he no longer could continue the relationship with Boyce, he said.

"When I resolved to write the column (for the Indiana Baptist), I suspected there could be difficulty (with Boyce) and I started brainstorming" about other possibilities for ministry training in Indiana, he said, noting seminary extension classes are among the options he is exploring. Coppenger also suggested in a May 22 Indiana Baptist article that the state convention may begin its own program of theological study.

Coppenger said he had been enthusiastic about the Boyce directorship and expressed regret that the relationship between Boyce and Indiana Baptists was ending: "Boyce has been a good resource for us. But when you sign on with Boyce, they become your overseers, and they become your stipulators, and it is not always the best sort of thing."

Boyce, which operates 17 off-campus centers across the United States, opened its Indiana center in 1982. During the spring semester, 38 Boyce students studied in Indiana.

--30--

Disaster relief volunteers
continue efforts in Texas

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

Baptist Press
5/24/90

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist volunteers continue to provide disaster relief, recovery and reconstruction for flood victims throughout Texas.

Volunteers set up the Texas Baptist disaster relief mobile unit at Hardin May 15. The unit is an 18-wheel tractor-trailer rig specially equipped with a portable field kitchen. Workers prepared an average of 1,000 meals a day during their first week in Hardin.

Bob Gilley of Bullard Southern Baptist Church, unit director in Hardin, also was asked after the evening meal May 22 to prepare an additional 200 meals for workers who labored for hours to shore-up weakened dams in Liberty County.

On the other side of the rain-swollen Trinity River, members of the Baptist Men organization at Kenefick, Texas, worked from the regional southeast Texas mobile mini-unit to prepare an average of 600 meals each day that same week.

Members of at least 13 churches in Trinity River Baptist Association assisted Texas Baptist Men in food preparation at the two mobile units, said Duane Kelley, director of missions.

Only one church facility in the association, Dayton Lakes Estate Baptist Mission, was endangered by rising water, he said. However, since the mobile homes that the mission was using for worship and educational buildings were moved to higher ground at Friendship Baptist Church in Dayton, no damage was sustained.

Several families who are members of churches in Trinity Association had flood-damaged homes, he added. At least two churches allowed displaced people to move into their unoccupied parsonages, and a number of families opened their homes to flood victims.

"Our church people are doing a good job of trying to take care of their own," Kelley said.

On May 19, an emergency food service operation was established in the kitchen at Central Baptist Church in Livingston, said Pastor Bill Skaar.

In three days, church members prepared 3,000 meals that were distributed by Red Cross personnel to flood victims throughout southern Polk County and the surrounding area.

The food service was moved on May 22 to a vacated local cafeteria with a larger capacity. Under the direction of Joe and Jane Harper of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, volunteers from Central Baptist Church continued to work in the relocated kitchen and in the temporary offices of the Red Cross Service Center, Skaar noted.

--more--

Elsewhere in the state, Texas Baptist volunteers began the long task of cleaning mud and silt out of homes. "We still have a terrible need for mud-out crews," said John LaNoue, off-site disaster relief director for Texas Baptist Men.

Mud-out crews from Dallas Baptist Association will join other volunteers from throughout the area in cleaning and repairing flood-damaged homes in southern Dallas County June 2, said Milfred Minatrea, associational director of weekday ministries.

Cleaning crews also are slated to begin work in the Brownwood, Weatherford and Fort Worth areas, and additional workers will be needed in southeast Texas when the waters there recede, LaNoue noted.