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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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91-164

Myers honored by
Nevada Baptists

CARSON CITY, Nev. (BP)--Ernest B. Myers, retiring executive director of the Nevada Baptist Convention, was honored by 160 messengers and visitors as they met to conduct the business in Carson City Oct. 22-23.

The meeting was held at First Baptist Church, which also hosted the Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting and the Pastors' Conference.

Highlights of the actions taken by the messengers included the adoption of a \$1,739,252 1992 Cooperative Program budget, \$505,000 of which is expected to come from Nevada Baptist churches.

The 1991 Cooperative Program budget requires gifts of \$466,564, with giving for 1991 expected to reach nearly \$475,000. The 1992 budget calls for a 25 percent giving rate to world missions, totaling \$126,250. Nevada Baptists currently are giving 25 percent to world missions. Although the percentage given to world missions will remain constant, the amount given should increase by about \$10,000.

The 1992 budget also includes a salary increase for Nevada Baptist Convention office staff of 3 percent, scheduled to take effect in 1992.

Messengers re-elected Michael Rochelle convention president by acclamation. Rochelle is the pastor of West Oakey Baptist Church in Las Vegas.

Hoyt Savage, pastor of Foothills Southern Baptist Church in Las Vegas, was elected first vice-president, and Barry Campbell, pastor of South Reno Baptist Church, was elected second vice-president. Both were elected without opposition.

Throughout the meeting Myers remained the center of attention, as various groups, agencies and boards of the Nevada Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention honored him in recognition of thirteen years of service as Nevada's first and only executive director. Myers will retire from active service effective March 15, 1992.

Nevada Baptists will give Myers \$5,000 cash and his convention-owned car, as well as a Nevada Baptist Convention crest ring upon retirement.

In addressing the convention, Myers shared a brief history of the work in Nevada. Myers also stressed his desire for Nevada Baptists to continue in their faithful efforts of winning Nevada to Christ. "I love Nevada. I love our churches. And I love our convention," he concluded.

The resolutions committee had only two resolutions for action by the convention. One expressed appreciation the host church. The second resolution expressed appreciation to Myers for his service to Nevada.

The closing message of the convention was delivered by Paul Powell, president of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board. He spoke on how to grow a great church, stressing a great church is not measured by size.

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The 1992 Nevada Baptist Convention will be Oct. 20-21 at College Park Baptist Church in Las Vegas.

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National and Texas CLCs
engaged in 'war of words'

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
10/31/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--The battle between the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and the Baptist Joint Committee over interpretation of the controversial "Lemon test" has shifted to Texas where the national agency and its state counterpart are engaged in a war of words over the issue.

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has mailed copies of a letter to about 4,300 Southern Baptist pastors in Texas to "set the record straight" on what it says are distortions by the Texas Christian Life Commission of the national agency's position on the issue.

The issue erupted in Texas after that state agency there published in its quarterly newsletter critiques of the national agency's position on the issue.

A footnote in the national agency's letter says, "We make no claim that the misrepresentations are intentional. We note that the 'sources' listed at the foot of the TCLC article do not contain our brief. Neglecting to read or quote directly from our brief may account for the mistakes of fact and analysis."

The letter says, "We regret that Cooperative Program money must be spent to correct erroneous information which was disseminated using Cooperative Program money. Nevertheless, we believe the old adage, 'Tell the truth and trust the people.' We believe we have an obligation to tell, and you have the right to know, the truth. We must set the record straight."

At the heart of the dispute is a case to be heard Nov. 6 by the United States Supreme Court. That case is known as Lee v. Weisman. It involves the constitutionality of prayers at public school commencement services.

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has filed a brief supporting one side in the case and the Baptist Joint Committee has filed a brief supporting the other side.

The Lee case developed out of a dispute over a prayer offered in 1989 by a rabbi at a public high school commencement service. By longstanding tradition, the principal at the high school had invited a different local member of the clergy to give the invocation and benediction at a voluntary commencement program, held outside regular school hours. The rabbi's prayer in 1989 included the word "God," prompting the American Civil Liberties Union to file suit on behalf of a Jewish parent, Daniel Weisman, who objected to the reference to God.

A lower court judge ruled the reference to God violated the Lemon test, a three-part judicial test formulated in 1971 in the Lemon v. Kurtzman case. Since 1971, the Supreme Court has recognized the Lemon test as an official litmus test for church-state cases.

Groups such as the Baptist Joint Committee and the National Council of Churches have long supported the Lemon test.

Other groups such as the Christian Life Commission, the National Association of Evangelicals and James Dobson's Focus on the Family have called for rewriting the Lemon test.

At issue in the Lemon test is its requirement that public-sponsored events must be secular, neither advancing nor inhibiting religion.

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The Christian Life Commission contends in its brief that such a requirement" ... seeks to create a vacuum in the public square by excluding everything that is religious. But nature abhors a vacuum, and emptying the public square of religious content does not create a neutral zone. Instead, the secularism which fills the public square brings its own non-theistic values which are antithetical to religion and intolerant of religious pluralism."

In its letter to Texas Baptist churches, the national agency says, " ... we argue that the Establishment Clause does not require the Court to ban voluntary prayers by non-school personnel at high school commencements. ... If God's name used in a profanity is protected speech, even if offensive to some, then God's name invoked in a prayer is protected speech, even if offensive to nonbelievers.

"We have urged the Court to replace Lemon with a test which will avoid the concept of 'secularization' while retaining the historic principle of benevolent neutrality in government's relation to religion, a principle central to historic Baptist church-state separation."

The CLC has proposed its own four-part test. "We are convinced that our test preserves all the strengths of Lemon, without the fatal weakness of abject secularization," the CLC letter says.

The CLC letter is signed by CLC Executive Director Richard D. Land and General Counsel Michael Whitehead. It is dated Oct. 21 and was mailed Oct. 28.

The letter is especially critical of the TCLC's charge that the national agency supports a "coercion" test.

"It is grossly inaccurate to characterize our brief as advocating a 'coercion' test. It was precisely because of our concern that the Court should not adopt a mere coercion test that we filed our brief. Our brief and our press releases since May 16, 1991, denounce any mere 'coercion' test. We believe our proposed test is much better and much stronger, than Justice Kennedy's. The concerns expressed regarding Kennedy's test would not occur in the CLC's more stringent test.

Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy also has proposed replacing the Lemon test with one he has written.

The letter also says, "School officials must be given a new message that school children should be able to talk with each other about religious matters and voluntarily pray and read the Bible together not only before or after school, as allowed by Equal Access, but during the school day as well, in free periods, recess and lunch.

"Accommodation of religions, without government coercion, is not synonymous with sponsoring religious express," the CLC letter says. "Accommodation without coercion balances the First Amendment's requirements that Congress not establish religion and that Congress not prohibit 'the free exercise thereof.'" Accommodation of all religions is required, without establishment of any sectarian view, as well as accommodation of those with no religion."

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EDITORS' NOTE: Attempts to get a response from Phil Strickland, director of the Texas CLC were unsuccessful.

**Bivocational Resource Center
opened at Southwestern Seminary**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A Bivocational Resource Center designed to provide information and research materials about bivocational ministry was opened Oct. 29 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, by officials from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Baptist General Convention of Texas and the seminary.

The center, located in the A. Webb Roberts Library at Southwestern, will house the largest collection of materials and bibliographical information on what HMB officials say is one of the fastest growing areas of ministry in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"One of our greatest tasks is to affirm the bivocational minister, to give him the feeling of self-worth that he deserves, to spread this understanding of legitimacy from Anchorage to Miami like an epidemic of red measles," Dale Holloway told people gathered for the ribbon-cutting ceremony opening the center.

Holloway, bivocational program consultant for the HMB, said the opening of the center at Southwestern represented "a magnificent moment, a goal accomplished, a dream realized.

"I believe this event was providentially planned before the earth's foundations were formed," Holloway said.

Holloway, who spent 21 years as a bivocational minister, said, "The call to prepare is almost as intense as the call to preach. Ministers need to learn. To learn, we need resources.

"This gathering of all bivocational resources available in the world will be accessible to all the double-duty ministers in the Southern Baptist Convention," Holloway said.

The library staff at the seminary will continue to collect and expand the resources available in the center, said Carl Wrotenbery, director of libraries at Southwestern. Those materials may be used by ministers across the SBC through Southwestern's library ministry-by-mail program.

During the opening ceremony, David Bunch, vice president of the extension services division of the HMB and Carl Elder, consultant in the church ministries department of the BGCT, presented donations to the seminary to help open the center.

The resource center at Southwestern is designed to provide information about bivocational ministry to students and all Southern Baptists, according to Kent Sanders, associate director of church/minister relations at Southwestern. Sanders said students in the seminary's Bivocational Ministers' Association will have available important resources to support their work.

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**Sex education guidelines
for all grades released**

By Tom Strode

**Baptist Press
10/31/91**

WASHINGTON (BP)--National guidelines for comprehensive sexuality education for students in kindergarten through the 12th grade are available for the first time.

Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education, released Oct. 16 by the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States and a panel of 20 education, health, family planning and sexuality professionals, discusses such topics as reproductive anatomy, "sexual orientation," abstinence, masturbation, contraception, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual abuse and gender roles.

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The document seems destined for controversy in some school districts. While it says the guidelines are designed to "reflect the beliefs of most communities in a pluralistic society," the messages communicated often reflect values outside the framework of the traditional biblical and Judeo-Christian understanding of sexuality.

Among statements in the 52-page document are:

-- "Homosexual love relationships can be as fulfilling as heterosexual relationships.

-- "Two people who cohabit can have the same commitment and responsibility toward one another as married people."

Such statements are called "developmental messages," which are divided into age groupings. These groupings, called levels, are: middle childhood, ages 5 to 8; pre-adolescence, 9 to 12; early adolescence, 12 to 15, and adolescence, 15 to 18.

Developmental messages for 5- to 8-year-olds include:

-- "Some couples who love each other live together in the same home without getting married.

-- "Many gay men and lesbian women live in lifetime committed relationships, even though they may not be recognized as married.

-- "Touching and rubbing one's own genitals is called masturbation.

-- "Some boys and girls masturbate, others do not."

"Listen up, parents," said James A. Smith, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "This report represents the values and world view of the sex education and family planning establishment, which is aggressively pushing their ideas on America's public schools. The guidelines suggested by SIECUS are the values which you will have to guard against being included in sex education classes at your local public school in the near future."

The guidelines make it clear they are to serve as a framework, not a mandatory curriculum, for school districts, SIECUS Executive Director Debra Haffner said in a telephone interview. They are "not a prescription for what you have to teach in your community," she said. Communities can choose to use only portions of the guidelines, Haffner said.

"What is particularly disturbing about this report is the desire of the sex education establishment to indoctrinate children as young as five years old to their pro-sexual deviance message," the CLC's Smith said. "The notion that a five-year-old can understand or should be forced to understand what homosexuality and masturbation entail should cause grave concern to Southern Baptists."

Other developmental messages in the guidelines are inaccurate or misleading, such as:

-- "After 24 weeks of pregnancy, an abortion is done only when the mother's life is in danger." (The Senate Judiciary Committee reported in 1982, "No significant legal barriers of any kind whatsoever exist today in the United States for a woman to obtain an abortion for any reason during any stage of her pregnancy." The status of the law remains the same today, except in Pennsylvania, which has a statute banning abortions after the 24th week except to save the life of the mother or to prevent severe physical injury to her, said a National Right to Life Committee spokesperson.)

-- "There is no evidence that erotic images in the arts cause inappropriate sexual behavior." (Pornography promotes hostile behavior toward women and children, according to studies cited by the National Coalition Against Pornography.)

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Based on community standards, developmental messages can be moved to other age levels than those recommended in the guidelines, the report says. Developmental messages are listed under 36 topics, which are organized by six key concepts: human development, relationships, personal skills; sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture.

Among assumptions made by the panel, the report says, are: sex education should be part of a comprehensive health education effort; it should be taught only by specially trained teachers, and community residents should participate in development of a sex education program.

The 20-member task force includes representatives from the American Medical Association, Centers for Disease Control, March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, National Education Association, National School Boards Association, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and SIECUS.

The guidelines will be sent to the commissioners of education and health in all the states, key federal officials and about 200 national organizations, SIECUS' Haffner said. They will be asked to publicize the guidelines, she said.

The task force is an outgrowth of the National Coalition to Support Sexuality Education, which consists of 49 national organizations committed to implementing comprehensive sex education for all students by the year 2000.

SIECUS, according to position statements adopted by its board of directors in 1989, advocates: full participation in churches and other religious institutions by homosexuals and bisexuals; access to contraceptives by minors without notice to their parents; the right to an abortion regardless of a woman's age or income; comprehensive sex education in "every grade of every school;" and civil rights protection for homosexuals.

SIECUS is a non-profit organization founded in 1964.

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Bailey Smith urges students
to maintain high morality

By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press
10/31/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptist Evangelist Bailey Smith exhorted students in a chapel address at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, Oct. 30 to "live above the snake line."

The "snake line" describes the altitude above which snakes cannot live, Smith said. For a Christian, Smith said living above the snake line means maintaining such a high standard of morality that "some of the temptations of this world will not really be a serious problem to you."

Such a lifestyle inevitably will help Christians avoid needless battles and unnecessary breakdowns, the Atlanta-based evangelist said.

For instance, Smith told the ministers-in-training, "You don't have to get involved in every (local church) conflict.

"You can't take the problems out of a church, but you can drown them out with the Lord Jesus," he said. "You get people being saved every time you open the doors and there will be no church conflicts. Keep your church at such a level that useless battles will absolutely be unnecessary."

A point of breakdown and stress comes when a Christian tries to live one foot in the world and one foot in church, Smith said.

"It's just like pulling a string in two different directions," he said. "It is called tension, and pretty soon that string will break."

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Living above the snake line also reinforces the biblical principle of avoiding temptation, said Smith, a graduate of Southwestern.

"God doesn't want you to see how close you can get to sin and be successful," he said. "God wants you to flee temptation, get away from it.

"Live your life and devote your life in such a way that some of the problems of this world just won't be a problem to you," he said.

Smith said in his ministry he has seen many people destroyed by the failure of Christian leaders. A lifestyle above the snake line will preserve, not destroy, unstable brothers and sisters in Christ, he said.

Applying this principle to Southern Baptists, he said, "It's time to start talking kindly about one another. I am concerned about your dispensation, but I'm more concerned about your disposition."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary