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91-187

**FMB trustees vote no further
action on seminary defunding**

By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board decided in a 54-27 roll call vote Dec. 11 to take no further action on the controversial international Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

The vote left in place an Oct. 9 decision to cut a \$365,000 allocation from the 1992 budget of the Swiss seminary.

The Oct. 9 vote, taken without consultation with the seminary and three months before the 1992 budget year, has drawn a storm of protest from across Europe and the United States. Trustees have complained since then their side of the story has not been made clear in news reports.

Several trustees said their action was not a quick one based only on the presence of visiting professor E. Glenn Hinson at the seminary. They said it also was based on a longstanding concern over the seminary's theological direction.

Trustees voted 35-28 on Oct. 9 to defund the Ruschlikon seminary after learning Hinson, whom they labeled as liberal, was teaching there for four months while on sabbatical from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Hinson, several trustees said, was the "straw that broke the camel's back," not the main reason for the defunding.

Trustees voted Dec. 11 that their chairman, Bill Hancock of Kentucky, "send a news release" in the form of a letter explaining the trustees' reasons to all Southern Baptist churches and state conventions and all people who have written letters about the controversy.

Hancock's mailing also will include his report on a Dec. 5-6 meeting between representatives of European Baptist leaders and an FMB trustee committee and staff, and an offer from the FMB of a set of four audio tapes of the Dec. 5-6 meeting for \$13 and a videotape of the Dec. 11 meeting for \$7.

Trustee debate seemed to boil down to two positions: some urging restoration of funds because of a promise to fund the seminary through 1992, and others opposing continued funding because the seminary has not lived up to what they feel was its pledge to move the seminary in a conservative direction.

Karl-Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, said following the vote he "grieves" over the judgment of the trustees and its implication the seminary and its graduates, who include many European Baptist leaders, are liberal. The unilateral defunding by FMB trustees breached trust between equal partners, he said.

Walter, who will relay the action to European Baptists, said he personally does not see a way to rebuild trust between the FMB and European Baptists. FMB President R. Keith Parks also said the vote will undercut the partnership approach, which he said is the basis of everything the FMB does overseas.

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But Parks and Walter feel a good relationship is needed to take advantage of opportunities for ministry throughout Europe. A committee of trustees and FMB staff will meet with European leaders to discuss future relationships and ways to continue initiatives for ministry, especially in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Each European Baptist union will decide for itself what the future holds for relationships with Southern Baptists, Walter said.

Some unions have warned the action could harm not only relationships with Southern Baptists but also affect the future status of Southern Baptist missionaries in Europe.

Wiard Popkes, chairman of the Ruschlikon seminary trustees, said neither the seminary nor the European Baptist Federation had considered taking the defunding action to court. That would be contrary to Scripture, he said.

When the FMB trustees defunded the seminary in October, they asked for a review of the legality of the action in face of earlier agreements by the mission board that it would fund the seminary through 1992.

Board attorney Lewis Booker counseled agency officials not to comment on his legal opinion. But a Richmond city newspaper quoted an anonymous source as saying the opinion concluded the board had broken its contract with the seminary.

In the face of questioning from the floor Dec. 11, trustee John Simms, an attorney from Virginia, said the legal opinion was no longer secret in light of the newspaper report.

"The report in the newspaper was that an opinion had been rendered that if a suit was brought in Virginia we might expect to lose," Simms said. "That report, albeit from an anonymous source ... was correct."

Earlier Simms had urged trustees to restore funds to the seminary because their vote had called their integrity into question.

"I've spent a lifetime advising people about what they have to do when they make promises," Simms said. "It simply runs counter to my grain to even think the Foreign Mission Board" would agree to do something and then refuse to do so.

Trustee John Jackson of California countered he would not want to "break a trust to any group" but said he had "a higher commitment ... not to break trust with the Lord himself."

Jackson said he was grieved European Baptist leaders would reject, rather than try to negotiate, a compromise proposal by Hancock at the Dec. 5-6 meeting. He added he felt deceived because the seminary leaders had not lived up to their end of the bargain for continued funding -- to move the seminary in a conservative direction.

Jackson also cited the high cost of education at the seminary compared to the small number of students. He also believes it violates FMB policy for the seminary to raise funds in the United States.

Trustee Jack Bledsoe of Arkansas said the issue is not cost or theological stance but the integrity of the FMB's promises -- although he believes the trustees erred in 1988 when they did not stipulate to the seminary "what would be an acceptable response to 10 propositions."

In 1988 trustees asked European Baptist and seminary leaders to respond to 10 points prior to the Foreign Mission Board's May 1989 transfer of ownership of the Ruschlikon seminary, now valued at over \$12 million, to the European Baptist Federation. The points included a request they put a statement of European Baptist beliefs in writing.

European Baptists responded to each point, but many trustees continued to be displeased with a statement of beliefs that was a part of this document.

Trustee Ron Wilson of California agreed the trustees made a commitment to fund the seminary. But the trustees' commitment was based on the understanding from the seminary president and FMB staff that the seminary was going in a conservative direction, he said.

"They broke that trust," Wilson said. "Therefore, I believe our reaction to it is appropriate."

Opposing the defunding, trustee Paula Hemphill from Virginia compared the situation to a marriage. She said she counsels a lot of women who have been betrayed by their husbands. She urges the women to pray for their husbands and seek reconciliation -- "not at all costs, but I never counsel them to deceive or betray in return, and I can't counsel that for us."

Several trustees warned the vote would seriously damage the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions. Some churches protesting the action have vowed to send their Lottie Moon offering -- intended for worldwide Southern Baptist missions -- directly to Ruschlikon if the defunding action stands.

In closing the meeting, trustee chairman Hancock noted: "It is a strange feeling to be caught in a controversy where there is no movement."

If there had been more movement and response on part of trustees, seminary leaders, European Baptist leaders and FMB staff, he said, the vote might have been different.

Hancock had offered at the dialogue to recommend trustees restore the \$365,000 for 1992 "if there can be a positive response" from the European Baptist leaders on his proposal. It asked that seminary leaders (1) "acknowledge their insensitivity to the conservative concerns" of the FMB trustees regarding the seminary's theological direction, (2) provide FMB trustees with advance "awareness" of the selection of professors to teach there, but "not to determine or dictate policy" and (3) give an accounting of funds received from all U.S. sources other than the Foreign Mission Board.

Walter and Popkes declined to accept the three points. Walter said acceptance would allow FMB trustees to intervene in the work of the trustees of a seminary now owned by the autonomous European Baptist Federation and would set "a pattern" for that type of partnership with other Baptist bodies in Europe.

"We understand partnership as being a partnership among equal partners," Walter said. "We understand that partnership means to have a mutual respect for the unique position and the autonomy of the partners."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press
NOTE TO EDITORS: Take note of reference in the eighth paragraph of the story above regarding an offer of four audio tapes of the Dec. 5-6 dialogue sessions for \$13. The story released Dec. 9 about the dialogue session had indicated five tapes were available for \$16. Please correct that reference in the Dec. 9 story if you have not yet run it.

Baptists, prayer cited as keys
in Soviet 'Green Alert' plans

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press
12/12/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's "Green Alert" task force plans to rely on prayer, Soviet Baptists and hundreds of Southern Baptists to reach the former Soviet Union for Christ.

Members of the Green Alert task force presented this assessment to FMB trustees at their Dec. 9-11 meeting. The mission board announced in September that it was on Green Alert status, a system that cuts through normal work procedures to seize timely mission opportunities, in response to needs in the Soviet republics.

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The eight-member task force told trustees of plans to request more than 130 career missionaries, 340 International Service Corps workers and between 1,200 and 1,450 volunteers for work in the various Soviet republics. The task force stressed it does not have places for all these workers yet and does not expect to have everyone on the field by the end of 1992. Total cost for Green Alert initiatives may exceed \$12 million, according to the task force report.

The task force will bring its recommendations for funding to the trustees at their February meeting.

"I have been excited about the openness and the desire of Soviet Baptists to cooperate with us in a variety of evangelistic efforts," said Isam Ballenger, vice president for Europe, Middle East and North Africa and chairman of the Green Alert task force. "In the talks that we had, I've sensed a commitment on their part to join us in this huge undertaking."

The task force emphasized the success of its plans depends on Baptists around the world praying, said Mike Stroope of Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization.

"It wasn't long after we started planning that we realized this was too big for any of us," he said. "This is too big for just Southern Baptists. If there's any chance for our efforts to be successful, we need the prayers of Baptists worldwide."

Prior to the December trustee meeting, the Foreign Mission Board asked all Southern Baptist churches and overseas Baptist conventions to designate New Year's Eve 1991 as an international day of prayer for the former Soviet Union. The New Year's Eve day of prayer will kick off a year of prayer for the Soviet region as part of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Watchman National Prayer Alert.

Mission planners will concentrate their work on strengthening Soviet Baptists' evangelistic efforts and placing Christians in areas of unevangelized people. The task force also anticipates helping local Christians set up their own mission outreach systems. This could lead to establishing mission boards in the different republics.

"However, we are not interested in just setting up another organization," Ballenger said. "Our desire is to help them start outreach programs which can start immediately, not just build institutions for outreach."

Work in some of the northwest republics, such as Russia, Ukraine and Moldavia, can rely on existing Baptist groups. The task force hopes Baptists in these republics eventually will send their own missionaries into unreached areas in their own and other republics.

The task force also wants to set up a number of partnerships. "It is our prayer that every republic, where local Baptists desire, might enter into a partnership with Southern Baptist state conventions or associations in 1992 and 1993," said Paul Thibodeaux, associate to the area director for Southern Baptist work in Europe.

Other Green Alert efforts center on supplying Bibles, discipleship materials and Christian films to local Baptist groups. The task force also plans to develop Sunday school materials and offer church building loans.

In the Soviet Central Asian republics, such as Azerbaijan, Kirgizia and Uzbekistan, the task force has focused on placing Southern Baptists in daily contact with people of the regions.

"Overall we would like to see a stream of Baptists go to Soviet Central Asia," Stroope explained. "We want Baptists from different backgrounds and walks of life to go into the former Soviet Union and touch those people with the message of Jesus Christ."

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In other board business, the trustees appointed 31 new missionaries and reappointed two former missionaries, bringing the 1991 missionary appointment count to 400, down from 414 in 1990. However, the 1991 missionary count includes a record 191 International Service Corps workers, an increase over 1990, when the board sent 178 ISC workers overseas for two-year assignments.

The total missionary force now stands at 3,941 working in 122 countries and providing a Christian witness in a number of other nations.

"I am pleased that we are ending the year with a strong missionary count of 400," said Harlan Spurgeon, vice president for mission personnel. "These 400 lives represent a deep commitment and I am grateful for that.

"However, we are faced with the reality that it will take around 470 appointments a year to reach our Bold Mission Thrust goal of supporting 5,000 missionaries by 2000. There needs to be a greater call to prayer and there's a need for pastors to call out the called as never before."

Trustees also approved a recommendation from the mission personnel committee that sets up a new system of interviewing prospective missionary candidate consultants. Earlier, a number of trustees said they wanted to have more input regarding whom the board selects as candidate consultants. Candidate consultants are staff members who work closely with people seeking appointment as career and associate missionaries.

The new procedure allows a committee composed of both trustees and staff to interview any individual the board is considering for employment as a candidate consultant and give counsel to the vice president for mission personnel, who makes the final decision. The board currently employs seven candidate consultants and has plans to add an eighth consultant soon.

In his report, FMB President R. Keith Parks told the trustees about the generosity of the 37 missionaries now in orientation at the Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va. The new missionaries have given \$14,500 to the 1991 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions. They first set a goal of \$2,000. But when they surpassed that amount, they increased the goal to \$5,000. When they went beyond that goal, the missionaries decided to quit setting a goal altogether, Parks said.

Later in the meeting, trustee chairman Bill Hancock challenged trustees to double the missionaries' offering. He said trustee Terry Horton had told him earlier he was pledging \$5,000 for the 1991 Lottie Moon offering and a year of volunteer mission service overseas. Horton is a builder from Colleyville, Texas.

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Moderate fellowship calls
for help for Ruschlikon

Baptist Press
12/12/91

ATLANTA (BP)--The moderator of a moderate Baptist fellowship has called for all "free and faithful" Baptists to restore \$365,000 in funds to the international Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon which were deleted by Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees.

"The trustees have broken a covenant with European Baptists. They have broken faith with Southern Baptists," said John Hewett, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., and moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

FMB trustees voted Dec. 11 to affirm their action in October to withdraw \$365,000 in funds in the 1992 budget for the seminary in Ruschlikon.

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"Against the recommendations of President Keith Parks (of the FMB) and the entire European staff, despite the protests of Woman's Missionary Union and thousands of mission-minded Southern Baptist churches, and with utter contempt for the sensitivities of Europeans Baptist leaders, they've let the political agenda of Presslerism overrule common sense and negate solemn oaths. They've set Baptist work in Europe back 45 years," said Hewett in a CBF news release.

Hewett also responded to criticisms leveled at Ruschlikon president John David Hopper for speaking in Hewett's church Dec. 1.

"I am appalled that (FMB chairman) Hancock and other trustees would censure a Southern Baptist missionary for accepting an invitation to lead a world missions celebration in a Southern Baptist church which has historically supported the school he heads," said Hewett. "Keith Parks spoke here in 1990, Isam Ballenger in 1984, Carolyn Weatherford in 1985, Bill O'Brien in 1986, Thurman Bryant in 1987 ... is Hancock going to question their integrity, too?"

The CBF is receiving funds for Ruschlikon daily through its Atlanta office and routing those monies directly to the Swiss school, Hewett said.

Hewett said he will lead a mission support trip to the seminary in Ruschlikon Feb. 16-21, 1992. The group will meet with European Baptist Federation leaders, visit the International Baptist Church in Stuttgart, Germany, and spend the balance of time in Ruschlikon.

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Patterson declines
offer from Liberty

By Tammi Ledbetter

Baptist Press
12/12/91

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist conservative leader Paige Patterson has declined an offer to serve as president of Liberty University's seminary in Lynchburg, Va.

While expressing gratitude to independent Baptist Jerry Falwell for offering him the job, Patterson said his commitment to ministry will continue among Southern Baptists.

"All of my life I have worked within the context of Southern Baptist people," Patterson said in a Dec. 11 release from Criswell College in Dallas. "With all of their many virtues and whatever weaknesses there are, Southern Baptists remain my people. To the best of my ability to determine God's will for my life, I believe that I should remain and work within our Southern Baptist Zion."

As he completes his 16th year as president of Criswell College, Patterson said he intends to continue to make the school "a major producer of pastors for tomorrow's churches."

Patterson was ousted as president in late October during disagreements with his board of directors. Following an organized protest by Southern Baptist pastors as well as students and alumni of the school, the board agreed to allow Patterson to continue in the position and include the college's chancellor, W.A. Criswell, and pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, Joel Gregory, in any further consideration of leadership changes.

Patterson currently is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

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Fercho resigns business affairs
post at Golden Gate Seminary

Baptist Press
12/12/91

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Citing family considerations and the need for a full-time administrator, Gordon E. Fercho has resigned as vice president for business affairs at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

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President William O. Crews appointed Jim Stephenson, 48, acting vice president for business affairs. A recommendation for a permanent replacement will be made at the trustees' April meeting.

Fercho, a trustee of the seminary from 1982-89, became consulting vice president for business affairs in 1989 while on sabbatical from California State University in Chico, where he is vice president for business and administration.

"I look back on my 10-plus years of association with Golden Gate both as a trustee and as vice president as a most rewarding experience for which I am grateful to the Lord," Fercho said in his letter of resignation.

Stephenson, who took early retirement as an AT&T executive in late 1989, has been an assistant to Fercho since October 1990. Earlier this year he was appointed special assistant to the president for strategic planning.

Stephenson is a member of Bethel Baptist Church in Concord. He received a bachelor of science in electrical engineering from Texas Tech University in 1967 and was in the Air Force from 1968-72, earning the rank of captain.

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Young ministers carrying on
'the work of an evangelist'

By Lydia Murphy

Baptist Press
12/12/91

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Being an evangelist isn't what it used to be. To some people, that's both good and bad. To young Southern Baptist evangelists, it's a challenge.

With recent scandals involving evangelists, young evangelists realize the importance of integrity in ministry. Establishing a solid theological base with a seminary education is a good start, they say.

One evangelist who feels that way is Ronny Hill, a master of divinity student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

"God called me into the ministry and I want to be as prepared as possible. These days the term 'evangelist' has lost its credibility and I want to have as much credibility as possible. A formal education helps," Hill said.

"Integrity will keep a man busy longer than how many people are saved under his preaching," added Kelly Green, a Southwestern graduate and full-time evangelist.

"Nowadays, pastors want to know how decisions are made (whether through the gospel or through manipulation), are creditors taken care of, is there a willingness to talk with people after church," Green said. "That host pastor doesn't want to clean up a mess when the evangelist is gone, no matter how many people got saved.

Along with integrity in ministry comes responsible preparation. Because of Southwestern's heritage of evangelism, many young evangelists choose the school, according to Malcolm McDow, professor of evangelism at Southwestern.

"Most evangelists come (to Southwestern) because of a deep sense of God's call, a strong conviction that God has separated them for evangelism," McDow said. "They have a deep sense of need for preparation if they are going to be effective.

"Southwestern provides a course that is especially designed for the vocational evangelist. We also offer an evangelism concentration. All of the theological disciplines augment evangelism," McDow added.

That would please seminary pioneers such as L.R. Scarborough, second president of Southwestern, who prayed from his death bed that the fires of evangelism would "burn forever in the hearts of students."

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One of the first academic chairs in the school's history was named for the fiery Scarborough -- the L.R. Scarborough Chair of Evangelism.

And while hundreds of courses have been added to the seminary's curriculum since then, nothing has changed about Southwestern's emphasis on evangelism, according to professors who teach the subject today.

"I came to Southwestern because I wanted to sit under men like Roy Fish," said evangelist Rodney Gage. "He encouraged me to commit to school and get through in order to establish a foundation."

Fish, professor of evangelism and holder of the Scarborough Chair, is known throughout the SBC for his evangelistic zeal. That example, according to Gage, is an inspiration to young evangelists.

Gage, who received the master's of divinity degree in July, said Fish encouraged him to continue his evangelistic ministry while in seminary. During his last year at Southwestern, Gage conducted more than 30 revivals in churches, combined with countless high school assemblies in which he addresses alcohol problems among teens.

Although most evangelists don't hold revival meetings in tents or brush arbors like in the old days, the approach remains much the same, young evangelists say.

"It starts with personal evangelism. An evangelist needs to be a person doing the work of an evangelist and not just wanting to preach to a large number of people," according to Frank Harber, student president for Southwestern's Fellowship of Vocational Evangelists. "The key is a deep commitment to Christ and a personal commitment to winning souls."

Evangelism is about "loving people and demonstrating that love through your life. That's why everyone can evangelize even though they may not be called to be an evangelist," Harber said.

"A true evangelist is also there for the saved and not just for the lost. They have a global ministry to encourage, equip, and prepare believers in order for them to experience changed lives through Jesus Christ," added David Crow, a student and vocational evangelist from Houston.

The seminary education also helps evangelists relate to all kinds of people, according to Gage.

"I want to be able to reach all platforms of life," Gage said. "I want to have the opportunity to reach the doctors, lawyers, scientists, and well-educated people. I don't want my lack of an education to hinder me from reaching these people."

"I felt like it was important for me to go as far as I could academically because I was a high school drop-out, a part of the counter-culture in California," Green added. "I didn't come to Southwestern just for an education. I needed the fine tuning that seminary gives apart from the degree."

That fine tuning includes opportunities to participate in a variety of mission and evangelism projects sponsored by Southwestern throughout the school year.

Two such events are the Spring Practicum and the 10-week Summer Praxis which give students practical evangelism experience.

The Fellowship of Vocational Evangelists is also providing evangelism opportunities for students.

"We're trying to provide a forum for students called to vocational evangelism. It is more than just an ingathering to discuss our calling, but we are in ministry," according to Fellowship President Harber.

One evangelist, or a whole team including music, adult, children, and youth, can be requested by local churches within a 150-mile radius of Fort Worth. The Fellowship also hosts seminars for students.

Those efforts have combined classroom theory with practice.

"There is no conflict between New Testament theology and New Testament evangelism," said McDow, faculty sponsor for the evangelists' organization. "A New Testament theology will always produce a New Testament evangelism and New Testament evangelism is always based on New Testament theology."

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