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NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee

901 Commerce #750

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Herb Hollinger, Vice President

Fax (615) 742-8915

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NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300

RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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92-3

Two FMB administrators step
down, protest trustee 'agenda'

By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's two top administrators for work in Europe have stepped down, saying they can no longer represent the agency because of what they term the trustees' "global agenda" to enforce theological orthodoxy overseas.

Isam Ballenger, vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and G. Keith Parker, area director for Europe, announced their early retirement effective May 31 and July 1, respectively. Ballenger, 56, and Parker, 55, said at a Jan. 7 news conference they have made no decisions about future plans, although they will weigh possible options.

FMB President R. Keith Parks praised the two veterans of foreign missions for their integrity and commitment to missions and said "losing them, at this crucial time of opportunity ... is an incalculable loss" to missions.

Ballenger said "the events of October and December 1991, brought clearly into focus the chasm between the trustees and me." He referred to votes Oct. 9 and Dec. 11 by FMB trustees to defund \$365,000 promised to the 1992 budget of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

Both men indicated later the Ruschlikon votes, which touched off widespread controversy in Europe and the United States, represented the "last straw" in their growing dissatisfaction with the trustees' philosophy of foreign missions.

However, both said they would not go so far as to discourage interested Southern Baptists from seeking missionary appointment. They suggested missionary candidates continue with the process until they see they cannot do so.

But they made their own disagreements with trustees clear, while noting appreciation for some trustees' approach to missions.

"With the (majority of) trustees ... the situation has changed slowly but drastically over the last months, so that working with any sense of missiological purpose or personal integrity has become impossible," said Parker, a 23-year veteran of missions.

Trustees are shifting to using money and power as a method to control Baptist bodies overseas and to enforce theological orthodoxy and are ignoring the diversity and autonomy of European Baptists, he charged.

"Granted, it was appropriately said no one will be forced to agree with us, but to get our money they must agree on the 'basics,'" Parker said. "What does that do, however, to those many tiny, poor unions who need our help and to their individual churches who may be told they must agree locally to whatever we Americans proscribe as 'basic' so they can get out of debt or build a church building? Is this the way to do missions? Is this trust?"

The trust between Southern Baptists and Europeans, built over many years, "is being destroyed and will profoundly affect mission outreach and ongoing work within Europe for generations," he said. "The urgent appeal of the European (Baptist) leaders was to talk about partnership as (being) built on trust, not about money. That point seemed to be missed totally (by the trustees) in putting conditions of control on the offered restoring of money."

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He also claimed the previous stance of trustees to serve all Southern Baptists is "being radically changed" to an approach that indicates "only 'inerrantists' should hold staff positions and be appointed as missionaries."

Both men said the trustees have a global agenda to expand their views worldwide.

"With the clear signal that the so-called 'conservative resurgence' within the Southern Baptist Convention is also an agenda for the global missions effort, I can no longer represent this board at home or overseas," said Ballenger, a 28-year missions veteran. "To the board (of trustees) itself, I can no longer represent (my region) for either I am not trusted or what I have to say is irrelevant to their goals and intentions."

Parker said "the political agenda within the SBC has overtaken most of our work to the near-exclusion of mission."

"A letter written by a trustee (Ron Wilson of California) to the (trustee) chairman (Bill Hancock of Kentucky) confirms for me the seriousness of the political agenda," Parker said. The letter "may represent a more radical 'minority' on the current board, (but) the attitudes now pervade and undermine our work."

Quoting excerpts from the letter, Parker said "the conviction was expressed that our staff and many of the missionary force in Europe are so-called 'liberals' or 'neo-orthodox' and that the appointment of them (us) over the last 25 years has brought about the problems we now have."

He also noted the letter calls for addressing "theological issues on the field in the same way that we addressed them here in the states," says the "obvious place to start is in Europe, and in particular, Ruschlikon seminary," and shows "disdain" for elected European Baptist leaders by urging that the Foreign Mission Board deal with different people in Europe.

"More shocking still is the global ambition revealed (in the letter)," Parker said. "In an appeal to make strong changes in the different trustee committees ... to bring about the required changes, the document says: 'There is not much happening in the rest of the world and we need to stack this committee with people who will see it through. If we cannot address liberalism and the mistakes of Europe, we will never be able to address liberalism and other problems in other parts of the world.'

Contacted for response, Wilson said, "It's amazing, and in a sense complimentary, that (Parker) would think I have much influence with the chairman or the board as a whole, because that letter is simply my attempt to address some of the problems I see.

"My letter is not the agenda of the board. Keith Parker knows better than that. He's using that letter for his own political gain. It's nothing more than a trustee's concern expressed to the chairman of the board, and it would be a mistake to make it anything more. There are differences of opinion on the board and the chairman has the freedom to accept, reject or ignore my correspondence. He chose not to be influenced by it."

Wilson rejected the idea that the trustees have an agenda for control. But he added: "If 'agenda' means the majority of the members want people who believe in all the Bible, then the answer is 'yes.' So do all Southern Baptists. To say I have theological concerns and commitment is fair. To say I have a political agenda is not."

As for politics, "the conservatives aren't the only ones who are political in the Southern Baptist Convention," he said.

Repeated attempts by Baptist Press to contact board chairman Hancock for comment were unsuccessful, but trustee Steve Hardy, chairman of the Europe, Middle East and North Africa committee, said the trustees have no global agenda for enforcing theological orthodoxy.

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However, he said, "It would be fair to say that some trustees perceive we've been involved with some institutions and ministries that have maintained a radically different theological concept than what our board operates under or what would be expressed in the Baptist Faith and Message Statement.

"Some trustees are frustrated about the continuance of those relationships," he said. "The trustees want to work with all Baptist groups, in Europe or elsewhere, that are seeking to win people to Christ and start Baptist churches."

Parker's statement concluded "We have a great group of missionaries in Europe who work in a very difficult area of the world. I love them. They are not 'liberals,' they are Christians.

"We have wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ in the Baptist family all across that great continent who have no earthly idea what is going on with us Southern Baptists. They are not 'liberal.' They love Jesus, too. Proportionally they win more people to Christ than do Southern Baptists and under far more difficult circumstances."

Ballenger said both his interpretation of the Bible, "which is for me authoritative," and his view of missions bring him into conflict with the trustees.

"I think the Bible teaches us to regard unity in the body of believers as a worthy goal," he said. "Disunity has been brought to our denomination and now our overseas work is threatened by the same malady.

"I think the Bible teaches us to give to the world without having to govern, to donate without having to dominate, to cooperate with Baptists in other lands without questioning their credentials, as if we were the measure by which others are to be evaluated. I believe the Bible teaches us to be partners, which leaves no room for paternalism"

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist papers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Householder announces
retirement from BSSB

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
1/8/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Lloyd Householder, assistant vice president for communications at the Baptist Sunday School Board, has announced his retirement, effective Feb. 1.

Householder, 62, and a 32-year employee of the board, also is chief of the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

"My decision to take early retirement has not come easily," said Householder. "I have been most blessed in my opportunities for many forms of service here in helping the churches and in telling the story of the Sunday School Board. Working with some of God's choicest people has been among the top rewards. But I know it is time to move on. My prayer is that I will have useful and fulfilling years ahead."

Sunday School Board President Jimmy Draper, who since becoming president in August 1991 has worked with Householder, said his first five months at the board have been greatly eased because of the "skilled and dedicated work of Lloyd Householder. He has done a splendid job in arranging for the many details of the transition in the executive leadership here at the BSSB, and I am deeply grateful. We owe a debt of gratitude to this outstanding Christian journalist. All of us here at the BSSB will join together in praying for him in these days that lie ahead."

Householder, a native of Tennessee, joined the board in 1960 as church-related vocations counselor. He became manager of the training union department (now discipleship training) in 1968 and assumed his present position in 1977.

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He has been national president of the Religious Public Relations Council, an inter-faith organization of religious public relations professionals. He currently serves as president of the Baptist Public Relations Association and a member of the Baptist World Alliance communications committee. He is listed in the latest edition of "Who's Who in Public Relations."

Householder also has been president of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association.

He is a graduate of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and holds the master of divinity, master of religious education and doctor of education degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

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Clint Ashley named director of
Golden Gate's Northwest campus

Baptist Press
1/8/92

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Clint M. Ashley, president of Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary in Alberta, has been elected director of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's Northwest campus in Portland, Ore.

He was unanimously endorsed by the executive committee of Golden Gate's trustee board in December following the recent retirement of William K. Peters, the Northwest campus's founding director.

Ashley, 52, has been president of the Canadian seminary since it opened in 1986. He begins his new duties Feb. 1.

"Dr. Ashley is committed to the West and is in tune with our direction for the future," said Golden Gate President William O. Crews. "He and I share common dreams about the kind of theological education we must provide to help reach the West and the world for Christ."

Golden Gate is one of six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries and the only SBC agency in the western United States.

Ashely was pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Pullman, Wash., from 1978 to 1986. Active in the Northwest Baptist Convention, he was on the convention's executive board from 1980-86, the long range planning committee in 1982, and was president of the regional convention from 1984-86.

"With such a close relationship between Northwest Baptists and Golden Gate, we are excited about Dr. Ashley's call to this new area of service and ministry," said Clayton K. Harrop, Golden Gate's acting academic dean. "He is one of the Northwest's recognized and proven leaders."

Ashley was on Golden Gate's board of trustees from 1983-86 and was a member of the SBC Canada Study Committee from 1983-84.

Prior to his involvement in the Northwest, he was a Southern Baptist missionary to Brazil in the area of theological education.

"Dr. Ashley is a devoted biblical scholar and a strong Bible preacher/teacher," Crews added. "He has demonstrated his missionary commitment repeatedly and will encourage young pastors and church leaders as he again serves the churches of the Northwest."

Ashely earned doctor of theology and bachelor of divinity degrees Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a bachelor of arts degree from Baylor University.

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He was a pastor, music director and youth director of several churches from 1957-69 and was a U.S. Army chaplain from 1967-72.

Ashley and his wife, Andrea, have two daughters.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Golden Gate Seminary

Southwestern faculty urges
delay for Truett Seminary

By Scott Collins

Baptist Press
1/8/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A statement calling on the faculty and administration of Baylor University to "delay your plans for the establishment of another Baptist seminary" has been issued by the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

The statement, which was delivered by a delegation from Southwestern's faculty Jan. 6, assures officials at Baylor that, "The academic freedom we have traditionally enjoyed at Southwestern Seminary remains intact."

"In light of our cordial historic relationships, we, the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, respectfully request that you delay your plans for the establishment of another Baptist seminary. We would welcome dialogue on this matter as 'laborers together with God'," the statement says.

Southwestern Seminary was founded at Baylor University in 1908 and moved to Fort Worth in 1910. The seminary's ownership transferred from the Baptist General Convention of Texas to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925.

Southwestern President Russell Dilday, a Baylor graduate, said the statement, which was approved by a vote of the faculty, represents a positive step on the part of the seminary's teachers in attempting to work together with Baylor. Dilday also said the statement is significant because 21 members of Southwestern's faculty hold degrees from Baylor.

"Through the years Southwestern and Baylor have benefited from a collegial and complimentary relationship which has mutually help both institutions," Dilday said. "We want to maintain that cooperative spirit and wish to avoid any actions that would create adversarial or competitive tensions.

"We believe our colleagues at Baylor share the same concerns and we are looking forward to continued dialogue."

William Tolar, vice president of academic affairs and provost at Southwestern, said the statement grew out of the seminary faculty's concern about the opening of the George W. Truett Seminary at Baylor.

"I love both of my alma maters and desire what is best for them," said Tolar, who holds two degrees from Baylor and taught at the school for 10 years before joining Southwestern's faculty.

"They are excellent academic institutions and serve unique purposes in the educational process of Baptists. I sincerely hope that we can continue to work together in a cooperative spirit of mutual respect and appreciation, rather than run the risk of moving into an adversarial and competitive mode," Tolar said.

Bruce Corley, dean of the seminary's school of theology and a member of the faculty delegation that delivered the statement, said the purpose of the statement is to "give a personal report of our healthy outlook and institutional vitality to our friends in Waco."

That assurance to Baylor's faculty and administration is affirmed throughout the statement.

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"We wish you to know that the Southwestern faculty, staff, administration and student body still represent mainstream Southern Baptist life in dedication to global missions, evangelism and religious liberty. We remain committed to providing graduate level theological education, combined with functional skills, for effective ministry," the statement reads. "We view our relationship with our Baptist colleges and universities as collegial and complementary in the cause of Baptist higher education."

The statement points to Southwestern's recent reaccreditation by the Association of Theological Schools and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It also says, "Persons recommended for faculty positions by faculty and administration are being elected by our board of trustees."

In addition, the seminary faculty states that, "Innovative and forward-looking degree and curricular changes are in process in all three schools (theology, religious education and church music) of the seminary."

Dilday affirmed the faculty's statement about Southwestern's future and his own as president.

"I am more excited about being a part of the future of Southwestern than at any time in my presidency," Dilday said after the faculty issued the statement.

Dilday said the reaccreditation of Southwestern, improved relations with trustees, creative new academic programs and recent additions to the faculty are evidence the seminary is moving forward with its purpose.

"Quality education is still available (in the SBC) at schools like Southwestern. Alternative programs are not necessary and would tend to dilute the support being given to our present seminaries," Dilday said.

"If they are being implemented on the assumption that quality education is no longer available, then I strongly object to that conclusion and would point to evidence that these are some of our best days," he said.

"People have become so emotionally involved with the (SBC) controversy that it is hard for them to admit that good work can still be done in many of our institutions. They are conveniently overlooking the fact that Southwestern is in its best days," Dilday said.

Text of Statement

To the Administration and Faculty of Baylor University:

We, the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, wish to extend to you our cordial Christian greetings during this time of uncertainty in denominational life and to assure you of our genuine interest and sincere prayers in your behalf.

We have cherished our historic relationship since Southwestern Seminary was conceived and founded on the Baylor campus in 1908. Not a few of your graduates serve on our faculty/staff as do not a few of our graduates on your faculty/staff. Your graduates continue to comprise the largest group from a single college or university in our student body. Because of our historic ties, we now write in genuine concern.

We wish you to know that the Southwestern faculty, staff, administration, and student body still represent mainstream Southern Baptist life in dedication to global missions, evangelism, and religious liberty. We remain committed to providing graduate level theological education, combined with functional skills, for effective ministry. We view our relationship with our Baptist colleges and universities as collegial and complementary in the cause of Baptist higher education.

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The academic freedom we have traditionally enjoyed at Southwestern Seminary remains intact. Persons recommended for faculty positions by faculty and administration are being elected by our Board of Trustees. Following our recent self-study, the ATS and the SACS have reaffirmed our accreditation for another ten years. Innovative and forward-looking degree and curricular changes are in process in all three schools of the seminary.

In light of our cordial historic relationships, we, the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, respectfully request that you delay your plans for the establishment of another Baptist seminary. We would welcome dialogue on this matter as "laborers together with God."

We hope and pray that we both will maintain our unique functions in the kingdom of God and among Baptists in particular. Unity is exceedingly urgent in Baptist life. We anticipate working together with Baylor in the years ahead.

Resolved by action of the General Faculty.

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Churches with high baptism rates
practice time-tested principles

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
1/8/92

ATLANTA (BP)--Churches with high baptism rates are those which practice time-tested evangelistic principles, a study of 1,000 Southern Baptist congregations reveals.

The research shows churches with high baptism rates have the following characteristics: a pastor who is committed to frequent personal witnessing, witness training for lay people of all ages, a variety of evangelistic methods, a vision for potential for growth and a method to identify and visit evangelistic prospects.

"The findings aren't startling, but they confirm some things we've said are keys in increasing evangelism effectiveness," said Steve Whitten, associate director of the Home Mission Board research department who wrote the report.

The survey of 1,000 churches distinguished 84 "high baptism churches" -- those which baptized five or more people per 100 resident members for two consecutive years.

Ninety-one churches were identified as "low baptism churches" -- those which baptized one or less person per 100 resident members the same two years. The remaining churches were classified as middle baptism churches.

Three-fourths of pastors of high baptism churches said they witness daily or several times a week. Only 44 percent of pastors in low baptism churches said they witness that frequently.

Churches with high baptism rates also stress personal evangelism by laity. Eighty-two percent of pastors of high baptism churches said their members would be comfortable telling a friend about Christ, compared to 66 percent of pastors in low baptism churches.

"A key factor (in high baptism churches) is aggressive personal witnessing by the pastor and lay people," said Whitten, a former pastor. "The data clearly show a positive relationship between frequent, intentional witnessing and high baptism rates."

One characteristic of low baptism churches is relying on revivals for the primary evangelistic thrust. Pastors of low baptism churches tended to agree with statements such as "revivals are more important in our church than any other evangelistic effort."

Pastors of high baptism churches preferred a variety of evangelistic tools, such as Continuing Witness Training and DiscipleYouth.

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Another comparison is prospect files. More than 82 percent of pastors from high baptism churches said their church had an updated prospect file, while 59 percent of pastors of low baptism churches reported an updated prospect file.

The study revealed a relationship between the church's size and its baptism rate. High baptism churches tended to be larger, with 16 percent having more than 500 members. Low baptism churches tended to be smaller, with 60 percent reporting fewer than 149 members.

Location also affected baptism rates. Fifty-six percent of the high baptism churches were in states where Southern Baptist work is new. Only one-fourth of the low baptism churches were in new convention areas.

The size of the community also impacted baptism rates to some extent. Forty-four percent of low baptism churches were found in settings described as "open country and villages." Only 2 percent of the low baptism churches were in cities of 50,000 or more.

Almost 16 percent of the high baptism churches were in cities of 50,000 or more. However, 18 percent of the high baptism churches were classified as open country or village.

Yet church size and location "need not determine a church's evangelistic effectiveness," Whitten said.

"High baptism rate churches are found in all sizes and locations. A church that begins to move toward the profile suggested by this report will be in a better position to see evangelistic results, no matter what its other characteristics."

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