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January 10, 1992

**FMB trustees want Europe chiefs
out sooner; Parks' future unclear** By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Isam Ballenger and Keith Parker will vacate their Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board administrative posts Jan. 31 rather than at midyear under an agreement negotiated with agency trustee leaders.

The agreement followed negative reaction from a number of trustees after Ballenger, 56, and Parker, 55, announced their early retirement Jan. 7 in protest of trustee actions and philosophies.

Meanwhile, Parks' own position seems unclear, according to a report in the Richmond News Leader, the city's afternoon newspaper. Citing anonymous sources, the report said "a coalition of fundamentalist trustees will ask the board ... to speed up establishment of a search committee to replace Dr. Parks."

Ballenger, vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and Parker, area director for Europe, announced they would leave their posts May 31 and July 1, respectively.

At a Jan. 7 news conference, the two said they could no longer represent the agency because of what they termed the trustees' "global agenda" to exert control and enforce theological orthodoxy overseas. Their decision to step down followed weeks of controversy surrounding trustee votes in October and December to defund the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

Trustee response to the news conference came quickly. Some trustees urged that the two men leave immediately. But the resulting agreement, if not altered at the next trustee meeting Feb. 10-12 in Richmond, would allow Ballenger and Parker to remain in their posts until Jan. 31, serve as consultants in February and receive full salary and benefits through their previously announced departure dates.

Under the agreement, FMB President R. Keith Parks and Executive Vice President Don Kammerdiener would move quickly to place interim leadership in position until a selection process for replacements is complete.

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Parks said he hopes the selection process of a new vice president and area director would move as normally as possible. The matter will be discussed in the trustees' regional committee meeting in February. Both positions are elected by trustees, but customarily after strong input and recommendations from the president and executive vice president, Kammerdiener said.

Parks, who turns 65 in October, said earlier he wanted to remain as president until 1995 to implement an ambitious 10-point strategy he outlined last year for global evangelization. The News Leader said the coalition "will report that the 'continuity' of Dr. Parks' leadership will not be necessary to implement" his plan.

Trustee chairman Bill Hancock told Baptist Press he feels Parks should be allowed to remain as president until he chooses to retire.

"There are some who desire that he would go ahead and retire, but my belief is that he should not do so until he chooses," Hancock said. "Now is the time to mount a bold offensive to address the mission opportunities in Europe, the former Soviet Union and around the world rather than to react to past developments and negative attitudes."

Parks said discussions will "intensify" over his tenure but declined to speculate further.

The agreement on Ballenger's and Parker's tenure was negotiated with Parks and Kammerdiener by Hancock and Steve Hardy, chairman of the trustee committee for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Hancock said Ballenger's and Parker's "volatile language" in opposition to trustees provoked the reaction that led to the early departure.

"In the business world, if someone leaves and they leave criticizing the organization they normally leave immediately," Hardy said.

Trustees have responded both negatively and positively to the agreement, Hardy added. Some trustees want the two men to leave immediately so they can't continue to criticize the trustees; others agree with the announced timetable.

Parks said he would prefer for Ballenger and Parker to remain in place until their previously announced dates so they could handle a host of legal, administrative and personal details.

"That would give a smoother transition," he said. "But given the trustee reaction we agreed the alternate plan would be workable."

A number of trustees reportedly don't want Ballenger or Parker to attend upcoming meetings with European Baptists. One such meeting would be a gathering of leaders of the European Baptist Federation Jan. 26-29 in Dorfweil, Germany. That meeting, previously planned to examine the role of Baptist churches in Europe, is expected to deal with European Baptist reaction to the trustees' decision to defund the Ruschlikon seminary.

Many trustees also don't want Ballenger and his wife to take the customary farewell trip a retiring vice president makes at board expense in his region. Parker, who lives in Europe, would have to return to wrap up his affairs.

Parks said he hopes the Ballengers will be allowed to make the trip. "It is important for the missionaries in the region and for the Ballengers to make a final trip to bring closure to their ministry. I'm confident they wouldn't use that opportunity to criticize the board."

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Parks praised Ballenger and Parker, both veterans of foreign missions, for their integrity and commitment to missions. He said "losing them at this crucial time of opportunity ... is an incalculable loss" to missions.

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Hopper denies making promise
for a conservative seminary

Baptist Press
1/10/92

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--No promise of a conservative thrust at a Baptist seminary in Switzerland was ever made to trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, according to the seminary's president, John David Hopper.

Hopper, in a telephone interview with the Baptist Message, newsjournal for Louisiana Baptists, also responded to charges that the cost of running the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, Switzerland, is too high for the number of students enrolled.

FMB trustees voted during their October meeting and reaffirmed their vote in December to eliminate \$365,000 in the mission board's budget for the seminary and redirect the funds toward other theological education efforts in Eastern Europe.

One reason cited by a number of trustees for their action was a promise they said Hopper, a Southern Baptist missionary, made to lead the seminary in a conservative theological direction during a dialogue session in 1988 at the Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Hopper denied making such a promise. During the three-hour Glorieta session, he said, "I presented my vision of Ruschlikon, what I wanted to accomplish, and I listened to the concerns of the trustees.

"That three-hour discussion is all of the time I have been with the trustees. That was recorded. The Foreign Mission Board has the tape. I have the tape. At no place, at no time, did I say, 'I promise I will make the seminary more conservative.'"

However, during their December debate over the defunding, several trustees said they nevertheless had interpreted Hopper's vision as a commitment for a more conservative direction at the seminary, and at least one trustee said Hopper voiced such a goal in a personal conversation.

Hopper said he told trustees at the 1988 dialogue session that "the theology of Ruschlikon is not an issue with me." He said his primary concerns were "making the seminary missions-minded, extending the work of (its) Institute of Missions and Evangelism, making the work of the seminary more near the life of the churches...."

"When I said, 'I'm not concerned about the theology,' that does not mean that I'm not a conservative theologian," Hopper said. "It simply means that from a missiological point of view, I do not see my job as forcing our theology on students from different European unions, which in many cases are older than the SBC.

"We can believe and teach what we believe. But we cannot force our opinion, especially the opinions of a certain group of trustees on our Foreign Mission Board, or within our convention, on all the rest of the Baptists movements in the world. This is missiological suicide."

Also during the December debate over defunding the seminary, a number of trustees complained that the cost of an education at Ruschlikon is numerous times higher than costs at other seminaries funded by the Foreign Mission Board.

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"Ruschlikon is a center of missions of which the seminary is only a hub," Hopper told The Baptist Message. "Whenever you say, 'Okay, you have 26 (students) in a diploma program and divide that by \$1.1 million,' you don't really understand that this is a mission center and not just a small seminary. The seminary is only one piece of a much broader ministry which brings Europe together." Hopper noted the seminary continuously reaches across Europe and trains hundreds of pastors and laypersons each year.

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CORRECTION: In Baptist Press story titled "Southern Baptist colleges log decade of continuous growth" dated 1/9/92, please change the word 19th in the first paragraph to 10th.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Cooperative Fellowship calls
Cecil Sherman as executive

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
1/10/92

DALLAS (BP)--The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's coordinating council voted unanimously Jan. 9 in Dallas to call Cecil E. Sherman, pastor of Broadway Church in Fort Worth, Texas, as the first full-time coordinator of the Atlanta-base moderate group.

The 82-member council approved a salary and benefits package not to exceed \$100,000 for the coordinator's post.

A member of the search committee, Daniel Vestal, pastor of Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston, said, "Cecil is giving it prayerful and favorable consideration."

The new coordinator will have an office in Atlanta, where the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was formed last year in response to a "takeover" of Southern Baptist Convention agencies by conservatives.

Sherman, 64, came to Broadway in 1984 after 20 years as pastor of First Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C.

He earned a bachelor's degree from Baylor University, master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a master of theology degree in homiletics from Princeton Theological Seminary.

He also was pastor of First Baptist Church in College Station, Texas, and First Baptist Church in Chamblee, Ga., and was a staff member of the Texas Baptist evangelism division from 1962-64.

Sherman was described by Jim Slatton, chairman of the search committee, as "a leading spirit in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship." Sherman was a founder of the Forum, the publication Baptists Today, the Southern Baptist Alliance and Baptists Committed. He also was a member of the Southern Baptist Peace Committee seeking a solution to the moderate versus conservative controversy.

Slatton, pastor of River Road Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., said the search committee nominated Sherman because "he has credibility and integrity, is articulate and has powerful intellectual and spiritual gifts."

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Also, Slatton said, Sherman bears "some baggage and wounds" from the conflict with conservatives.

Vestal said, "Cecil is deeply qualified to lead us at a very crucial juncture," noting Baylor University soon will name Sherman as one of its distinguished alumni.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship also adopted a mission statement and announced churches sent \$4,517,000 for missions causes through its Atlanta office in 1991.

The finance committee said 78 percent of the income was for Southern Baptist Convention line item causes, including \$1,374,000 for the Foreign Mission Board and \$495,000 for the Home Mission Board.

The total included designated gifts of \$96,000 for Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, from which the trustees of the Foreign Mission Board voted to withdraw funding last year, and \$27,000 for Associated Baptist Press.

According to the group's mission statement, "Our purpose is to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to carry out the Great Commission by an inclusive global mission in which all Baptists can participate."

The five-year major mission emphases include strengthening Christian ministry in Europe -- especially Eastern Europe -- and the former Soviet republics, ministering to internationals in the United States, development of inner-city ministries and enabling Christian witness within countries, cities or people groups where there is no present access to the gospel.

"We are willing to communicate with, cooperate with and joint venture with the mission agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention and other Baptist groups," the mission statement said.

"We are also willing to work anywhere in the world with other Christian organizations with like objectives."

Charles Wade, pastor of First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas, and co-chairman of the general assembly committee, told the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, "We're through with anger and confrontation. We just want to do the work of God with whatever group wants to work with us."

Also, Mercer University in Atlanta has volunteered to serve as a repository for CBF archives, the council was told.

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Russians sign agreement
with SBC TV network

By Toby Druin

Baptist Press
1/10/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission's reputation for quality family programming, devoid of nudity, violence and profanity, has led to an agreement to permit the showing of two to seven hours weekly of RTVC-produced programs -- including The Baptist Hour -- to 80 million Russian people beginning in February.

Officials of the RTVC's ACTS Network and of four Russian entities in St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) and Ufa, Bashkerian, Russia, recently signed "letters of understanding" to provide up to seven hours of programming weekly for an estimated audience of 75 million people in and around St. Petersburg and another 5 million around Ufa in south central Russia.

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The understanding also gives the RTVC exclusive rights to produce documentaries on the 50-plus museums in St. Petersburg and on cultural events in the two cities.

RTVC President Jack Johnson; retired former President Paul M. Stevens; Bob Cargill, president of Cargill Associates and former director of development for the RTVC; and Mike Wright, vice president for RTVC network operations, visited St. Petersburg and Ufa in early November.

The stations are two of only five commercial stations in the former Soviet Union which originate programming, Johnson said. The vast land of 300 million people has no cable TV.

Specific plans for program content are still being worked out, Wright said, but among weekly offerings to the Russian stations will be The Sunshine Factory, Listen, The Answer, music and The Baptist Hour, which likely will be reduced to half-hour segments and carried as "The Word of Life."

"They asked for family programming," Johnson said, "but in any package, we have a 'must carry' agreement that includes The Baptist Hour. Our purpose is to present the gospel."

A two-hour pilot program is being prepared for showing in February to be followed shortly by the weekly programming Johnson said.

The venture will mean added expenses of about \$500,000 to cover transportation costs, translation and production equipment, including equipment to change the programming to the European PAL system, Johnson said.

Johnson said the RTVC hoped to work with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to open more doors in Russia for Southern Baptist witness.

The opportunity for the Russian venture came last fall at the Western Cable Television Convention when Johnson and Wright were approached by a Russian emigre, a U.S. citizen living in southern California.

"He came to us and said he had connections with television stations in Russia and was interested in RTVC/ACTS programming," Johnson said. "He said, 'We'll take anything you've got.'"

"He was interested in family programming," Johnson said. "He wasn't interested in us because of our religious orientation, but because we had family-oriented programming free of nudity, violence and profanity."

An invitation to St. Petersburg followed when the RTVC delegation met with officials of the television stations and local cultural officials interested in attracting attention to their art treasures to encourage restoration of their facilities.

Programs are projected on museums and other cultural attractions of St. Petersburg and the surrounding area, which may be distributed to domestic and international markets and for broadcast on ACTS.

Several details remain to be worked out, such as clearing international copyrights on programs, including the music to be presented. International legal specialists are working on the formal agreements, which are to be presented to the Russian entities in early February.

Missionary child's death
opens ministry in Benin

By Suzanne Darland

ELIZABETHTOWN, Ky. (BP)--Despite tremendous grief for the family, the drowning of a missionary couple's 2-year-old daughter has opened new doors for ministry in Benin, a West African country.

Previously, there was a barrier between Richard and Carmela Bartels and the Africans they hoped to share the Christian gospel with, Bartels said. Before, they were perceived as "rich, white people," he said. "But now we've suffered too."

In Benin, half of all children die before age 5.

At the funeral of Victoria Bartels, one person explained this change to the Bartelses. "He said we had walked in their footsteps now that we'd lost a child and that they had seen how the Lord has led us through it and they could follow us now. Our words were more credible now."

Bartels, a former staff member at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, Ky., and his wife and 10-year-old daughter, Chandra, spoke at the church while in the United States for a brief Christmas reunion with family.

"I felt totally desolated," Mrs. Bartels told the church. "I couldn't believe it had happened. Yet from the very minute they brought her out of the pool I've felt the Lord's hand. In a supernatural way, his strength has literally held us up."

The Bartels family tragedy began on a warm evening, Nov. 23, while many of the missionary families in Benin gathered at the American Recreation Center in Cotonou for fellowship, Bartels recounted. The adults were inside and on the back porch while many of the children splashed in the swimming pool.

When Bartels went to round up his children for the trip home, he found 10-year-old Chandra playing with other missionary children at one end of the pool. But 2-year-old Victoria had slipped unnoticed into the other end of the pool and drowned.

Bartels jumped into the pool and attempted to revive the child, but "I knew she was gone," he said. "I knew there was nothing we could do."

Carmela sobbed as she watched her husband breathe into the child's mouth. As she cried, a verse she had taught her Bible study group that week came to mind: "For the glory of God," Jesus said of Lazarus in John 11:4, "that the Son of God might be glorified."

The Bartelses said God has ministered to them during their time of grief and shown them new opportunities for ministry in Benin.

About 250 people, including many unchurched neighbors, attended Victoria's funeral services under a tent in the family's back yard. Such services never are held for children in West Africa, Mrs. Bartels explained. With the high infant-mortality rate parents "try to forget the death and go on. They stay hidden in the house to mourn." For Bartels to tell the crowd at the funeral that "God has given us consolation and strength" was "a bit of a shock," he said.

"They couldn't believe we were there," Mrs. Bartels added. "I kept fixing the ribbon in her hair, touching her. You just don't do that."

At the funeral, pastor Venance Kouton told the people in their native language, "Don't think about Victoria anymore; think about yourself. You will die, too."

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No sad songs of mourning were allowed at the funeral. Instead, a group of missionary children sang "Jesus Loves Me" and "This Little Light of Mine," two songs Victoria had learned to sing.

"A friend told me she had been a Christian a long time, and this was the first time she had seen victory in a funeral service," Mrs. Bartels recalled.

Through this experience, the African church of about 400 members found a way to minister to the missionaries who so often had ministered to them. After the Saturday night drowning, he didn't feel like going to church on Sunday, Bartels said. "But God put it on my heart I needed to be there. God began giving me comfort then."

By 12:20 p.m., the doorbell was ringing with church members who weren't sure what to do but who wanted to show their love. "They brought fruit, and that was real sharing," he explained. "It was out of their need, not surplus."

Victoria's arrival into the Bartels family was no less a miracle than what has happened since her death, the couple explained. After despairing at not being able to have another child, the Bartelses adopted Victoria while on furlough in 1989.

They overcame the barriers of limited time in the States, a \$35,000 hospital bill related to the child's birth and competition from other couples who wanted to adopt the child.

When the Bartelses picked up the baby in South Carolina, the nurses told them they had named her Victoria. The nurses had become attached to the child who had spent eight weeks in the intensive care nursery.

"I started crying," Mrs. Bartels recalled. "Victor is Richard's dad's name, and we had always said we would name our next baby after him. I looked up and told God he had a good sense of humor; I'd never thought of Victoria."

The day Victoria died, her parents watched her dance naked in the sprinkler in the back yard with a pet puppy. That evening, sister Chandra remarked that Victoria was dancing in heaven.

"I don't want to deny there are and will be moments when we wonder what kind of girl she'd be, what she would have been like," Bartels said. "But already we're focused more on happy memories."

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(Suzanne Darland is a state correspondent for the Western Recorder, newsjournal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.)

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