



(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420.17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75248-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
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

February 6, 1992

92-22

Century-old publisher
nears electronic future

By Charles Willis

NASHVILLE (BP)--After being a publisher and provider of Christian resource materials for more than 100 years, the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board has begun a strategic initiative to become the electronic communications center for the 15.2-million member denomination.

Sunday School Board trustees heard a report Feb. 3 on computer communications options that soon may link churches and individuals with each other and with denominational information in an unprecedented fashion.

Charles Wilson, assistant vice president for business, urged trustees to think of the board's Church Information System, not as a line of computer products but as a "technological link between the Sunday School Board and churches. We want to put computer technology within the reach of every church in the Southern Baptist Convention."

He said he hopes the system will "help link together resources the Sunday School Board has with resources of other Baptist entities to make those available to a broader base of people. There is the possibility we could tie in every church and entity in the SBC as equal participants in the process," he continued. "The Sunday School Board's role would be coordinator for the volume of information on the system."

Current use of SBCNet, the denomination's computer communication network, and possibilities offered by other software being tested are "essential to the future of the Sunday School Board," Wilson said.

The potential to provide demographic information for effective ministry and up-to-the-minute applications for Sunday school lesson materials will enable churches to be more effective in ministry, he said.

SBCNet, begun in April 1991, provides computer networking among convention agencies, state conventions, associations, churches and individuals. More than 130 subscribers can read the latest news from Baptist Press and from several SBC agencies through CompuServe, a worldwide computer network service. Users must purchase CompuServe's SBCNet software for \$20 from the SSB to access denominational data.

Herb Hollinger, director of Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention news service, said: "The Sunday School Board's leadership in providing SBCNet has opened up all sorts of communications possibilities between and among Southern Baptists. While Baptist Press is primarily designed for the news media, the Sunday School Board has provided an economical way for all Southern Baptists to obtain all our news stories."

David Haywood, SBCNet system operator in the board's office of communications, told trustees SBCNet has the capability to provide the latest teaching helps for any age group and demographic data on which community areas are growing or declining. It also will permit users to participate in meetings without leaving their offices.

Bill Peter, specialist in customer research and applications for the board's corporate planning and research department, demonstrated for trustees software now being tested, which combines geographic and census information with data from the SBC Uniform Church Letter. The color graphics program, he said, provides "clues for ministry and strategy planning."

--more--

Slightly more than 8,000 churches reported on the 1990 Uniform Church Letter that they have computer capabilities, Peter said. In 1991, 4,000 churches sent their Uniform Church Letters to the board on computer disk.

Louis Hanks, manager of the youth curriculum section in the board's Sunday school youth-adult department, told trustees of a pilot project to provide Sunday school lesson applications for youth from current news and trends.

Using an SBCNet electronic supplement to the ongoing teaching plans for "Youth in Action: Teacher," a program called "EXTRA!" provided motivational and Bible application suggestions to 13 churches in November 1991. A 12-day schedule, from the creation of material on a computer file to its use with youth in Sunday school, provided relevant issues for an age-graded teaching plan. Printed materials typically have been written about two years before they are used in churches.

Brenda Harris, director of Christian education at North Cleveland Baptist Church of Cleveland, Tenn., and a writer of Bible Book Series youth materials, said writers can never provide the current detail that was available in EXTRA! because of the time delay for printed materials.

Clif Cummings, youth and family minister at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Enid, Okla., said the October-November-December quarter was the first time his church had used SBC youth curriculum in more than 10 years.

"I realize the awesome possibilities of this type of information," he said. "Nothing, I mean nothing else, comes close to meeting the current needs of making Bible study applicable to my students."

Russell Jenkins, minister of youth at Lake Shore Baptist Church of Pasadena, Md., said youth workers in his church were disappointed when the pilot project ended.

"It is a tremendous help to the teacher who tries so desperately sometimes to get the youth to see the application of the biblical truths," he said. "The literature improvements (introduced in 1991) were excellent, but this (EXTRA!) was the crowning achievement."

Wilson said an expanded six-month test of EXTRA! resources for youth teachers will be available for all SBCNet users from April through September 1992.

"I see SBCNet and CIS as a way to help people, especially those in emerging state conventions, be involved in the SBC in a way we could never do it before."

During their three-day meeting, 16 Sunday School Board trustees purchased SBCNet membership kits.

Individuals and churches interested in using SBCNet should contact David Haywood at the Sunday School Board.

--30--

Draper reports to trustees
on first months as president

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
2/6/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Citing a "wonderful response" as he travels throughout the nation, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. said he is spending a major portion of this time speaking and meeting with Baptist groups.

"The convention at this time is very fragile," Draper told trustees meeting Feb. 3-5 in Nashville. "I don't try to go in and give a commercial for the Sunday School Board. I try to go in and preach and share my heart."

--more--

Draper, who became the board's eighth president in August 1991, said he and his three executive vice presidents are coming together as a team.

"These are not 'yes' men," said Draper of Gene Mims, executive vice president for planning, research and denominational relations; Mike Arrington, executive vice president for operations; and E.V. King, executive vice president for finance and administration.

"Each of us has his own baggage. While it's tough, it's going to work. I'll have to be honest with you, autocratic leadership would be easier but what we're doing is the wave of the future in management," Draper said.

Task forces of employees will participate in evaluating "every area of our work at the Sunday School Board" in the next few months, he said.

In another area, Draper called for expanded efforts with language and culture groups.

"I believe the potential to work with ethnic groups is mind boggling, and we're just playing at it," he said. He also cited a need for greater ethnic representation on the trustee board.

Trustees approved business plans to guide the operations of Genevox music publishing, video/audiovisuals and Church Information System computer hardware and software.

Draper told trustees the board's first quarter financial report had "mixed results." Total revenue from operations was \$48.5 million, 1.3 percent below budget but 11.3 percent above last year. "Overall, the financial health of the board is strong," he said.

On the positive side, sales in the 63 Baptist Book Stores topped \$7 million in December, the first time the milestone has been reached in one month. Sunday school literature sales registered a 1.9 percent increase in unit sales for the first quarter of Breakthrough improvements.

On the negative side, Broadman books were below budget and church literature, except for Sunday school, showed a decrease.

Trustees voted to ask the administration to review policy for stocking books in Baptist Book Stores and at the SBC store and other special meetings.

They also voted to delay closing of the Baptist Book Store in Albuquerque, N.M., for at least one year in response to expressions of concern from New Mexico Baptists. During that time, a business plan will be developed for the store. In August 1991 trustees had voted to close the store on March 31, 1992, because it had lost money for 12 of the previous 15 years.

Trustees also adopted resolutions directed to the trustee boards of two other agencies.

To Foreign Mission Board trustees, a resolution proposed by Tommy Taylor, pastor of London Bridge Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, Va., notes "difficult and troubled times at the Foreign Mission Board" and "unprecedented opportunities for sharing the gospel worldwide with the demise of communism."

The resolution conveyed "to Chairman Bill Hancock and the trustees of the Foreign Mission Board our heartfelt concern, our continuing prayers and our strong confidence in their Spirit-led leadership at this time."

--more--

Trustees also voted to commend to the trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., their support for David Dockery, general editor of "The New American Commentary" at the board. A day earlier seminary trustees unanimously had approved faculty status for Dockery who then was appointed dean of the school of theology by President Roy L. Honeycutt.

Sunday School Board trustees approved a process to allow the administration to fill Dockery's position before the next full meeting of the trustee board in August. A candidate will be presented and questioned by the trustee executive committee and a mail ballot will be conducted of the full board.

Dockery reported on an expanded line of academic books to be released by Broadman Press in the next five years. Books to be released this year include "The Identity of Jesus of Nazareth" by Carl F.H. Henry, "Survey of the Old Testament" by Paul R. House and "Learning to Study the Bible" by Earl P. McQuay.

In another report, trustees learned of plans by the discipleship training department to release on an accelerated production track a new line of church-based, support-group materials for use with people suffering from addictive behaviors and codependency.

The first course, "Making Peace with Your Past," will be released in October 1992 by the discipleship training and family ministry departments. "First Place: A Christ-Centered Health Program" developed by First Baptist Church of Houston, will be published.

Utilizing manuscripts provided at no charge from RAPHA, a Christian-based in-patient hospital program for the treatment of psychiatric and substance abuse problems, the board will develop church-based materials on a variety of other subjects under the imprint, Lifeway.

Roy Edgemon, director of the discipleship training department, said the release of 24-30 products in the next 30 months represents an "unprecedented opportunity for ministry and evangelism."

Harry Piland, director of the Sunday school division, said the 1991 Sunday school enrollment gain of 173,303, the largest since 1976, puts Southern Baptists "on the verge of one of the largest breakthroughs we have ever seen."

After hearing a report on options for "downsizing" the 93-member board, trustees voted to ask their five-member committee to continue its study and bring a recommendation in August.

They also voted to give an annual Trustee Award for Excellence to an employee for "excellence in performance of his/her work or who makes suggestions which result in significant savings to the board or enhances the work of the board." The \$1,000 cash award will be funded by voluntary contributions of trustees.

Elected as officers were Dan Collins, attorney from Taylors, S.C., chairman; Raymond Davis, pastor of Ewtonville Baptist Church of Dunlap, Tenn., vice chairman and chairman of the trustee executive committee; and Burgess E. Guinn, deputy state statistician from Cornersville, Tenn., secretary.

--30--

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press

Land among religious leaders
who met pope about pornography

By Louis Moore

VATICAN CITY (BP)--Three Southern Baptist leaders met with Pope John Paul II and other Vatican officials to explore possibilities for an international, interfaith effort to combat child and hard-core pornography.

Southern Baptists who participated in the meeting at the Vatican Jan. 30 were Richard Land of Nashville, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission; Oscar Romo of Atlanta, director of the language church extension division at the Home Mission Board; and H. Robert Showers, a lawyer from Washington and a Christian Life Commission trustee.

The meeting produced a document, entitled "Declaration of Concern and Common Conviction Regarding the Problem of Pornography," pledging interfaith action against the spread of child and hard-core pornography. Land was a member of the subcommittee that drafted the declaration.

Land, Romo and Showers were among 19 U.S. religious leaders from a variety of denominations who met with the pope to encourage Vatican support for the effort. Included in the group were Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Mormons, Pentecostals and representatives of the Salvation Army, the National Council of Churches and National Association of Evangelicals.

"I am tremendously encouraged that leaders from such diverse religious groups could come together and establish agreement on a meaningful commitment to eradicate hard-core and child pornography," Land said. "I was impressed by the sincerity and commitment of all the participants. A sense of urgency was expressed repeatedly as more people around the world are being victimized by adult hard-core and child pornography each day."

In his address to the group, John Paul said, "Dear friends, your meeting is a noteworthy example of religious believers coming together in order to address one of the great social ills of our time. I am convinced that by offering the unanimous witness of our common convictions regarding the dignity of man, created by God, the followers of various religions, both now and in the future, will contribute in no small measure to the growth of that civilization of love which is founded on the principles of an authentic humanism. I encourage your worthy efforts, and I cordially invoke upon all of you the abundant blessings of Almighty God."

The pope also said, "The family is usually the first to suffer from pornography and its damaging effects on children. Consequently, as the primary cell of society, the family must be the first champion of the battle against this evil. It is my hope that your efforts to combat the plague of pornography will help families in their delicate task of forming the consciences of the young."

The meeting with the pope was requested by the Religious Alliance Against Pornography, a group of U.S. religious leaders active in the fight against pornography. Land and Romo are members of RAAP's board and its executive committee.

In January RAAP sent smaller delegations of religious leaders to Geneva to meet with officials of the World Council of Churches and to Constantinople to meet with the Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarch to solicit their support for the fight against child and hard-core pornography.

Future consultations are planned with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the World Evangelical Fellowship and other worldwide religious bodies.

--more--

RAAP maintains pornography has become a worldwide problem, and religious leaders must fight it on a global scale. The organization says the United States is the primary producer of pornographic materials, including child and hard-core pornography. It also says in the wake of the breakup of the Soviet bloc pornography is pouring into Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union at a rapid rate. The former communist governments restricted the flow of pornography along with the flow of religious, political and other materials.

Pornography in languages other than English also is being imported to the United States from other countries and focused on ethnic and language groups in America, Romo said.

Child prostitution and child pornography are a major problem among refugees and immigrants, Romo said, adding some ethnic immigrants force their children into prostitution and pornography in order to supplement low family incomes.

Land said, "In America we have assembled an alliance against this pernicious evil that is unprecedented in its breadth and religious diversity. I am excited that it now looks as if we have commenced a process that will allow an international alliance against pornography which will be worldwide in scope and yet flexible enough to allow people to adapt the movement to their particular cultures.

"There was common agreement among the conference participants that the problem of hard-core pornography knows and respects no national or denominational boundaries," he said. "It must be opposed by international and interdenominational efforts. I believe all of us who participated in the conference felt we had been privileged to be part of a providential event and that God is preparing to do something of great historical significance through the commitments and agreements reached in their meetings."

The declaration drafted by the participants in the meeting at the Vatican said, "We commit ourselves to do all in our power to proclaim the truth of human dignity, freedom and responsibility, and to promote the God-given human values needed for the moral, physical and spiritual health of our world."

It also said, "We call on people of faith and good will throughout the world to stand against this pervasive evil."

RAAP was founded in the United States in 1986. Its foundational statement says the organization is committed to First Amendment freedoms and also to "help people understand the moral dimensions of the problem of hard-core and child pornography and what their responsibility is in this regard, ... (namely) that hard-core and child pornography, which are not protected by the Constitution, are evils which must be eliminated."

Jerry Kirk, a Presbyterian minister from Cincinnati, and Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago are co-chairs of the organization.

--30--

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Christian Life Commission

North Carolina congregation
ponders licensing homosexual

Baptist Press
2/6/92

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (BP)--Deacons of the Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church have recommended the church license to the gospel ministry an admitted homosexual.

The church's deacon body voted on Feb. 3 -- 15 for, 7 against and 1 absention -- to recommend the church license John Blevins, 24, a third-year divinity student at Duke University in nearby Durham. The church council now will consider the matter and set a date for a congregational meeting, according to Pastor Linda Jordan.

--more--

Contrary to several news media accounts, first reported in The News and Observer in Raleigh Feb. 5, the deacons did not vote to recommend Blevins' ordination. The newspaper article has generated a lot of calls to the church, Jordan said.

Blevins, according to the Raleigh newspaper account, has concerns the publicity might cause problems in the church and jeopardize the possibility of the church supporting his request for the license. Blevins is a member of the congregation and has preached there on occasion, Jordan told Baptist Press.

Church members have been aware of the discussions about Blevins's request for the past six months, Jordan said, and many have attended the deacons' meetings where the subject has been discussed.

The Binkley church was organized in 1958 and has 574 members, Jordan said.

The Chapel Hill church's announcement comes on the heels of news in January about a neighboring Raleigh church, Pullen Memorial Baptist, which is considering sanctioning the relationship between two gay men, akin to marriage. The congregation is meeting in small groups to determine whether to act on the two men's request. A decision is expected early this month.

--30--

Williams stresses importance
of state Brotherhood leadership

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
2/6/92

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--James D. Williams, president of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, met for the first time with state convention Brotherhood leaders Jan. 29-Feb. 1 and called them a "valuable and important part of the Brotherhood network."

"We cannot carry out the mission assigned to the Brotherhood Commission without the faithful, effective executive leadership you are giving," Williams told those attending the National Brotherhood Leadership Conference, which meets annually in Memphis. "That's not sugar coating or window dressing, but it's from the heart."

Williams repeated a pledge made at his installation last October to work with state personnel, along with trustees, staff, Woman's Missionary Union leadership and other Southern Baptist agencies to "strengthen our commitment to world evangelism and missions."

"Everybody, everywhere, ought to know who Jesus is," Williams said. "This simple line from the familiar chorus is a good way of expressing Southern Baptists' understanding of our world missions challenge, and I'm ever more convinced that men and boys should be spiritual leaders in the ministry of reconciliation with Jesus Christ. I hope he will use us to do just that."

"Without you (state leadership), we cannot do our work," he said. "I want us to be partners in the process, and you've already been extremely helpful."

Much attention was given during the conference to discussion of the partnership involving Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood in the ongoing production of coeducational missions options and products. Brotherhood Commission members of age-level work groups on coeducation reported on progress.

Editors shared with state leaders that the first Express Missions quarterly resource packet for youth ministers, published under the new World Changers Resources imprint, will be available June 1, while the World Changers coeducational work projects for senior high youth will see expansion with a junior high pilot project this summer in Birmingham, Ala.

--more--

The task force on coeducational options for adults has agreed that existing WMU and Brotherhood organizations are still needed and that both organizations reserve the right to program a "total church missions experience," according to Douglas Beggs, Brotherhood Commission vice president of program services. He added that the group's preliminary discussions have focused on missions options for senior adults "using their wealth of experiences from a professional lifetime."

In other action, the state leaders:

-- Engaged in dialogue with Williams covering the Brotherhood Commission's new organizational structure, corporate planning process and strategic growth goals, all approved by the agency's trustees last October.

-- Honored retiring state Brotherhood directors Edd Brown of California, Charles Ragland of Florida and John Winters of Louisiana.

-- Welcomed new state leaders Bill Berry of Virginia, Steve Melvin of Iowa, Rick Patchin of Georgia, Cecil Seagle of Florida and Jerry Taillon of Canada.

-- Elected Rob Carr, director of Brotherhood for the Illinois Baptist State Association, as their co-convenor-elect, to succeed Cameron Byler of Tennessee at the January 1993 meeting. The co-convenor represents all state level directors and associates in planning the conference agenda and presiding over the annual meeting.

The next National Brotherhood Leadership Conference is scheduled Jan. 27-30, 1993, in Memphis.

--30--

(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Brotherhood Commission.

Husband, friends grieve loss
of mother and unborn child

Baptist Press
2/6/92

ARLINGTON, Texas (BP)--Family and friends of Susan Scirratt remembered her life and mourned her death during funeral services at First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas, Feb. 5.

Scirratt, wife of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary student Martin Scirratt, died Feb. 2 after being accidentally shot by her husband. The accident also claimed the life of the couple's unborn child.

She is survived by her husband, a 3-year-old son, her parents and two brothers.

"Even though our hearts are heavy, we are lifting them to God for healing and comfort," pastor Charles Wade, told mourners at the funeral.

"We need courage, for some of you are wondering if you can ever laugh and smile or face life with joy again. I want to say to you that you will live again. Your heart will not always be numb."

A memorial fund for Susan Scirratt has been established at the Buckner Baptist Children's Home in Dallas. The Arlington church has set up a trust fund for the couple's surviving son.

Friends of Susan Scirratt described her as a loving mother and wife who was dedicated to her church and to her career as a teacher at Mansfield (Texas) High School.

Debbie Andrews, a co-worker at the high school, said Scirratt was loved and trusted by students and teachers alike.

--more--

"Her students would come in and allow her to help them," said Andrews, whose husband is assistant director of purchasing at Southwestern Seminary.

"It was not unusual for there to be four or five students waiting for her in the mornings. She just communicated so well with them and she cared about them and wanted to help," Andrews said.

Friends said the Scirratts' marriage was a model of love and respect. "Marty put his wife and family first," Andrews said. "Even church activities did not come before his wife."

Wade said Scirratt is feeling "a lot of hurt and pain, love and hope. Marty is working through a lot of shock and confusion. He just feels horrible about what happened."

Wade encouraged Southern Baptists to write letters of encouragement to Scirratt in care of First Baptist Church. "He is really a man who appreciates the prayers of people," Wade said. "People need to really pray for him."

The Scirratts were active at the Arlington church. Martin is minister to singles and Susan was active in the church's choir.

The accident occurred around 5:30 p.m. Feb. 2 according to the Arlington Police Department.

Arlington Police Detective John Stanton told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram Martin Scirratt was cleaning a .20-gauge pump shotgun in the couple's home when the gun discharged.