



# -- 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 75246-1798, 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 14, 1992

92-28

FMB meeting roundup:

Parks, trustees set up talks;  
funds allocated to seminaries

By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees voted Feb. 12 to hold a spiritual retreat with board president R. Keith Parks, allocated funds for theological education in Eastern Europe and named a committee to work on relationships with European Baptists.

In other action, trustees approved \$3.85 million, including \$1 million for Bibles and other materials, as the initial installment of their "Green Alert" initiative in the republics of the former Soviet Union.

They also elected Bill Goff, a 20-year veteran of missions in Venezuela, area director for mission work in Spanish South America, named a writer and editor for a book on the mission board's 150-year history and appointed 17 missionaries.

The new appointments bring the mission force to 3,926 in 122 countries, with work extending into several other nations.

The trustee retreat with Parks and board staff of his choosing is set for March 19-20 in a Dallas-Fort Worth area hotel, shortly before the trustees hold their April 6-8 meeting in Clemson, S.C. At the retreat they will try to resolve the cloudy question of Parks' tenure -- as well as questions Parks and some trustees have asked about willingness for mutual cooperation.

Trustees decided on the retreat for dialogue and prayer after Parks, in an address Feb. 12, asked them either to resolve whether his tenure would last through the 1995 date he had requested or to "move as quickly as possible to change leadership."

Parks asked trustees to respond to his request the same day to "lay to rest many anxieties" or at most no later than the April meeting.

During the ensuing discussion, some trustees agreed they must act immediately to assure Southern Baptists of their support for Parks and missions. Others argued for a delay so Parks, who had expressed strong disagreement with some trustee actions, could address his own willingness to work cooperatively with them.

In other action, trustees divided the \$365,000 they had redirected in October to theological education in Eastern Europe among eight seminaries in that area. The funds originally were budgeted for the international Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

The money was divided among seminaries in Bulgaria, \$100,000; Estonia, \$50,000; the Ukraine, \$50,000 in Kiev and \$50,000 in Odessa; Russia, \$50,000; Latvia, \$45,000; and Romania, \$10,000 in Bucharest and \$10,000 in Oradea. The work in Oradea received an earlier \$50,000 from the board for construction of the Second Baptist Church, which sponsors the seminary there.

The committee to work on relationships with European Baptists will respond to an invitation from the European Baptist Federation to explore relationships in the wake of the trustees' vote to defund the Ruschlikon seminary. It will meet with European Baptist leaders in Europe, with the place and date to be determined.

--more--

Trustee committee members are Steve Hardy of North Carolina, John Simms of Virginia, Hoyt Savage of Nevada, John Jackson of California, Joel Gregory of Texas and Pat Bullock of Texas. The committee also includes Parks and Winston Crawley, interim vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Trustees approved selection of William Estep Jr. to write the Foreign Mission Board's 150-year history and Johnni Johnson Scofield to edit it. Estep is emeritus distinguished professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Scofield is a retired Foreign Mission Board vice president of communications and special assistant to the president. The book is expected to be published by October 1994. The board will observe its sesquicentennial in 1995.

A trustee subcommittee will read the book's final manuscript, according to a contract signed by Estep. If approval of the book's content is not granted, the manuscript will become Estep's property. In that event, the contract stipulates the book would not be published until the year 2000.

In other matters:

-- Trustees heard a report that Parks and interim Europe vice president Crawley will report to the board in April about their discussions with Ruschlikon seminary president John David Hopper about fund-raising in the United States.

Trustees had felt Hopper, a missionary of the board, was violating FMB policy against missionaries raising funds for their work among Southern Baptists in the United States. Crawley said a letter has been written to Hopper telling him to cease direct fund raising among Southern Baptists if he is to remain a missionary.

That does not prevent Hopper, as president of the institution, from raising funds among other groups in the United States or elsewhere, Crawley said. Also, the Foreign Mission Board has no control over the fund-raising activities of trustees or non-missionary staff of the seminary, Crawley said.

-- Trustees heard a report from their communications committee that it will appoint a subcommittee of trustees and staff to review and develop procedures for the board's news releases and press conferences and report to the June trustee meeting. The action followed criticism by some committee members of certain news releases and a Jan. 7 press conference where Europe administrators Isam Ballenger and Keith Parker announced early retirement in protest of trustee actions and policies.

-- The mission personnel committee accepted a recommendation to alter the way the International Service Corps department processes personnel. The new procedure grew out of trustee protests over the selection of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Professor Glenn Hinson to teach as a four-month ISC volunteer at the Ruschlikon seminary.

In the past, the ISC department simply reported to trustees names of those going overseas as ISC workers. Trustees had no formal way of raising questions about an individual in the process.

The new procedure, recommended by a committee of trustees and staff, provides a way for trustees to voice their opinions on an individual. Trustees now will have their concerns weighed when the staff selection committee reviews ISC applications. If the committee approves an applicant and trustees still have concerns, the decision about the applicant will rest with one of the two trustee committees reviewing career and associate applications for missionary appointment.

-- Trustees heard reports of increases in baptisms, church members and the number of churches overseas. Baptisms in 1991 set a new record of 233,334.

--more--

-- They gave standing applause to Tim Brendle, associate vice president for mission personnel since 1987, who is resigning to become pastor of Ridge Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., March 1. Trustee Leroy S. "Skip" Smith of Texas asked that since Ballenger and Parker had a platform to express their criticism of the trustees in a press conference that the board should recognize Brendle's hard work and contributions. He asked that copies of a devotion Brendle had given Feb. 11 to the mission personnel committee be put on record, distributed to the press and sent to all trustees along with copies of Parks' address to the board.

In his devotional thoughts, Brendle expressed gratitude to "you and to the trustees who have come before you for the opportunities you have given me to fulfill my calling. Although we have not always agreed, it has been a rich experience and I will always be grateful."

He urged trustees and staff at the committee meeting to "claim the unity that is yours in Christ. Yes, there are differences and those differences cannot be ignored or swept under the carpet," he said, but he urged the group to "address the problems; speak the truth in love. Avoid being tossed back and forth by whatever wind is currently blowing and you will find the unity that has already been given."

--30--

Missionaries busy  
at Winter Olympics

By Mike Creswell

Baptist Press  
2/14/92

ALBERTVILLE, France (BP)--Five Southern Baptist missionaries are at the Winter Olympics, but for working rather than watching.

The missionaries, all based in France, have joined a 140-member Olympic ministry team called Action Evangelique Olympique (Olympic Evangelical Action) made up of Baptists, Free Church and Brethren workers. More than 100 of them are evangelical students from across Europe who have paid their own way to minister during the games. Others are pastors and missionaries.

Each day evangelism teams go out among the crowds to pass out tracts and explain the Christian plan of salvation. Each evening they sponsor concerts, films and Christian theater groups in a church in the city, all designed for Christian outreach.

"We were out in the streets witnessing on Saturday just before the opening ceremony," said Southern Baptist missionary Dennis Barton, based in Pau, a city in southwestern France. Missionary Robert Shehane, based in the Nancy area, leads training sessions for the workers. Other missionaries are Woody Wilson, Joel Sutton and John Perkins. The missionaries will spend a week in Albertville.

Another team is made up of British Baptists affiliated with the Baptist Missionary Society in Great Britain.

Because the sporting events are spread throughout the mountains and valleys around Albertville, it's hard to find enough people during the day to make many contacts in Albertville, Barton said. Also, people they encounter on the street usually are rushing to a bus or the next event and have no time to talk.

A full day's work may result in serious dialogue with only six people, Barton said.

They meet more people in the streets outside events, however. After an ice hockey match and a women's downhill skiing event, "we spent five straight hours talking as fast as we could talk," Barton said.

As in past Olympics, designer lapel pins are avidly bought, sold and swapped. They also have become tools for evangelism. Team members of Action Evangelique Olympique wear "AEO" pins to identify themselves.

--more--

One avid pin collector from the United States was asking \$25 for a pin with "Oklahoma" on it but offered to swap it for Barton's AEO pin. After the trade the man asked Barton what the letters "AEO" meant. "The door was open for witnessing to him," Barton said.

While the AEO team has no access to Olympic athletes, several Protestant chaplains have met with some athletes for Bible studies and other ministries,

Have the missionaries taken time off to see even one sporting event? "No," replied Barton. "That's not why we're here."

--30--

Baptist groups oppose  
IRS plan for churches

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
2/14/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs have expressed strong disapproval to Congress of a White House proposal requiring churches to make burdensome and unprecedented government reports on contributors.

Under the proposal in President George Bush's recently announced 1993 budget, churches and religious organizations would be required to report to the Internal Revenue Service the name, address, Taxpayer Identification Number, amount given and the circumstances under which contributions were made on every person who gave more than \$500 during the calendar year. The Tax Identification Number usually is the person's Social Security number.

If passed, the reporting requirement would affect about 80 percent of Southern Baptist churches. Churches with receipts of less than \$25,000 in a year would not be required to make such reports. About 7,500 of the Convention's 38,000 churches report annual contributions of less than \$25,000, said a staff member in the Sunday School Board's corporate planning and research department.

The CLC, joined by the National Association of Evangelicals, and the BJC wrote separate letters criticizing the proposal shortly before the President's tax-package proposal was reported to the House of Representatives without recommendation by the Ways and Means Committee Feb. 12.

The proposal would not only burden many small churches but would entangle liable churches in the "government's tax collection business," the CLC and NAE said in a letter to leaders of Congress' tax-writing committees.

The reporting requirement "would offend deeply held religious principles about the privacy of one's gift to God through the church," said Richard D. Land, executive director of the CLC, and Robert Dugan, director of the NAE's office of public affairs.

While the government may be expected "to impose reasonable requirements for documentation" of gifts to churches and other charities, the burden for obtaining such information should be on the donor, Land and Dugan said in their letter.

"The church or charity should not be made the tax enforcement agent of the government," they said. "At the very least, churches and other religious charities should be exempted from the proposed reporting requirement."

The letter from Land and Dugan was sent Feb. 12 by facsimile machine to Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, D.-Ill., chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and Rep. Bill Archer, R.-Texas, ranking minority member of Ways and Means, and by mail to Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, D.-Texas, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Sen. Robert Packwood, R.-Ore., ranking member of the Finance Committee.

--more--

"Can the army of IRS agents not do their job without deputizing church treasurers into the federal posse to search the pews for tax cheaters?" said Michael Whitehead, the CLC's general counsel. "Forcing churches to file a report on the widow's mite is not the solution to our budgetary crisis."

Requiring churches to report the circumstances of members' gifts "invades the privacy of the sanctuary," said J. Brent Walker, the BJC's associate general counsel, in a Feb. 11 letter to the members of the Ways and Means Committee.

"To require reporting of names and tax numbers violates confidentiality and requires churches to be the unwitting instrument of tax enforcement against individual contributors to whom the church owes fiduciary duties and spiritual obligations," Walker said in the letter.

"We urge you to oppose this ill-conceived measure. Both government and religion will be better off for it."

Democrats in the House plan to present alternative legislation but it was not ready as of Feb. 13, a Ways and Means spokesman said. It was uncertain if such a reporting requirement would be included in the Democrats' bill, the spokesman said.

The Senate Finance Committee is expected to begin considering the president's tax package Feb. 25.

President Bush has set a March 20 deadline for Congress to deal with his short-term economic package, which includes the proposal on charitable giving. Under the proposal, contributions made beginning July 1 of this year will be affected.

The reason given for the new reporting requirement is to help IRS distinguish between gifts to churches/charities and payments to churches/charities for such goods or services as entertainment events or items purchased at charity auctions. The IRS has expressed the belief some donors deduct the full amount on their tax return rather than reducing it by the value of the items or services received.

Charitable organizations have expressed approval of a proposal in the president's package which will increase donations of property. Under the proposal, the alternative minimum tax exclusion for appreciated property would become permanent and would cover intangible as well as tangible personal property.