

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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92-52

**N.C. Baptist convention urged
to address homosexual issue**

ASHBORO, N.C. (BP)--The leadership of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina has drafted a recommendation which would refuse gifts from churches publicly approving homosexuality and disqualify them as "cooperating churches."

The recommendation, which goes to the convention's general board at its May 19 meeting in Ashboro, was drafted by E. Glen Holt, convention president; Dorothy Allred, first vice president; Edwin Vick, second vice president; Lamar J. Brooks, General Board president; Kathryn H. Hamrick, board vice president; and Roy J. Smith, convention executive director-treasurer.

The recommendation would change the business and financial policy of the state convention and the general board by adding the following paragraph:

"No funds of any kind, designated or undesignated, shall be accepted by this convention, its programs, institutions, or agencies, from any church which knowingly takes, or has taken, any official action which manifests public approval, promotion or blessing of homosexuality. Any such church shall not therefore qualify as a 'cooperating church' as defined in Article IV, A, 3 of the Constitution of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina."

The recommendation was prompted by the decision of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh to approve the "union" of two homosexual males and the news Binkley Memorial Baptist Church in Chapel Hill is considering licensing a homosexual male to the ministry. The "union" of the two homosexual males took place March 15 at the Raleigh church.

"This in no way negates the importance of local church autonomy or the Biblical mandate for all Christians to minister to the needs of all people in keeping with the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ," said a statement released to news media following the meeting of the leaders.

The recommendation will be given as information to the general board's executive committee in its April 7 meeting. North Carolina officials noted the general board acts for the convention between annual sessions but does not have the power to contradict convention actions. Otherwise any action taken by the board during the interim is binding on the convention and reported fully to the convention at its next session.

In 1991 the Pullen church contributed \$4,854 through Southern Baptists' Cooperative Program state, national and international missions fund plus \$2,163 for special offerings through the Baptist Building office in Cary. The Binkley church gave \$2,062 through the Cooperative Program and \$1,600 to special offerings last year.

The Pullen church approved the union of the homosexuals by a 64-36 percent margin. While technically not a wedding, forbidden by law in North Carolina, the "union" is seen as similar to marriage.

The Binkley church has scheduled in April a congregational vote whether to license a ministerial student at Duke University Divinity School who is an admitted homosexual.

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The Pullen congregation is affiliated with the Raleigh Baptist Association. The association has set a special meeting March 28 to discuss the church's action. Binkley church is not affiliated with any association. Both churches are dually aligned with the American Baptist Churches and the Southern Baptist Convention, and Pullen is affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Alliance of Baptists.

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This story was compiled from information provided by R.G. Puckett, editor of the Biblical Recorder, state Baptist newspaper of North Carolina.

Music ministers sing
praises of new hymnal

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
3/24/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist ministers of music are singing the praises of "The Baptist Hymnal" after almost a year of experience with the volume released in March 1991, a sampling across the Southern Baptist Convention indicates.

"If I had the choice of buying any hymnal on the market, I'd rate 'The Baptist Hymnal' as far superior to the others," said Harry Cowan, part-time minister of music at Lakeview Baptist Church of New Orleans. "I couldn't have said that before this one was released," he added.

Cowan praised the resources for instrumentalists, mentioning specifically "the descants, medleys, transpositions and modulations" provided in separate volumes, and the continuing release of "supplementary material provided in 'Worship: Resources for the Church Musician,'" a quarterly publication of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church music department.

"I probably won't use everything (in the hymnal)," Cowan said. "But some things I wouldn't use probably will appeal to someone else. This makes it versatile."

Sales of the hymnal as of March 13, one day short of the book's first anniversary, had reached 1,804,809. Of those, 1,687,586 were pew editions, with the remainder representing other hymnal editions, including those for instrumentalists and ministers of music.

Dennis McIntyre of First Baptist Church in Cookeville, Tenn., said the hymnal has "a much better musical selection over anything we've done before."

"We purchased all the companion products and the congregation has been very excited by the use with the handbell and instrumental editions," he added. "The response from our people has been almost 100 percent positive. I really can't say anything negative about the book we have found this to be."

David Justice, a general contractor and part-time minister of music for Mid-cities Baptist Church in Westminster, Calif., said his church had used "the old hymnal and a variety of chorus books" before "The Baptist Hymnal" was published.

"I've done away with all of them," he said. "The new hymnal just provides a wonderful mix for our congregation."

Justice, a composer whose chorus "One by One" is included in the hymnal, expressed concern that some might view his opinion as prejudiced. "It's a wonderful worship tool and I'm not just saying that because I have a chorus in it," he said. "The responsive readings throughout the hymnal have been very meaningful to us."

Another music minister who has eliminated supplemental material for congregational singing is Ed Miller of First Baptist Church in Henrietta, Texas. "We have not had to use any chorus sheets since we've had 'The Baptist Hymnal,'" he commented. "Our folks love it."

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And from the musicians' point of view, Miller said he has found the hymnal's organization of material convenient, noting, "It's been real easy to put medleys together."

Farther north at Grandview Baptist Church in Anchorage, Alaska, Lee Hansard said the congregation was "ready" for the new hymnal to be released and has enjoyed having orchestrations for hymns that have not been available, even from other publishers.

"I've been extremely pleased with the balance among choruses, familiar hymns and new hymnic material," he said, but said he has "a minor problem" with the location of keyboard enhancements in supplemental editions.

Hansard, who also serves as volunteer music program leader for the Alaska Baptist Convention, said the hymnal has been received "very well statewide also. We have at least one church in every association that has the new hymnal."

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Church newsletter material
to be available on SBCNet

Baptist Press
3/24/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Help for church staff members with responsibilities for newsletters will be available April 30 on SBCNet, the Southern Baptist computer network operated by the Sunday School Board on CompuServe worldwide computer service.

The Facts and Trends Information Service will include news briefs and general-interest fillers for newsletters, bulletins or bulletin boards. The material will be adapted from "Facts and Trends," a monthly newsletter for church, associational, state convention and SBC leaders published by the board's office of communications.

Items in the May edition of the information service will include support for dated church emphases such as Christian Home Emphasis and Senior Adult Day along with information about new resources and fillers of church-related statistics and quotes from SBC leaders. Each item will be accompanied by a usage suggestion.

The May edition will be posted on SBCNet on Thursday, April 30.

The Facts and Trends Information Service will be available to any SBCNet subscriber. For information about SBCNet, call David Haywood, SBCNet system operator at the board at (615) 251-2895. Questions about the information service should be directed to Linda Lawson, manager of the news and information section, at (615) 251-2798.

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Parole-jumping preacher
leaves split congregation

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
3/24/92

WEST RICHLAND, Wash. (BP)--A Southern Baptist congregation in this Washington town of 4,000 has been split in the wake of the pastor's arrest for violating parole for the murder of his second wife in Illinois.

Members of First Baptist Church in West Richland knew their pastor, Ed Lopes, 56, was a convicted murderer but Lopes had told them he was a Mafia hit man whose life was changed by a death row encounter with Christ.

Lopes moved to the Richland area in south-central Washington in 1985 and became pastor of the 60-member West Richland church in 1988. He also recounted his reformation, with tears in his eyes, in Baptist churches throughout the Tri-Cities area of Richland, Kennewick and Pasco along the Columbia River.

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His fictitious life began to unravel after an interview with the local Tri-City Herald newspaper. The reporter, Wanda Briggs, checked into Lopes' story and learned from Illinois corrections officials he was a fugitive from a 50- to 99-year sentence for murder. He also had been convicted of attempted murder in Illinois for stabbing, choking and leaving a girlfriend for dead. And he was a suspect in the death 25 years ago of a live-in girlfriend with a 6-month-old daughter in Massachusetts. Earlier, Lopes deserted his first wife, with whom he had four daughters.

Lopes was arrested in his office at the West Richland church Dec. 12. After initially denying the reporter's expose, he told church members the reporter was "God's instrument" to force him to tell the truth. Lopes is now married for the third time.

The arrest thrust the congregation onto the Associated Press wire and, in turn, into newspapers across the country as well as USA Today and People magazine and TV tabloid shows such as "Inside Edition," "A Current Affair" and "Hard Copy."

Several church members raised Lopes' \$50,000 bail. Church leaders surveyed the congregation in January and two-thirds felt Lopes should resign. Lopes submitted his resignation but about a dozen members quit the church to form an independent "Bible church," intending to call Lopes as pastor.

The 22-church Columbia Basin Baptist Association has assisted First Baptist by providing counsel to the West Richland congregation's leaders as well as supplying preachers for Sunday services. The congregation has formed a pulpit committee but has not yet recommended a new pastor.

In February, Lopes' bail was revoked and he was returned to Illinois for a hearing before prison authorities, who gave him a three-month sentence for jumping parole. He could be released May 18. Lopes told Illinois authorities he wants to return to Washington to lead the new congregation.

"I knew in my own heart and my own mind I was not going to commit another felony," Lopes told a three-member Illinois prisoner review committee, according to a transcript of the hearing. "There is this jailhouse talk ... and I was stupid enough to listen (that) if you stay straight for five years, they aren't even going to bother with you. That was something I had in the back of my mind."

He lied about being a Mafia hit man with 27 or 28 killings so people "would have respect for me," Lopes said, "and then I tried to live the lie ... Then it became so difficult to tell them the truth because then I was afraid they would reject me."

Lopes' current wife, Joan, told the review committee learning the truth about her husband "didn't make any difference. I knew his crime (involved) a woman. But I did not know that man" back then. She and Lopes met after becoming pen pals during the 12 years he served his sentence in Illinois.

In Massachusetts, police officials in Brockton have decided they cannot prosecute Lopes in the death of his girlfriend 25 years ago. After admitting his false story in December, Lopes also told the Tri-City Herald and two pastors that he had killed the woman. However, Lopes has since refused to talk to Brockton's district attorney office. Without a formal confession, prosecutors say they have no case. The autopsy at the time listed acute alcoholism as the cause of death.

Lopes fled Brockton the day she died in July 1966. Her 6-month-old daughter went four to six days unattended in her crib but was alive in the sweltering apartment when found by the woman's father.

Lopes' lies to the West Richland congregation and other churches in the Tri-Cities area include how he became a Christian with a Gideon Bible during a two-year stint on death row. The Tri-City Herald reported, however, Illinois did not have the death penalty when Lopes was convicted in 1970.

Lopes said all 350 employees of the prison where he was incarcerated signed a petition supporting his parole after his conversion and work as unofficial chaplain. "We can't do that," the newspaper quoted a prison official as replying.

An Illinois corrections official told the newspaper Lopes "still owes this state time until 2019."

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Ed Young announces
for SBC presidency

Baptist Press
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HOUSTON (BP)--Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Houston, has agreed to be nominated as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis June 9-11.

Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, earlier told news media he wanted to nominate Young in Indianapolis if Young would agree.

Young's nomination brings to three the number of announced candidates for the SBC presidency. Jess Moody, pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Church in Van Nuys, Calif., announced last September that a group of non-aligned pastors and others had asked permission to nominate him. Nelson Price, pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., and, like Young, identified with the conservative movement, announced Feb. 21 he would be a candidate.

Current SBC president is Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Texas, who concludes two one-year terms at the Indianapolis annual meeting in June.

Conservative candidates have won all SBC presidential elections since 1979 against moderate Southern Baptists. Last year in Atlanta, moderates declined to nominate a candidate to oppose Chapman.

Interestingly, conservatives have nominated only one candidate each year since the start of the "conservative resurgence" in 1979.

Asked about being on the ballot with another conservative, Young said he has the "deepest affection and respect for Nelson Price," who is the current SBC first vice president.

"He is a man of great piety and prayer," Young said. "I do not know what the future brings but I feel certain that God's will will be done in this matter although I am not certain how that will evolve. What I can say is that I feel a strong leading this year to allow my name to be placed in nomination whereas in the past the burden God laid on my heart was exactly the opposite -- that I should not be nominated."

Young said he searched his priorities, which are first the Lord, then his family and then his calling to his church.

As to the first, Young said there has never been a greater opportunity for both evangelism and missions. "We need to set a goal to win a half-million people in 1995 and one million in the year 2000 for Jesus Christ," he said.

"I also would seek to institute a plan whereby specific churches adopt specific programs and by so doing double our foreign and home missionary efforts. People will more willingly sacrifice when they have specific goals and see them accomplished. It is imperative that we do a better job of marketing the Cooperative Program."

As to his family, with his youngest son now in college, Young said that commitment will not be as time-consuming. Young also emphasized "in no way will I allow this added responsibility to impact on my primary calling -- to pastor this church."

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Second Baptist Church in Houston has grown from 1,800 members to its present membership of more than 18,000 in the 14 years of Young's tenure. "I have been ordained for 36 years, served in many kinds of churches and I therefore think I understand the Baptist family. And I also see what can happen when God blesses an effort.

"I have a strong desire to find a method whereby all Southern Baptists who believe in the truth of God's Word, regardless of for whom they voted for president since 1979, can be reconciled with their brethren in such a manner that doctrinal integrity is preserved and our worldwide missions effort is given renewed impetus," Young said. "We must get this dispute behind us so that God will pour out his revival on us as a body. It's time to put down the guns and go fishing."

As to his health, Young said the angioplasty procedure he underwent in 1988 was completely successful, there has been no recurrence of the blockage and doctors have given him a "clean bill of health. I have never felt better."

Second Baptist Church last year gave \$400,000 to the Cooperative Program, or 3.8 percent of its undesignated receipts, and devoted a total of \$1,424,122 to missions giving.

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EDITORS' NOTE: This story was compiled from an interview with Young written by J. Walter Carpenter, editor of the Southern Baptist Watchman in Houston.

Wanted: carpenters for
Jericho mission project

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
3/24/92

ATLANTA (BP)--You don't have to be the son of a carpenter to be involved in missions this year at Jericho but some carpentry skills are needed.

Visitors to the annual missions fairs at Glorieta, N.M., and Ridgecrest, N.C., can help build pews, pulpits and tables for two mission churches during the annual festivals, project organizers said.

The project began last year as volunteers tried to build at least one piece of furniture for 60 churches, said Elmer Goble, short-term missions volunteer coordinator for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

This year the program was modified to equip one overseas church and one church in America with pulpits, portable lecterns, pews and Lord's Supper tables, Goble said.

Workers at Ridgecrest will build furniture for Canaan Baptist Church in Queens, N.Y., Goble said.

Workers in Glorieta will build pews for the Church of the Good Pastor in Praxedis, Mexico, in the Rio Grande valley, said M.B. Howard, of the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn.

In addition to building furniture for two churches, Howard said he hopes the project will educate church leaders of the need for resources in foreign and new churches.

"Once you get a fellow involved in something like that, he catches the spark and runs with it," said Howard, who added he hopes American churches along the U.S.-Mexican border will want to assist Mexican churches.

In addition to seeking workers, officials also need more than \$3,500 for materials to build the furniture for each church, Goble said.

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The program is a joint effort of the SBC Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union which will work together on construction of furniture, Howard said. The Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board helped select the churches, Goble said.

Howard said he hopes the program will become an annual event during Glorieta. Some woodworkers have offered to build furniture in their own shops, Goble said.

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Sparkman given medical leave
in resigning from Midwestern

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
3/24/92

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Citing "personal reasons," G. Temp Sparkman has submitted his resignation effective immediately as professor of religious education and church administration at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Sparkman, 60, was granted medical leave through July 31, with early retirement effective Aug. 1, according to a news release from the seminary.

A seminary spokesman said the seminary was honoring Sparkman's request not to disclose the nature of his illness and Sparkman did not return calls to Baptist Press.

Sparkman has been on Midwestern's faculty since 1972. Previously he was a staff member at churches in Louisville and Bowling Green, Ky.; Warrington, Fla.; and Paragould, Ark. He and his wife, Faye, are members of Englewood Baptist Church in Kansas City.

He had been one of two full-time religious education faculty members at the seminary.

Sparkman is the author or editor of seven books. He faced a doctrinal challenge in 1983 from a seminary trustee who mailed his concerns to fellow trustees. The trustees' instructional committee subsequently issued a report stating that Sparkman "does not teach or advocate universalism, but rather he teaches in accordance with the seminary's statement of faith with reference to this matter." Trustees also declined to take action against comments by Sparkman in a book that adolescence is a more desirable time for young people to make a public commitment to Christ.

He and his wife have two grown daughters. A third daughter, born in 1961, died of leukemia in 1970.

A native of Quebec, Tenn., and graduate of Belmont College in Nashville, Sparkman earned a master of religious education degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and a doctor of education from the University of Kansas.

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Also available upon request:

-- Feature by Bill Bangham on a 3,000-member Korean congregation in a Maryland suburb of Washington