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**MBTS trustees adopt  
abortion resolution**

By Brenda J. Sanders

**KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)**--Trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary adopted a strongly-worded resolution on abortion and voted to increase their involvement in the process of selecting adjunct faculty during their annual meeting, April 6-7.

The board approved a resolution opposing abortion on demand recommended by the trustees' instruction committee. In the 17-paragraph resolution, they said abortion on demand is "immoral, unethical and unbiblical."

The resolution added: "... this board respectfully requests the administration and employees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary who may not share this understanding of Scripture to refrain from publicly espousing the right of a woman to have an abortion on demand."

Before voting on the resolution, trustees allowed W. Hulitt Gloer, professor of New Testament studies and chairman of the seminary's faculty affairs committee, to address the board. Faculty members received copies of the proposed resolution April 2 and, after a discussion, asked Gloer to share their concerns about the resolution with trustees.

Among the faculty, response to the resolution could be characterized as "a deep sense of hurt," Gloer told the board.

"Faculty members perceive the resolution to be directed at them," Gloer said. "Faculty members feel that the resolution implies that board members believe that faculty members hold unacceptable views with regard to this issue and that these views need to be restricted. In short, faculty members feel that the resolution reflects an attitude of suspicion toward the faculty which indicates an underlying lack of trust."

The faculty affirmed "the right of the board of trustees to adopt a resolution setting forth its views on this issue," Gloer noted. However, he said the faculty feels the resolution "has the effect of setting parameters on acceptable responses to an issue which lies outside the bounds of the seminary's Articles of Faith. In so doing, it sets up a new test of orthodoxy and acceptability which goes beyond the governing documents of the institution."

On behalf of the faculty, Gloer asked trustees to delay adoption of the resolution until faculty and trustees could discuss the implications of the resolution.

Although the faculty report was discussed at length during the board's instruction committee meeting, trustees made no response to the faculty's request for dialogue during the full board meeting. They adopted the resolution by a 17-9 vote.

During the meeting trustees also approved adding a statement to seminary policy documents to increase their involvement in selecting adjunct teachers, who teach courses on short-term assignments.

The new policy statement calls for the seminary president and dean of the faculty to share the name and background of each prospective adjunct teacher with the board's instruction committee 30 days before appointment "for their information and input." In emergency situations, adjunct teachers may be appointed "after telephone notification of the trustee instruction committee."

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In other business concerning faculty, trustees voted to elect Robert E. Johnson of Fort Worth, Texas, to the position of associate professor of church history. Expressions of support for his election were voiced by several instruction committee members.

Committee members said they interviewed Johnson at length in February, reaching unanimous agreement that he should be elected to the faculty. They reported asking him "detailed and specific questions" and said they were "impressed with his responses." Johnson is a former Southern Baptist missionary to Brazil and guest professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

However, before the vote, trustee Timothy Harvey, pastor of Northside Baptist Church in Warner Robins, Ga., expressed concern, saying he had just been elected to the board in June 1991 and felt "at a disadvantage being asked to vote on a person I've never met, who's being recommended by trustees I barely know." He expressed a desire to "know more about Johnson's beliefs."

In response, Jim Jones, evangelism director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and instruction committee chairman, said: "We asked him (Johnson) straight out if he believed in inerrancy and he said yes; if he believed Adam and Eve were real people and he said yes . . . . We asked everything we could think of to ask and were very satisfied with his answers."

Instruction committee member Stoney Shaw, pastor of Parkway Baptist Church in St. Louis, said, "I can tell you that I wholeheartedly recommend Dr. Johnson. He has a tremendous heart for God and is very biblical. On tough issues like abortion he had a balance and forthrightness."

Trustees voted to elect Johnson to the faculty by a 20-6 margin.

Trustee Jerry Davenport, a self-employed rancher from Sheffield, Texas, presented a motion to allow students to tape record classroom lectures and chapel services at Midwestern. He said he believes there is a misunderstanding among students concerning "what their privileges are" in relation to taping on campus.

Asked to explain seminary policy on taping lectures, President Milton Ferguson said, "We currently do not have a policy prohibiting the taping of classroom lectures or chapel services. It's done all the time.

"All chapel services are taped," he continued, adding chapel speakers are given options of allowing the seminary to use the message any way it deems appropriate, for educational purposes only or to request the recording not be used in any manner.

"We have never had a policy prohibiting the taping of classroom lectures," Ferguson said. "It is at the discretion of the professor. If a professor chooses to request that a lecture not be taped, that's his prerogative in the class that he or she is teaching."

Trustee Ronnie Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church in Hot Springs, Ark., favored the motion because "it would move the discretion (to tape record a lecture) from the professor to the student" and provide seminary administration and trustees with "a mechanism to substantiate allegations" about the orthodoxy of a professor's teachings.

Trustee chairman Sid Peterson interjected, "If a person is taping a lecture for the purpose of using it against somebody, he has no business being in the seminary."

Trustee Harvey responded, "If a professor is teaching something he doesn't want to be accounted for on tape, he shouldn't be teaching in this school."

Ross Morrison, a retired pastor representing the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, moved to refer Davenport's motion to the instruction committee for further consideration. Trustees approved the motion.

At the request of Rogers, trustees voted to go into executive session to deal with a "personnel matter involving the recent resignation of a faculty member." At the request of Ferguson, trustees allowed the seminary attorney to attend the closed-door session, lasted about one and a half hours.

In other business, trustees:

-- Approved an operating budget of \$3.7 million for the 1992-93 fiscal year, a 2.2 percent increase over the current operating budget. For the first time in three years, the budget includes an average 3 percent salary increase for faculty and staff, with a total compensation increase of 7-10 percent per employee counting benefit cost increases.

-- Voted to increase the student matriculation fee from \$475 to \$500 per semester.

-- Elected new officers, all by acclamation. Peterson, pastor of Stine Road Baptist Church in Bakersfield, Calif., was elected to a second term as chairman. Richard Proctor, municipal court judge from Wynne, Ark., was elected to a second term as first vice chairman; James Reimer, senior pastor of Second Baptist Church in Springfield, Mo., was elected second vice chairman; and Lowell Socolofsky, a data processing instructor from Omaha, Neb., was elected to a fourth term as secretary-treasurer.

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Committee named to replace Parks;  
Jackson elected trustee chairman

Baptist Press  
4/9/92

By Robert O'Brien & Donald D. Martin

CLEMSON, S.C. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees elected John Jackson trustee chairman and Joel Gregory chairman of a 15-member committee to find a successor for retiring President R. Keith Parks.

Parks, who said in March he would retire, made it official in an April 8 letter, setting Oct. 30 as his departure date and noting one of the reasons for retiring is his leadership has continued to cause division among trustees.

The previous evening Parks drew a standing ovation from about 11,000 people gathered at Littlejohn Coliseum at Clemson University April 7 for the appointment of 38 new foreign missionaries. After Parks gave a challenge to the missionaries and issued an invitation to the audience, 199 people made spiritual decisions, including 77 who committed to various types of foreign mission service.

The appointments bring the total foreign mission force to 3,955 missionaries assigned to 125 countries. Outgoing trustee chairman Bill Hancock told the crowd the board had achieved the 125-country figure eight years ahead of the 2000 A.D. target date in the Southern Baptist Convention's Bold Mission Thrust effort to proclaim the gospel to the whole world.

Jackson, a pastor from Fairfield, Calif., won the trustee chairmanship by a vote of 48-35 over John P. Greene, a business corporation president from West Palm Beach, Fla. Jackson was nominated by trustee Paige Patterson of Dallas and Greene by trustee Hoyt Savage of Las Vegas, Nev. Jackson previously was first vice chairman and is former state president of California Southern Baptists.

Other officers elected for one-year terms by similar vote margins were Bonnie Westbrook, physician from Beaumont, Texas, first vice chairman, and Mike Goodwin, pastor from Festus, Mo., second vice chairman. Karen Gilbert, a pastor's wife from Hampton, Va., was reelected without opposition as recording secretary.

Jackson, who will preside over his first trustee meeting in June, said he will be an ex-officio member of the search committee, appointed by Hancock and chaired by Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas.

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Besides Gregory, other members are Leon Hyatt, vice chairman, from Pineville, La.; Bob Oxford of Lakewood, Colo.; Phyllis Randall of Blacksburg, Va.; Karol Wise of Harrisburg, Pa.; John Simms of Salem, Va.; Bruce Romoser of Ellicott, Md.; Terry Williams of Batesville, Miss.; Ted Moody of Warner Robins, Ga.; Reed Lynn of Shawnee, Okla.; Carol Gilbreath of Florence, Ala.; Terry Horton of Colleyville, Texas; Mike Goodwin; Hoyt Savage; and John Greene.

Jackson said he would encourage the committee to seek input from missionaries and Southern Baptists in general as they develop a profile and seek a candidate for a successor to Parks, a 38-year veteran of foreign missions who has been president since 1980.

Asked if it is essential to follow the past pattern of naming a person with missionary experience as president, Jackson said the trustees' opinion is divided. "About half the board feels it's mandatory to have missionary experience," he said. "Another large bloc is looking for the man and his ability to lead and his missions heart."

Asked if the committee would have a candidate by Oct. 30, Jackson said the search could take a year if the committee "does its work right." He said he feels trustees would be willing for Parks to serve until a successor is found but Parks said in an interview later he would stay no longer than Oct. 30.

Jackson also said Parks, who has expressed strong philosophical differences with trustees, will retain full authority as president until Oct. 30 "as far as I'm concerned."

The question of Parks' disagreements with trustees resurfaced both in his official letter of retirement and as a result of a motion from the floor which would have asked him to remain in his position until 1995. Last August Parks asked to remain until that date but changed his mind in a spiritual retreat March 19-20 with trustees to resolve the issue of his tenure.

Trustee L.H. McCollough, from Bastrop, La., moved the trustees vote to support Parks as president and commit to his leadership through 1995.

However, during discussion of the motion, pointed questions were directed to Parks about views attributed to him in a Baptist Press story on an address he made to FMB staff after his return from the spiritual retreat.

Trustee Bill Blanchard, from Soddy Daisy, Tenn., read two paragraphs of the article which he said "caused me tremendous concern." The paragraphs said:

-- "Parks also noted concern about a trend toward considering individuals qualified for denominational and missionary service only if their theology and politics are 'right.'"

-- "There are many people whose theology would be very conservative, even more conservative than some who are in control, but they aren't acceptable because they haven't endorsed the political activity within the denomination."

Blanchard asked Parks if the article quoted him correctly and for him to name "just one person" who has been ruled out for political reasons. "I don't know of any like this," Blanchard said.

Parks said the quotes were correct but then Hancock ruled both the motion by McCollough and the discussion out of order because he felt it was inappropriate in a public forum and because trustees have expressed affirmation of Parks. Trustees sustained his ruling by an overwhelming majority.

Parks said he would have liked to answer the question but would honor the decision of the group. But he did comment before proceeding with his presidential address: "The operative word there (in the quote) was 'trend' and I think it's true."

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"I disagree with Dr. Parks," Jackson told reporters later. "I don't see the trends he sees." He said he doesn't know of anyone rejected for missionary service and trustees have followed staff recommendations.

"We're not going to bring the creedal approach," Jackson said. "I hope my chairmanship is similar to Bill Hancock's, which has been fair and spiritual. I think my role (as chairman) is to be very objective and fair-minded and have the ability to foresee future problems."

Commenting on philosophical differences with trustees Parks has expressed, Jackson said: "We will never find anyone who is in full philosophical agreement with all trustees. You've got 88 different opinions. That will depend on the leader and how he can serve. I hope his resignation is not because of philosophical differences. He said it was because God had led him to do so."

Parks has said his retirement came as a result of God's leadership at the spiritual retreat in Dallas-Fort Worth but that leadership came in the context of differences in the Southern Baptist controversy which made his role as president impractical.

In a matter related to the board's news policy, Greene, chairman of the communications committee, announced a seven-member subcommittee of trustees and staff to develop guidelines for handling press conferences and sensitive news releases. The action stemmed from trustee criticism of news coverage.

The subcommittee, which will meet May 4-5 in Richmond, includes four trustees: Terry Williams of Mississippi as chairman, Bill Pace of Florida, Mike Smith of North Carolina and Greene. It also includes three FMB staff members: Alan Compton, vice president for communications; Irma Duke, associate vice president for communications support; and Bob Stanley, director of news and information and chief of the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

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Former Miss South Carolina  
trades glamour for glory

By Debbie Moore

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Nothing's unusual about being described as a preacher's wife who occasionally plays the piano in a small country church with 80 people on a good Sunday. But when that preacher's wife is also described as having won the talent competition and the crown in the 1984 Miss South Carolina pageant, eyebrows start to rise.

"When I told the congregation I had proposed to Vicki and she had accepted, there was a lot of cheering and shouting," recalled David Leavell, pastor of Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church in Louisiana's Lee's Creek community the past three years. "We had prayer, then everyone rushed to the altar to congratulate us." His bride, the former Vicki Harrell of Columbia, S.C., has been a pastor's wife nearly two years now. While she has lived in many major cities, she would rather be in Bogalusa right now than anywhere else.

A quaint dairy farming and mill community, Lee's Creek is located just outside Bogalusa, about an hour north of New Orleans. "Bogalusa has a nice, quiet lifestyle. It's a papermill town; everything revolves around that," Leavell said about her new home, far from hectic New York City where she worked two years for a modeling agency following the Miss America Pageant and her reign as Miss South Carolina from 1984 to 1985.

Many contestants in Miss America pageants use the national TV attention and year-long reign in their home state as a stepping-stone into glamorous careers: acting, politics, television, modeling. Leavell had no problems getting a position with a respected modeling agency. She brushed shoulders with the rich and famous; one of her assignments was with Oscar de la Renta furs. However, she soon realized "I wanted to be a model but the Lord had something else in mind."

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A Christian since age 7, Leavell became involved with Models for Christ (now called Impact), discipling other models and business people in New York City and directing them toward churches where they could be fed spiritually.

After two years in New York, Leavell felt a burden to minister to youth. She returned home and worked as public relations director for a political advertising firm during the day and at night and on weekends began a ministry to young people. Within a year of returning home she began ministering full-time, conducting concerts and teaching seminars in public high schools and churches on such topics as "Sexual Sanity in Today's World," "What Your Horoscope Doesn't Tell You," "Seven Things I'm Glad Someone Told Me" and "Balancing Your Christian Walk."

Four years into her ministry, a young pastor in Louisiana invited her to conduct a week of concerts and seminars in his church and area schools. Within a year, they were ministering together as husband and wife.

"I think it's beautiful how God can blend two separate ministries into one ministry that is stronger than they were separately," Leavell said.

Her husband, David, has been on church staffs, usually as the only paid member, the past eight years in three different churches. A 1989 graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, he will graduate this May with a Ph.D.

When looking for a wife, "he wanted someone also called to minister," Leavell said.

"I love being a preacher's wife," she continued. "You receive a lot of love from church members; their kindness and love is a wonderful blessing," as are generous gifts of fresh eggs and vegetables she did not expect to receive.

"I didn't know what to do to be a preacher's wife," she said. "I was very New York in my style" but her husband, who comes from generations of preachers, told her not to change. "He told me to be myself, which gave me a lot of freedom." Many pastors' wives dislike feeling their lives and family are constantly being examined by church members, but Leavell said, "I had gotten way past the fishbowl idea because of going through the Miss South Carolina pageant."

Her main job now is "basically taking care of the preacher," she said. But besides learning how to cook she also is learning major ministry lessons, such as how to comfort members of the church family when a death occurs. She regularly disciples young women in the church through Bible studies during the week as well as counseling and encouraging people in the Lord, something she finds "real contentment in doing," she said. She also co-teaches a Sunday morning Bible study with her husband and has her own discipleship class on Sunday nights.

"The focus of my ministry has changed a great deal now, being a pastor's wife," Leavell said. She still does some concerts and seminars but spends more time discipling people one-on-one because she believes "there's nothing better than being able to help a young Christian become grounded in God's Word and helping her begin to grow in her Christian walk."

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(BP) photos available upon request from New Orleans Seminary.

Alabama preacher's sermon  
inspires environmental group

By Dianne Shaw Casolaro

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MONTEVALLO, Ala. (BP)--Garbage -- that's what has become of a preacher's sermon and a church member's dream -- 68 tons of garbage each week.

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Bob Albritton, pastor of University Baptist Church in Montevallo, Ala., preached a sermon on Christians and the environment and soon afterward the environmental organization Vision was formed. From its inception in 1988, Vision has grown into the recycling organization for Montevallo and surrounding Shelby County handling 68 tons of newspaper, glass and aluminum weekly.

The founder of the group, Leigh Eason, was a member of Albritton's church. Having worked with secular environmental groups, she approached him about her dream of a Christian environmental group after his sermon.

The church gave its support and office space to the group because it was "in keeping with who we are," Albritton said.

Vision is a nonprofit, grassroots, environmental organization that takes the Christian approach to environmental issues -- personal change, individual and church education and church and community organizing, according to executive director Kathy Crites who took over the helm when Eason moved out of state.

Vision has gained the support of Shelby County government in its recycling efforts, and the organization hopes to turn over its operation of 68 bins in 50 locations to the county. Vision would rather concentrate on other environmental topics now that recycling is under way, Crites said.

The organization is supported by some municipal governments in Shelby County and through membership fees and small donations. The money it receives from selling collected goods covers one-third of the cost of operating the service.

Employees collect newspapers from drop-off sites each week, including those at University Baptist, First Baptist Church in Montevallo and Shelby Baptist Association, and store them in a donated transfer trailer. When the trailer is filled, it is picked up by a company which uses the paper to make insulation. A contractor collects the aluminum and glass.

Churches are some of the best supporters of recycling, Crites said, if pastors support the idea of recycling. And churches should be involved, Albritton and Crites contend.

Christians know this is God's earth but have been "keepers of men's destruction," Crites said. "We've got to stop being keepers of man's destruction and go back to stewardship of God's creation," she said.

University Baptist Church has stopped using plastic foam and other plastic products, Albritton said, because it takes them many years to decompose. Instead, the church uses paper plates for meals and hopes soon use washable dishes, thus eliminating the throwaways.

Crites cited a Presbyterian church in Shelby County that cut its kitchen budget in half by such things as using washable dishes and having youth drink soft drinks from aluminum cans rather than plastic bottles. It reduced its waste so much that it went from using a dumpster to a medium-size garbage can.

In addition to recycling, Vision is involved with other environmental concerns, such as the transportation of hazardous wastes, wetlands destruction and water pollution. But it does not go looking for problems, Crites said.

"We're not 'tree-huggers,'" she said. Instead, Vision tries to answer the question, "Where do we go from here?"

It also deals with the people of an area rather than barging in, demonstrating and leaving. "We let the people go to their leaders and let them work it out. We will advise them and give them material. We let them do it because they live there."

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The same philosophy holds true when dealing with industry that may be negatively affecting the environment. Again, Vision takes the positive approach when an environmental problem occurs and asks, "How can we help you to address this? How can we work together?" while encouraging local citizens to help.

Other projects include speaking to garden clubs about using natural rather than chemical pesticides, addressing school groups about litter and recycling and encouraging cities to use natural means, such as certain bacteria, fish and birds, to fight mosquitos rather than chemical spraying.

However, the ultimate goal of Vision is lifestyle change and individual responsibility. "My whole life has changed," Crites said. For example, she uses products like vinegar and baking soda for cleaning rather than prepared cleaning agents.

Albritton agreed lifestyle change is a long-term goal -- to see how people can change from the "throw-away" mentality of society and become more aware of political and business decisions that will affect their children and grandchildren.

"Let's don't talk about 'not in my backyard.' Let's talk about 'What am I doing in straightening out my life?' That is the Christian response," he said.

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Dianne Shaw Casolaro is a writer for The Alabama Baptist newsjournal.

Church discards conventional  
wisdom in reaching prospects

By Sarah Zimmerman

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4/9/92

CHICAGO (BP)--Time-tested principles of church starting failed the test in a Chicago suburb where a church is being built primarily through direct mail outreach.

Paul and Brenda McEntire moved to Northbrook, Ill., last year with the intention of starting a Southern Baptist church. Six people, including themselves, began meeting for Bible study at the McEntires' home.

Home Bible studies are frequently used to begin a congregation. Occasionally, several home Bible studies start simultaneously and later merge into one congregation.

However, that strategy did not work well for the McEntires. Their core group did not grow significantly until they moved the Bible study to a room at a local YMCA in the middle-class community.

Conventional wisdom also rates direct mail as one of the least effective ways to reach people. However, it has been the backbone of North Bridge Church's outreach program.

Last summer, the infant congregation mailed 7,000 professionally designed brochures about their church to neighboring homes. The church received about 1,400 responses.

"That's not bad, especially considering about 40 percent of this community is Jewish. Some people probably threw them away and we did get some returned with angry letters," said McEntire, an Illinois native.

More than 50 people attended North Bridge's first Sunday worship service Sept. 15 last year and attendance now averages 80.

One of the latest church mailings resulted in five new families for the church and 12 people who called for more information.

However the new church does not discard traditional methods of reaching people. Last summer a volunteer youth group delivered brochures about the church to 6,000 homes the old fashioned way -- door-to-door.

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Also, the McEntires are active members of the YMCA where the church continues to meet. Mrs. McEntire said participating in community athletic programs creates witness opportunities and chances to tell people about the church that meets in the aerobics room on Sundays.