

The logo consists of the letters "BP" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, enclosed within a white outline of a pair of parentheses. This logo is set against a solid black rectangular background.

-- 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) 899-7522
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

May 27, 1992

92-90

Executive Committee conducting
mail ballot on homosexuality

By Art Toalston

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee is conducting a mail ballot on a motion to declare two North Carolina churches "not in friendly cooperation" with the SBC over their stances affirming homosexuality.

The ballot, mailed May 22 to the Executive Committee's 77 members, addresses Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh for approving a marriage-like "union" of two homosexual men and Olin T. Binkley Memorial Church in Chapel Hill for licensing a homosexual man to the gospel ministry earlier this year.

For Executive Committee action on the proposed motion to be official, use of a mail ballot first must be approved unanimously, according to its bylaws. Both the question of the mail ballot and the four-paragraph motion were part of the May 22 mailing.

"I think it's a great first step," said Executive Committee member T.C. Pinckney of Alexandria, Va., a vocal advocate of a firm anti-homosexuality stance by the SBC.

Pinckney said he hopes the Executive Committee also will initiate a change in the convention's bylaws "to make it crystal clear that ... a church which condones the practice of homosexuality is not in sympathy with the purposes and work of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The Executive Committee's eight-member bylaws workgroup is scheduled to meet prior to the committee's June 8 meeting before the SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis.

According to the introductory paragraph of the motion proposed in the mail ballot, "The Southern Baptist Convention is a noncreedal association whose standards are those embodied in God's Holy Scripture. The Scripture clearly and unequivocally declares that homosexuality is a sin against God."

The motion specifies the return of funds received by the SBC from Pullen and Binkley churches since Oct. 1, 1990, the start of the SBC's previous fiscal year. According to the SBC business office, however, no Cooperative Program nor designated gifts have been received from either church since that date.

The motion notes, "... it is totally inappropriate for the Southern Baptist Convention to receive gifts of money from local churches which do not adhere to these (biblical) standards and are therefore not in friendly cooperation with this convention nor sympathetic with its purposes and work."

The motion also states, "... the Executive Committee also fervently prays that these churches will respond to the teachings of Holy Scripture by rescinding their actions related to avowed homosexuals." And the proposed motion voices prayer "for God's saving grace and healing power in the lives of homosexuals" and for redemptive ministry to homosexuals.

The proposed motion was framed by the bylaws workgroup May 8 in a conference telephone call then forwarded to the 25-member administrative subcommittee May 11 for a mail ballot vote, which was unanimous.

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The convention may avoid a tussle over seating messengers from Pullen or Binkley because neither church is planning to send representatives to the convention, according to Mahan Siler, Pullen's pastor, and the office administrator at Binkley who asked not to be identified.

Pinckney said numerous denominations have faced the issue of homosexuality and "most of them have waffled in one degree or another. I think it is absolutely essential that the Southern Baptist Convention stand clearly and firmly on God's Word. If we do, God will honor that in the response to our efforts to evangelize."

David Hankins, Executive Committee chairman and pastor in Lake Charles, La., said the proposed motion is vital for "addressing something which brings open shame on the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ" but is not the start of a "nitpicky" list of items for which a church will be disfellowshipped.

"This is a moral issue of concern to the whole culture," Hankins said. "That's why we must react and separate ourselves from those who openly approve homosexual behavior."

The Southern Baptist Convention has adopted six resolutions against homosexuality since 1976, the latest during last year's annual meeting in Atlanta. The Executive Committee also adopted a resolution against homosexuality in February, and began exploring possible changes in the SBC bylaws, after news broke of the two North Carolina churches' deliberations regarding homosexuality.

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Carter pleas for unity
by helping poor people

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
5/27/92

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Former President Jimmy Carter, in an address to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's graduating class, urged fellow Southern Baptists to find unity by focusing on needs of poor people.

The Southern Baptist Convention will never heal its rift through theological or philosophical debate, Carter told 238 graduates of the Louisville, Ky., school at its May 22 commencement. "But I think all Baptists, regardless of ultra-conservatism or extreme liberalism or fundamentalists or moderates, can find common ground in dealing church by church, believer by believer, minister by minister with the poorest among us whom we now rarely know."

Southern Baptists used to be known as "dynamic missionaries for Christ," Carter said. However, in recent years, when he has identified himself as a Southern Baptist, "it's treated as something of a joke," he said, adding the denomination is now associated with schism and division.

Southern's 169th commencement was moved off campus to the Kentucky Center for the Arts in downtown Louisville to accommodate the crowd of 2,250 people. The graduates included Dan Ariail, Carter's pastor at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Ga., who received the doctor of ministry degree. Carter is a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Maranatha. Carter's wife, Rosalynn, and several other members of Maranatha attended commencement.

Carter decried discrimination that exists against poor people: "Discrimination because of race, because of religion are very important but I think the main discrimination that afflicts us, and indeed the entire world these days, is the discrimination of rich people against poor people.

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"Who are rich people?" he asked. "Everyone in this room is a rich person. A rich person is someone who has a home; who has a family and knows where they are, who has a modicum of education, a decent chance for a job, enough to eat, some degree of health care, some hope for the future. You believe that the police are on your side. You believe if you make a decision it will make a difference at least in your own life."

Carter emphasized poor people do not just live in Third World nations but "they also live next door to us" Jesus treated poor people as his neighbors, he noted. "He reached out to those who felt discrimination, to the abandoned, to the scorned, to the despised and to those who suffered from an illness like leprosy that a whole society believed was caused by the sins of the leper."

However, churches have done little to help the poor, he said. "I'll tell you this and you won't like it: Politicians do a lot more to end discrimination against the poor than churches do."

Political candidates compete to find the best solutions to social problems, Carter said, asking, "Where is the competition among the churches to eliminate the suffering of the poor?" Churches usually are more concerned with matters like budgets, attendance and the size of radio and television audiences, he said.

Yet Carter said he bears more responsibility than most people for the plight of the poor since he has held political offices that have given him more opportunity to help. "I would be the last one to hold myself up as a model," he said. "I have been guiltier than you have."

Poor people are wrongly stigmatized as being lazy and without ambition, Carter said. As a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, he said he has helped build houses alongside poor people who "are just as intelligent, just as hardworking, just as ambitious and love their kids just as much as I do."

During the past six months, he has helped initiate a project through the Carter Center at Emory University to aid poverty-stricken areas of Atlanta, Carter said. These communities are in the part of Atlanta "that the Chamber of Commerce doesn't want to talk about," he said.

"For the first time in my life, I have to admit to you, I have been trying to learn about a whole broad community of people who are totally different from me. I don't mean just racially but totally different from the wealthy status of my life."

In these communities, young boys get esteem from their peers by owning a semiautomatic weapon, said Carter. Pregnancy among sixth-grade girls is not uncommon, he said, noting "pimps and drug pushers" exploit them sexually.

"It's a world we do not know but it's a world ... through Christ we should know intimately," Carter stressed.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Terry Waite tells Samford grads
of renewed passion for justice By William A. Nunnolley

Baptist Press
5/27/92

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Former hostage Terry Waite told Samford University graduates he is not bitter about his years of captivity but that the experience reinforced his "passion for justice."

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"I come from the experience more convinced than ever that my vocation takes me onward" in working for reconciliation and justice, said the Anglican Church envoy held captive in Lebanon almost five years by Shiite Muslims.

He survived the ordeal, he said, "knowing that Christ is the light and light is stronger than darkness."

"I was allowed to read the Bible and nobody can ever stop you from praying," Waite said in a press conference following the commencement exercises.

Waite, who was released with hostage Thomas Sutherland last November, is working at Cambridge University on a book about his experiences. He is in the final days of a 13-year stint as special advisor to and envoy of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

He spoke to an audience of 6,000 people May 23 at commencement for Samford's 1,028 graduates at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center Coliseum.

Waite said he hopes his future efforts in behalf of reconciliation would help "enable the weak and powerless to be strong, the strong to be just and the just to be compassionate."

In the press conference, he praised the work of universities in promoting international understanding.

"It's a way of actually bringing young people together with people of another culture," he said. "One of the great things universities can do is to promote face-to-face contact, right across the board. And that pays enormous dividends in the future."

Waite said his hostage experience had strengthened his conviction "to make a positive contribution in the field of reconciliation, where there is conflict in the world, ... in a situation where people are suffering and dying in misery as a result of conflict."

His captivity also taught him it is possible "to grow into a new understanding of one self," he said.

"As you get to know yourself really deeply," he said, "then you begin to have an empathy and understanding of others. It's so important to be able to understand others so that you don't fall into quick judgments and into situations that would treat people as less than human."

Waite said the Anglican Church made no claims to be professional negotiators nor did it "seek a place on the world stage" but took part on humanitarian grounds because it regarded the act as "a fundamental duty to help those who were desperate and at their wit's end."

Waite helped negotiate the release of hostages from Iran and Libya during the early 1980s and played a role in the release of Americans Benjamin Weir and Father Lawrence Jenco in 1985 and David Jacobsen in 1986.

He went to Beirut, Lebanon, in January 1987 to negotiate the release of Sutherland, acting dean of American University in Beirut. Instead of gaining Sutherland's release, Waite was kidnapped and detained until November 1991, spending the first four years in solitary confinement.

He said he knew the later negotiations would be difficult but decided to go to Beirut "because of the integrity of the church and because of the despair of the families of the hostages."

Support group materials getting
fast-track development at SSB

By Terri Lackey

NASHVILLE (BP)--Eddie's father is an alcoholic but Eddie doesn't touch the stuff. He's too busy working late nights to provide for his family. On weekends he spends hours taking care of his large, beautiful home. Eddie is a very successful man.

So why isn't he happy?

Eddie is the product of one of the 76 million American families dealing with addictions -- about 11 million of which are alcohol-related. Alcoholism, sexual addiction, dependency on drugs are among addictions that create dysfunctional families, said Avery Willis, manager of the adult section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department.

Workaholism, relationship disorders, perfectionism, anxiety, stress, strict religious beliefs and harsh disciplinary tactics are a few of the dysfunctions that grow out of living with an addictive family member, Willis added.

"Dysfunction occurs anytime family members have to constantly take care of and make excuses for one specific family member because of his addiction," Willis said.

Increasingly, Americans are learning how growing up with these addictions have affected their lives, he said. Increasingly, they are turning to support groups to deal with the issues.

Materials dealing with co-dependency, self-worth and health are being released this summer and fall by the discipleship training department under a new imprint, LifeWay, Willis said.

"Fifteen million Americans are in support groups so we are trying to meet an obvious need in a fast-track way," said Willis referring to the LIFE Support courses, the new line of discipleship training products.

Traditionally, Christians had to look outside their churches to find help with life issues, Willis said, but now church members can be offered support group materials with a Christian perspective.

The first courses to be offered under the discipleship training department's newly created LIFE Support unit are "First Place: A Christ Centered Health Program;" "Making Peace with Your Past," a course dealing with dysfunctions and co-dependency; and "The Search for Significance," a study on strengthening one's self-concept.

The discipleship training department is planning to release 10 LIFE Support courses consisting of 25-30 products in the next 30 months under the new imprint, Willis said. A staff of four has been hired to edit and modify the materials, he said.

"Normally, releasing one product would take four to five years from the time it became an idea to the time it is released to the churches," Willis said. "But two things happened that really created an opportunity for us to release these support courses in a fast-track way."

Willis said "First Place" was developed, published and has been distributed since 1980 by First Baptist Church of Houston.

"It has become so popular, it overwhelmed their ability to keep up with demand," Willis said. "So they asked us to publish and distribute it."

Although some revisions are being made, the church will retain ownership of the Christ-centered health program, Willis said.

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Another new course, "Making Peace With Your Past," is expected to be taught and released this summer at conference centers, Willis said. Author Tim Sledge, pastor of Kingsland Baptist Church of Katy, Texas, said one of the reasons he wrote the 12-week course is because he himself is co-dependent.

"Co-dependency can be somewhat elusive as far as definitions go," Sledge said in explaining his need to write the course. "It is a serious problem in our church. Co-dependent people help others at their own expense. On the surface they almost look like committed Christians. But they are interested in helping other people because they feel inadequate."

The third product being released this fall is "Search for Significance," developed through Rapha Inc., a provider of hospital treatment centers for psychiatric disorders and addictions, Willis said.

"Another reason we are able to work on such a fast track is because Rapha is allowing us to use their manuscripts at no charge," said Willis, who explained writers will reformat the materials to conform with LIFE courses.

Willis said during a staff retreat a few years ago, discipleship training department employees "felt led in this direction" (support group materials), but they believed it would take years to develop.

"Then God created the opportunity for us to do it quickly," he said, referring to support from First Baptist in Houston, Rapha and the Sunday School Board administration.

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Southern Baptists have left
their isolation, Land says

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
5/27/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--Southern Baptists are operating with a recently and firmly established willingness to cooperate with other Christian groups on critical issues, Richard D. Land told a group of evangelicals meeting in Washington.

"Southern Baptists are no longer going to be provincial, no longer going to be insular, no longer going to think that ecumenical is in and of itself a dirty word," said Land, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's executive director.

"We understand that there is often now going to be more division within denominations than there is going to be between denominations and that we are going to have more in common with people in other denominations who have the same basic values, the same understanding of Christian absolutes than we do than those people within our denomination or within other denominations who have abandoned those and have succumbed to relativism and to modernity."

Addressing the recent Washington Insight Briefing held by the National Association of Evangelicals, Land mentioned some personal and corporate examples of this cooperation in 1992:

-- His participation in an interdenominational delegation, which included other Southern Baptists, to Rome to discuss with the pope an international antipornography effort.

-- His election to NAE's executive committee.

-- The joint brief filed by the Christian Life Commission, NAE and United States Catholic Conference asking the Supreme Court to overturn its 1973 decision legalizing abortion.

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-- The CLC's adaptation of the NAE's Christian citizenship manual for use in Southern Baptist churches.

Southern Baptists especially are willing to work with other evangelicals, Land told the group of about 85 people.

"The days are long gone when we in any way, shape or fashion -- the vast majority of us -- have any constraint whatsoever about calling ourselves evangelicals," Land said. "Now there was a Southern Baptist leader, one of those who was who in the Southern Baptist Convention, who said, 'Evangelical is a Yankee word. We don't use evangelical.' He didn't know what he was talking about then; he doesn't know what he's talking about now."

He read Carl F.H. Henry, James Packer and Francis Schaeffer as a college student and "saw absolutely no conflict" in considering himself both an evangelical and a Southern Baptist, Land said. "That is overwhelmingly true for people in my generation of Southern Baptist life," Land said.

American evangelicals face a great challenge, but he believes God still may have "something great that he wants to do with us as born-again believers and with our nation," he noted.

"I've got good news and bad news for those who look out on the social terrain who don't like us," Land said. "The good news is that we have a greater understanding of our responsibility to be salt and light as evangelical Christians than at any time since the Civil War. The bad news is we're going to disagree with those social pundits on almost every issue because they're wrong."

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Bisagno claims unity in evangelism
essential for Southern Baptists By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
5/27/92

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptists must "find a way to at least do evangelism and soul-winning together" said John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston, Texas.

"Whatever the controversy (in the Southern Baptist Convention) has become, it was at least a doctrinal controversy to begin with," Bisagno said. Conservative and moderate Southern Baptists "may have some irreconcilable differences but not on matters that are essential to salvation."

Bisagno, who has identified himself with the SBC conservative leadership, said he recently participated in an area crusade sponsored by several churches. He said he realized pastors from other denominations had joined forces for the evangelistic crusade even though they did not agree on every point of their theology.

Speaking during a Home Mission Board-sponsored school of evangelism and church growth in Las Vegas, Bisagno said he became convicted Southern Baptists must cooperate despite the conflicts of the past decade.

"If we cannot work together in education, we must at least try to find ways to cooperate in soul-winning and missions," Bisagno said.

Bisagno made his point during a sermon on the Great Commission as it is reported in each gospel. He noted Luke stresses the need for Christians to work together.

"We must join hands and link arms," Bisagno said. "We will do together better than what we can do alone."

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John 20:21-23 emphasizes the importance of ministering in God's power. Bisagno said the verses tell Christians they do not have the power to forgive sins but they do have the "power and responsibility to announce the terms of the gospel under which people may be forgiven."

Mark 16:17-18 is the Great Commission that stresses confidence. The passage promises power over evil, other languages, hostilities and disease.

Matthew 28:18-20, the verses most people refer to as the Great Commission, emphasize the need to go everywhere, Bisagno said.

The 400 people attending the conference heard an array of church growth models during the four-day meeting. Bisagno urged them to discover their special abilities and tailor their programs for their communities.

"Do what it takes to reach your communities for Christ and don't let anybody put you in a box," Bisagno said.

In another sermon, Bisagno challenged participants to renew their commitment to Christ. "We have the people, the money, the bureaucracy, the education, the plan, the seminars and the seminaries," he said. "What we need is the commitment.

"God has an exceedingly high standard for those who follow him -- and it is total commitment," Bisagno said. "We've got to preach the gospel that does not separate saviorship from lordship."

Pastors must be faithful to preach that gospel even if it means fewer people respond, Bisagno said. "God will never lower the standard of quality just for the sake of quantity."

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National Prayer Conference
planned prior to SBC meeting

Baptist Press
5/27/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--A two-day National Prayer Conference with general sessions and special-interest seminars is planned June 5-6 prior to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Indianapolis.

The sessions are open to all Southern Baptists and will provide annual training for Bold Mission Prayer Thrust state coordinators, said T.W. Hunt, prayer consultant at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The prayer conference will be at the Hilton at the Circle in Indianapolis, 1 to 8:30 p.m. Friday, June 5, and 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. June 6.

Speakers for the conference include Wallace Williams, executive director/treasurer of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey; Newton Carey, pastor of True Vine Baptist Church in Oakland, Calif; Larry Thompson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., and chairman of the Watchman National Prayer Alert; Bob Dixon, executive director of Texas Baptist Men; Terri Willis, associate director of the International Prayer Strategy Office at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board; and Hunt.

Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. will present a closing message for the Saturday evening general session. Ron and Patricia Owens will provide music for the sessions. Owens is associate director of prayer and spiritual awakening at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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Hunt said special-interest conferences will include sessions on watchman prayer ministry, church prayer ministry, prayer as strategy, prayer and spiritual warfare and how to develop an urban ministry.

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Crime spree hits close
to Hong Kong missionaries

By Lounette Templeton

Baptist Press
5/27/92

HONG KONG (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary Jean McCord happened onto two potential gun battles in Hong Kong in one week.

A shootout in the restaurant below their Hong Kong apartment recently awakened East Asia area director Sam James and his wife, Rachel. James directs Southern Baptist missions in east Asia.

A gunman even walked onto a ward at Baptist Hospital in Hong Kong May 8 and shot a patient. The man escaped but was later arrested.

Residents of the British colony never know when another band of robbers may race down their street firing automatic weapons and exploding hand grenades.

McCord, of Statesboro, Ga., was seeing a friend off at Hong Kong's airport when police cornered a jewelry store robbery suspect in the parking lot.

"I came around the corner and saw three men in plain clothes with guns," McCord recalled. "Several policemen were crouched behind cars with their guns pulled. I decided not to stay around."

A few days later in a major shopping area, McCord noticed a traffic buildup and a crowd at a major intersection. On closer inspection, she saw policemen with guns pointed "at something." She didn't wait to find out what.

Such occurrences are becoming commonplace in the hectic -- but until now relatively safe -- Asian city. The week before McCord's airport encounter, six armed thieves staged a \$1.3 million jewelry shop robbery at midday, running through crowds and firing at pursuing police before commandeering a taxi to escape.

A week later, robbers at another location fired automatic weapons and threw hand grenades into crowds as they hijacked escape vehicles. The gun battle with police left 17 wounded, including three schoolgirls.

Police insist a crime wave hasn't hit Hong Kong but 22 armed robberies have occurred since January -- twice as many as last year. Like many Hong Kong residents, McCord thinks criminals are more daring and dangerous than before. Residents worry the rise in crime foreshadows a breakdown in law and order as China's 1997 takeover of the colony nears.

"There was crime (before), but there weren't guns and hand grenades," McCord said. "The kind of crime is changing. They go for jewelry stores, gold shops, banks -- they're after megabucks. It's like a last-ditch effort. There seems to be some correlation between the crime issue and 1997. Some of the criminals are from China."

Police spokesmen admit weapons used in the current rash of crimes have come from China. Hong Kong has strict gun-control laws that prohibit residents from owning firearms. But police contend Hong Kong criminals are the "brains behind the operations" -- they set up the robberies, then recruit mainland gangsters for the jobs.

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The deputy police commissioner ascribes mainland Chinese involvement to "socioeconomic changes in China." Hong Kong's much higher standard of living, he said, is "bound to be attractive to bad elements in China."

Meanwhile, sellers of high-tech security systems hope to cash in on Hong Kong residents' fears. Almost 100 companies from 15 countries exhibited a range of security equipment and technology at an exhibition in May.

McCord isn't interested. "I still feel safer here than in most cities back home," she said.

James, a former missionary to Vietnam, concurred. "I just went back to bed" after the gun battle below his apartment, he said. "In Vietnam, we used to have bombs blowing up in front of our house."

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Alabama Baptist board adopts
homosexuality position plan

By David E. Reid

Baptist Press
5/27/92

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--Alabama Baptists' state board of missions has approved a position paper which says homosexuality violates the "intended purpose of sex" and "is not a viable alternate lifestyle for Christians."

Joe Bob Mizzell, director of public affairs and Christian life for the board, said it took action May 22 for several reasons.

"The board responded to actions taken recently by two North Carolina Baptist churches," Mizzell said. "One church licensed a homosexual man to the ministry and the other voted to approve a marriage-type relationship between two homosexual men."

Mizzell said Auburn University's decision to sanction and give public funds to a gay and lesbian rights group also contributed to the decision to approve the position paper.

A third development was continuing increases in Alabama of the number of cases of AIDS, which often is transmitted by homosexual relationships.

Among other things, the paper calls for parents to teach biblical morals to children and for all Christians to express God's forgiveness to homosexuals who repent.

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Five traits typify growing
churches, Hemphill says

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
5/27/92

LAS VEGAS (BP)--Five traits are common of all growing churches, though churches may vary greatly in environments and styles, Ken Hemphill said during a school of evangelism and church growth.

Hemphill, pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., will become church growth specialist for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Sunday School Board Aug. 1.

The first trait common to growing churches, he said, is strong leadership. He said pastors of growing churches trust God to give them the ability to lead.

The pastor's leadership is not an issue of authority but function, Hemphill said. A pastor's leadership depends on the trust he has with church members, he noted.

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Growing churches also have a generous spirit. He said this includes joyous, spontaneous, sacrificial financial giving as well as willingness to give up the best parking spaces for visitors and willingness for Sunday School classes to relocate to accommodate others.

Spiritual sensitivity is another characteristic of growing churches. Hemphill said he attributes the growth First Baptist Church of Norfolk has experienced since he became pastor to the prayer ministry the church had in place before he came.

Fourth, growing churches have a great vision. They are willing to take risks as the vision from God ignites the congregation.

The final key to growing churches is a passion for souls, Hemphill said. They do not wait for people to visit their services. Instead, they pursue non-Christians in their community to share their faith.

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Missionary to fill FMB's
black church relations post

By Mary E. Spedel

Baptist Press
5/27/92

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--David Cornelius Jr., a Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria, has been named director of black church relations at the Foreign Mission Board.

Cornelius, 47, replaces Victor Davis, who left the position to become pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Richmond, Va.

Cornelius, of Texarkana, Texas, starts his new role July 1. He will promote foreign missions in churches, recruit black Southern Baptists for missions and work as a liaison between the Foreign Mission Board and black Baptist conventions in the United States.

"I'll help bring black Southern Baptists closer to the Foreign Mission Board, primarily reaching out and encouraging them to consider foreign missions as an option," said Cornelius. "As soon as possible I'm going to get out there and get to know them and see where we go from here."

Black Baptists traditionally have tended not to become foreign missionaries because of "the background in which most of us have grown up," Cornelius said. "Foreign missions was not the type of missions heavily stressed in our churches."

Cornelius sees part of his role as encouraging churches to develop a world view.

"This can be said not just for many black churches, but for all our churches," he said. "I don't believe churches can work to their potential locally if they don't have a vision for reaching the world with the gospel. To simply concentrate on your local area, you limit what God can do with you and through you."

Another challenge: the need to encourage missions education in black churches. "That's been a key to the success of the Foreign Mission Board in enlisting foreign missions volunteers," Cornelius said. "We have had in our convention a mission education program that covers the person from time he's a baby up through senior citizenship."

Cornelius and his wife, the former Elwanda Brown of Palestine, Texas, went to Nigeria in 1984 to begin Baptist work in the city of Abuja. Recently he has been urban evangelism consultant for the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

He became interested in missions while he was Baptist Student Union director at El Centro Community College in Dallas. At the time of his missionary appointment he was pastor of Fruitdale Baptist Church in Dallas. Earlier he had been a chemist for 10 years.

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Cornelius received the bachelor of arts degree from Texas Christian University and the master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, both in Fort Worth, Texas. He is working toward the doctor of ministry degree at Southwestern. He and his wife have two grown children.

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

McElrath receives
teaching honor

Baptist Press
5/27/92

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Hugh T. McElrath, V.V. Cooke professor of church music at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, was presented the Findley B. and Louvenia Edge Award for Teaching Excellence during the Louisville, Ky., school's 169th commencement May 22.

McElrath, who has taught at Southern since 1948, was presented the award for his contributions during more than 40 years on the seminary faculty. One of three Baptists ever to be named a fellow of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, McElrath has written eight books dealing with hymnody and hymnology and several hymns. He also served on editorial committees for the 1975 and 1991 editions of the Baptist Hymnal.

The Murray, Ky., native will retire from full-time teaching at Southern this year but will remain on faculty as a senior professor. He earned degrees from Murray State University, Southern Seminary and the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music.

The Edge award, named in honor of the emeritus professor of Christian education at Southern and his wife, has been endowed by the Edges and friends of the couple. The honoree receives a cash prize of \$2,500.

Recipients are selected annually by a committee of faculty, students and alumni on the basis of effective teaching, personal care for students and demonstrated concern for students' spiritual needs.

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16 Southern Baptists will receive
Royal Ambassador awards of merit

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
5/27/92

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Sixteen Southern Baptists will receive the third annual Awards of Merit presented by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission's International Legion of Royal Ambassador Leaders at the National Brotherhood Breakfast in Indianapolis June 10.

The ILRAL supports Royal Ambassador work around the world and its Award of Merit is the highest RA leadership award given by the Brotherhood Commission.

Royal Ambassadors is the Brotherhood Commission's missions education program for boys in grades one through nine.

"The Award of Merit is given to those outstanding RA leaders whose commitment to missions education is exemplary," said Brotherhood Commission president James D. Williams. "Such leadership is the backbone of missions education, and ultimately, the seeds of mission work."

The Award of Merit was begun in 1990 to recognize RA leaders around the world for their lifelong commitment to missions education for boys.

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The Award of Merit winners represent a variety of levels of work in Royal Ambassadors and represent hundreds of years of service.

This year's recipients are:

Roy J. Gilleland Jr., 77, Nashville, retired Brotherhood director for the Tennessee Baptist Convention; Wade Watts, 36, Trujillo, Peru, Southern Baptist foreign missionary; David Langford, 47, Raleigh, N.C., former Brotherhood director for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina; David Brown, 37, and Janet Brown, 36, Shelby, N.C., state and associational RA specialists for North Carolina;

Joe T. Lenamon, 62, Fort Worth, Texas, chairman of the Brotherhood Commission board of trustees, vice chairman of finance for Texas Baptist Men, regional Brotherhood director, and associational Brotherhood director; Leo Smith, 54, LaMarque, Texas, pastor of Highlands Baptist Church and regional Brotherhood director; Travis Murray, 42, Amory, Miss., RA counselor and director for First Baptist Church of Amory and area RA coordinator;

Norman Wagoner, 54, Bismarck, N.D., Brotherhood consultant for North Dakota, western division RA director and RA director for Riverwood Baptist Church in Bismarck; F. Harold Heiney, 59, Pine Ridge, S.D., Southern Baptist home missionary and RA counselor and director at Lakota Baptist Church; Jimmy F. Holland Sr., 54, Sheffield, Ala., RA counselor at York Terrace Baptist Church, state RA specialist, and associational RA director; Bryce Stokes, 40, Auburn, Ala., state RA specialist and associational RA director.

Posthumous awards will also be given in memory of:

H. Mac Johnson Jr., formerly of Montgomery, Ala., Alabama Baptist Convention Brotherhood director for 20 years; Eddie Iglehart, formerly of Calhoun, Ky., 30 year RA camp counselor and RA counselor at Glenville Baptist Church; Kirby Able, formerly of Columbia, S.C., RA counselor at Northside Baptist Church and state RA trainer for 20 years; John A. Farmer, formerly of Columbia, S.C., South Carolina Baptist Convention Brotherhood director for 26 years.

Recipients are nominated by state Brotherhood department directors and associates from across the SBC to the ILRAL advisory board. The advisory board reviews all nominations and makes recommendations to the Brotherhood Commission trustees, who vote to either approve or reject the recommendations.

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(Specials on individual recipients have been sent to state Baptist newsjournals via facsimile by the Brotherhood Commission.)