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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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92-94

Quayle challenges Baptists
to stand with him on morals

By Scott Collins

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Vice President Dan Quayle brought his message of moral values to messengers at the 135th meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in what he described as an effort to gain support from the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

Speaking to more than 15,000 messengers at the Indiana Hoosier Dome, Quayle, who has been at the center of debate about values since criticizing the TV comedy "Murphy Brown," called on the SBC to join him in what he said is a fight against the country's "cultural elite."

"My friends," Quayle said, "we need to have a discussion among ourselves on the importance of moral values. It's time that we Americans speak out for what we believe in and what we stand for. It is time we Americans stand up for our values, stand up for America and say that America is great because of our people and our values."

Those values, contrary to "sophisticated folks," are values still alive in America, Quayle said in the SBC's opening session June 9. "They live in our thousands of Southern Baptist churches and in other places of worship across America."

Quayle said it is important to speak out about moral values because, "If America ever lost its moral vision, it would cease to be America. We would become a soul-less and divided nation, a nation under siege instead of a nation under God."

Moral values make a nation great, Quayle said. "They are the solid foundation of our lives as individuals and as families."

But the vice president said his recent speech on values has uncovered an intolerance in America on "the other side. And the tragedy of our time is that so many in the elite culture off-handedly dismiss moral values."

Quayle said anyone talking about moral values is inviting "the scorn and laughter of the elite culture. Talk about right and wrong, and they'll try to mock us in newsrooms, sitcom studios, and faculty lounges across America."

But Quayle said values is the most important issue facing the nation today and vowed to continue his crusade.

"Moral values are what the American people care the most about. This is what I say about the media elite, I wear their scorn as a badge of honor."

Taking aim at critics of his recent statements about marriage and fictional Murphy Brown, Quayle said the family is a "sacred institution entrusted with the world's most important work."

"It is not only nature's masterpiece ... it is God's masterpiece. We believe society is only as strong as the families who live and grow within it. And we believe that the family and family values need our support."

In his introduction of Quayle, SBC President Morris Chapman, of Wichita Falls, Texas, thanked the vice president for his support of moral values.

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"Thank you for standing up for the unborn who cannot stand up for themselves. Thank you for raising the conscience of this nation to the importance of the family," Chapman said. "It is a sad day when a nation allows a situation comedy to trivialize tragedy."

SBC Executive Committee President-Treasurer Harold C. Bennett presented Quayle a resolution of appreciation commending the vice president for speaking out about values.

Calling criticism of Quayle's statements about values "outrageous abuse," the resolution thanked Quayle for his "forthright statement on the sanctity of marriage."

While the cultural elite "sneers" at those values, Quayle said they also ignore the results of immorality.

"Do they even acknowledge the consequences -- an ever-increasing rate of illegitimacy, youthful promiscuity, 1.6 million abortions?"

Instead, Quayle said, the elite compound problems by "handing out condoms in the schools or distributing sexual propaganda to third- and fourth-graders.

"Morally speaking, our children ask for bread and cynics give them a stone," Quayle said. "We believe our children were made for better lives than that and that moral and spiritual integrity are the key to human fulfillment."

The vice president also spoke out on abortion. He offered an alternative for women with unwanted babies: "Our solution for those mothers who feel they cannot raise the child is adoption."

In a news conference following his speech, Quayle said he is determined to continue speaking out about moral values.

Asked if he was sorry he criticized fictional Murphy Brown, the vice president said no. Instead, he said he has had an "outpouring of letters and support from the American people."

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Committee stance on homosexuality:
historic constitutional action

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--After declining for almost 150 years to take action against Southern Baptist churches on faith and practice issues, the Southern Baptist Convention will consider a constitutional amendment declaring churches approving homosexual behavior "not in friendly cooperation" and, therefore, not eligible to send messengers to annual convention meetings.

Approved June 8 by the SBC Executive Committee, the amendment will require approval by SBC messengers in both 1992 and 1993.

To have messengers, the constitution presently defines a church in friendly cooperation with the SBC if it is "sympathetic with its purposes and work and has during the fiscal year preceding been a bona fide contributor to the Convention's work." While stipulating friendly cooperation and bona fide contributions, the proposed amendment states, "Among churches not in cooperation with the Convention are churches which act to affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior."

Joe Reynolds, Houston layman and chairman of the bylaws workgroup which proposed the constitutional amendment, said the group elected the route of amending the constitution rather than a motion or bylaw amendment "to send a message to the world where Southern Baptists stand" on homosexuality.

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Messengers also will be asked to withdraw fellowship from two North Carolina churches, declaring that their actions "in regard to homosexuality are contrary to the teachings of the Bible on human sexuality and the sanctity of the family and are offensive to Southern Baptists."

In March, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh voted to bless the "union" of two homosexual males. In April, Binkley Memorial Baptist Church in Chapel Hill voted to license a homosexual student to the ministry.

The recommendation adopted by the Executive Committee for messenger consideration states that the "Southern Baptist Convention also fervently prays that these churches will respond to the teachings of Holy Scripture by rescinding their actions related to avowed homosexuals while continuing to pray for God's saving grace and healing power in the lives of homosexuals and continuing to minister redemptively to homosexuals."

The Executive Committee also voted to return to Pullen and Binkley churches funds contributed since Oct. 1, 1990, to SBC causes, an action not requiring ratification by SBC messengers. Approximately \$2,200 has been identified as gifts from the churches to SBC causes. Exact accounting is difficult because Southern Baptist churches channel gifts to SBC causes through state conventions.

The recommendation to return the funds states "it is totally inappropriate for the Southern Baptist Convention to receive gifts of money from local churches which do not adhere to these standards and are therefore not in friendly cooperation with this Convention nor sympathetic with its purposes and work."

Because being a contributor to SBC causes is a requirement for having messengers, returning their money makes the churches ineligible for messengers.

Executive Committee Member Larry Otis, a layman from Tupelo, Miss., said he favored withdrawing fellowship from the churches and returning their contributions but opposed amending the constitution.

"A constitutional amendment is not necessary," Otis said. "Opening the constitution is a serious matter."

Jim Guenther, Executive Committee general counsel, said during a news conference: "Experts on ecclesiology are of the opinion the SBC has always had the authority to determine if by its faith and practice a church is in friendly cooperation. The Executive Committee is of the opinion this is a latent power. They believe the issue of homosexuality is so significant that the convention for the first time ought to exercise that power."

Executive Committee chairman David Hankins, a pastor from Lake Charles, La., said the action could have been taken with motion or bylaw as well as a constitutional amendment.

"The desire on the part of the Executive Committee is to use the means to most indicate permanence. We are on record in our most significant document," our constitution.

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Executive Committee affirms
historic relationship with WMU

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee affirmed its historic relationship with Woman's Missionary Union, an auxiliary to the SBC, stating their action was based on the WMU constitution's preamble.

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The preamble specifies WMU will collect mission funds "to be disbursed by the Boards of the Southern Baptist Convention" and disclaims "all intention of independent action." The action came in response to a motion at the February meeting of the Executive Committee by Gibbie McMillan of Baton Rouge, La., asking the Executive Committee to recommend that messengers to the 1992 SBC "invite Woman's Missionary Union to initiate legal steps to become an agency of the Southern Baptist Convention rather than remain as an auxiliary to the Convention."

As an agency, WMU would have its trustees elected by SBC messengers and would be subject to all guidelines and policies of SBC agencies.

McMillan opposed affirming the historic relationship with WMU. "This is nothing at all like the motion I originally made," he said. "My original motion was to the entire SBC, not just the Executive Committee. The convention needs to vote on it."

During an earlier session of the administrative subcommittee, several Executive Committee members questioned whether a May 18 dialogue with leaders of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderate Southern Baptists, constituted "independent action."

WMU also has issued an invitation to meet with SBC leadership as part of a new self-study, according to a May 19 Baptist Press article.

"We felt we did not want to create a problem or jump on a potential problem before it occurred," said C. Ray Fuller, an Illinois pastor and administrative subcommittee chairman. "It behooves us to be very concerned about not overstepping our relationship."

In other action, the Executive Committee adopted a resolution of appreciation for comments on family values by Vice President Dan Quayle.

The resolution notes that Quayle "has suffered enormous and outrageous abuse for speaking the truth" in his criticism of fictional TV newscaster Murphy Brown for giving birth to a child out of wedlock. A resolution of appreciation for R. Keith Parks, retiring president of the Foreign Mission Board, also was adopted.

The Executive Committee also received a report that second quarter Cooperative Program receipts of \$70.2 million represent a 1.88 percent decrease compared to the same period a year ago.

They also acknowledged a report from the accreditation taskforce of the SBC Education Commission. Representatives of the Executive Committee program workgroup consulted with the taskforce.

The report, among other points, states that responsibility for decisions relating to seminary accreditation rests primarily with trustees of SBC seminaries.

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WMU leader says Southern Baptists
have endured 'enough' controversy

Baptist Press
6/9/92

By Susan Todd Doyle & Orville Scott

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union honored Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks, who is retiring earlier than planned, and heard national WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien say enough is enough to those who led the 15-million-member denomination through a 12-year controversy.

Speaking to more than 2,500 men and women at the WMU annual meeting June 7-8 in Indianapolis, O'Brien drew applause on several occasions and a standing ovation at the end of her remarks.

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"No longer can we put missions on the back burner while the pot of denominational enmity and dissension boils over," O'Brien said. "It is enough. No longer can we be silent when we see anger and distrust tearing the heart out of our denomination.

"It is time to confront our brothers with our impatience with divisiveness, with our refusal to play little games when there are those dying in sin because of our lack of faithfulness. It is enough."

Throughout its 104 years, WMU has had many opportunities to rally around causes which affect women -- labor laws, voting and women's rights, O'Brien said. However, WMU has never strayed from the course of missions, she said.

Therefore, WMU has earned the right to be heard in the missions arena, O'Brien said. "We have demonstrated our faithfulness to the missions cause in many notable ways, not the least of which is by raising \$1.7 billion for the evangelization of the world."

It is time, once again, for WMU to speak up and to confront those people making decisions affecting the work of Southern Baptist missions around the world, she said.

"If the money and energies spent on the intrigue, the altercations, spreading seeds of hate and discord and the assembling together of mass forces for wars of votes -- if all of this had instead been applied to the support of missionaries bearing Christ's name, spreading seeds of hope and love, today there would be many more names written in the Lamb's book of life," O'Brien said.

O'Brien drew applause when she asked if it is time for WMU to point out that Southern Baptists have forced out of service the man who has effectively led the Southern Baptist foreign missions program the past 12 years.

Parks, who has been involved in foreign missions 38 years, was cited in a resolution of appreciation for his "example as a servant leader, with a passion for missions, a burden for winning the lost, and a zeal for rallying others to the missions causes."

The WMU executive board announced the R. Keith Parks Scholarship Fund with an initial endowment of \$25,000.

Also, Parks and his wife, Helen Jean, were given a quilt made by Southern Baptist foreign missionaries and Brazil Baptists. In appreciation for the quilt and Parks, participants at the annual meeting in Indianapolis gave \$3,047 toward the 1992 Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions.

Among missionaries addressing the meeting was chaplain Ann Griffith of Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City who works with AIDS patients.

She said an AIDS patient who died recently told her he didn't go to church because "They don't really want me there."

Griffith said he is one example of a searcher who has been abandoned on a "godless horizon.

"I think true godlessness is hopelessness and despair," she said. "So, while we're fighting over what we think God's Word means, and what we think God wants, and who we think God calls to speak God's Word, we are abandoning people, just like us, to hopelessness and despair."

Another missionary, Ethne Stainer, who was director of nursing at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen 21 years, said the Muslim knows 99 names for God but love is not one of them.

"In a busy hospital, where you have sick, hurting people, small children, sad and grieving people, you have many opportunities to show them love and to tell them about the wonderful love that God has for all people everywhere," Stainer said.

She urged her listeners to "pray that the wall of Islam will collapse. If God can do it for communism, God can do it for Islam so people can worship God as they wish," Stainer said.

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Chapman urges Baptists
to 'move up the mountain'

By Terry Barone

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Saying Southern Baptists have "skirted this mountain too long," convention President Morris Chapman called on Southern Baptists to "move up the mountain, over the mountain and toward the promise land."

In his presidential address, Chapman, pastor of 5,000-member First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, said Southern Baptists are not called to go around mountains but are a "people, a convention, a denomination of destiny."

"We have not come to this place because of our own worthiness, or even of our churches. We have been brought to this moment of destiny by God, who has worked mightily among us for his own glory."

Chapman, newly-elected president-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, warned that in moving forward Baptists need to remember "who we are and whose we are."

He told messengers the denomination was "built, led and sustained" by leaders such as J.B. Gambrell, George W. Truett, W.A. Criswell and Herschel Hobbs; that the convention was led by theologian-statesmen such as E.Y. Mullins, James P. Boyce, B.H. Carroll and Lee Scarborough; and that the denomination's mission endeavors were led by Baker James Cauthen, Theron Rankin and Arthur Rutledge.

Southern Baptists stand on the shoulders of giants, Chapman said. "Those who would use these names for some other movement pay us the ultimate compliment -- but they cannot and will not hijack our heritage."

The denomination is not fragmented as some have said because the gospel is preached, he declared. "We will not be distracted from our central purpose," he said.

Chapman addressed disenchanted congregations, saying, "To those churches who join a new movement and move away, we offer no word of censure, rebuke or retribution.

"Know this: We will not be angry but we will not be deterred from the mission God has called us to accomplish for his glory."

He pleaded with Southern Baptists to exhibit honest cooperation and partnership, which he said is "desperately needed in our own day."

"Those Southern Baptists of old stated boldly that cooperation was on the basis of conviction ... not at its expense. We can do no less today."

He also called on churches, state conventions, the Woman's Missionary Union, SBC seminaries, Baptist colleges and universities and Baptists of the world to remain true to their heritage and move with the denomination.

To SBC churches, Chapman said, "Stay the course, keep the faith, remain steadfast in the work of the Lord."

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To state conventions, Chapman said, "Move together in common cause at home and abroad and keep a world vision of the gospel in view."

To WMU, he said, "Stay true to your founding vision. Do not be distracted from your mission by those who would divert you for their own purposes."

He reminded WMU members of their constitution which states the organization will collect funds to be "disbursed by the boards of the Southern Baptist Convention" and disclaims all intention of independent action.

"You have been a bulwark of support for Southern Baptist missions and an example to all of missionary commitment. Do not falter now."

To the seminaries, he asked for "theological leadership for the renewal of this denomination. Provide us with training for preachers, teachers, missionaries and fellow servants."

To Baptist colleges and universities, Chapman said, "Show us an education which weds learning with undiluted conviction."

"Baptists have been far better at founding colleges and universities than at keeping them. Show us that being a Baptist university means more than Baptists founding the institution and supporting it financially."

Chapman called Baptists of the world to "Join with us in the sacred cause of missions as we work together, hand in hand, for the furtherance of the gospel" and to "go with us together where none of us could go alone."

He asked for Southern Baptists to move together up and over the mountain. "Southern Baptists have been a mountain-climbing people driven by a commitment the world will never understand. It is our time to take the high ground ... our time for putting our lives on the line."

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Messengers vote to sever
final ties with BJCPA

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Final ties between the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs were severed June 9.

Messengers to the SBC's annual meeting voted to end the 50-year relationship with the Washington-based religious liberty organization of 10 Baptist bodies. Convention messengers in 1991 ended SBC funding of the BJC, which had been the subject of controversy among Southern Baptists in recent years.

At one time, Southern Baptists provided more than 50 percent of BJC funding. Messengers also defeated a substitute motion calling for binding arbitration to settle a dispute with the BJC over a \$300,000 capital fund. Instead, messengers approved recommendations from its Executive Committee expressing appreciation for the arbitration proposal, authorizing payment of interest from the fund to the BJC, claiming the principal for the SBC and authorizing the Executive Committee to use the principal as it deems appropriate.

The fund was authorized by 1964 convention messengers to provide office space for the BJC, the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance. Over the years, the funds were held in trust by the Southern Baptist Foundation and more than \$600,000 in interest was paid to the BJC.

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In 1991 the BJC requested the money to buy a building in Washington. The money also was claimed by the SBC Christian Life Commission, which now has offices in Washington and carries out citizenship and religious liberty assignments for the SBC.

The Executive Committee voted by a two-to-one margin June 8 to reject the proposal for arbitration that would have been facilitated by the former executive director of the Christian Legal Society. BJC general counsel Oliver Thomas described arbitration as "simple, inexpensive and scriptural."

Executive Committee member J.C. Mitchell of Winter Park, Fla., proposed the substitute motion that garnered only scattered messenger support.

"In the spirit of conciliation, it would be well for this convention to accept this proposal," Mitchell said. "Even if we lose, it would say a lot about our image." Mitchell estimated 30 Executive Committee members did not vote when they considered the proposal.

Rex Terry, Executive Committee member from Fort Smith, Ark., opposed Mitchell's motion. "It was the Executive Committee's determination that there had never been a gift (to the BJC) but only a conditional allocation. The money belongs to the Southern Baptist Convention."

After the vote to allow reallocation of the \$300,000, Executive Committee chairman David Hankins, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles, La., said a report on reallocation will be forthcoming.

In a news conference after convention action, Thomas said he would recommend that his board file suit in Washington against the Southern Baptist Convention. He declined to predict the decision of the board, which meets the first week of October.

"We have time to make a careful, deliberate decision at that time," he said. Thomas estimated litigation would cost the SBC more than \$300,000 and noted the BJC has retained the firm of Powell and Goldstein to handle the matter.

In other recommendations from the Executive Committee, messengers adopted without discussion a 1992-93 Cooperative Program allocation budget of \$140,200,395, a reduction of 0.36 percent from 1991-92. They also adopted a 1992-93 SBC operating budget of \$4.2 million.

A bylaw revision allowing SBC entities to request the removal of trustees for excessive unexcused absences also passed without discussion.

Also adopted were program statement revisions for the Executive Committee, Woman's Missionary Union and Christian Life Commission, along with amendments and restatement of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary articles of incorporation.

The first-year report of 1990-95 Bold Mission Thrust efforts was received. Toward five-year goals of 2.1 million baptisms and a total of 45,000 churches and missions, 396,668 baptisms were reported in 1990-91 while the denomination has 43,273 cooperating churches and missions.

A resolution of appreciation for Executive Committee President-Treasurer Harold C. Bennett who retires Oct. 1 also was adopted.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For background, initial action by the Executive Committee on the BJC dispute is reported in the following story.

Executive Committee declines
BJC arbitration proposal

By Linda Lawson

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Executive Committee rejected by two to one an appeal for binding arbitration to resolve a dispute with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs over a \$300,000 building fund.

In declining BJC's request for binding arbitration, the Executive Committee cited its February 1992 action to recommend that the Southern Baptist Convention authorize the Executive Committee to reallocate these funds to convention causes as the Executive Committee deems appropriate."

Messengers to the 135th session of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting June 9-11 at the Hoosier Dome will consider the Executive Committee recommendation.

If messengers approve the recommendation, decline binding arbitration and authorize reallocation of the \$300,000, BJC general counsel Oliver Thomas indicated he would recommend that the 60-member BJC file suit over the matter.

Noting that the BJC board includes 60 members from 10 Baptist bodies, Thomas declined to predict what the board would decide. "I think it will be a very difficult decision," he said in a news conference after the Executive Committee meeting.

The controversial fund was authorized by messengers to the 1964 SBC meeting for a building to house the BJC, the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance. Over the years, the funds were held by the Southern Baptist Foundation and more than \$600,000 in interest was paid to the BJC.

In 1991, the BJC requested ownership of the funds to purchase a building in Washington. The Nashville-based Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, which now has offices in Washington also claimed the money. Instead, the Executive Committee decided to reallocate the \$300,000.

"I came here today to extend an olive branch," BJC general counsel Oliver Thomas told the Executive Committee. "When Christians have a dispute they should submit it to other Christians."

Thomas reiterated a proposal he made in an April 2 letter to Executive Committee general counsel Jim Guenther that binding arbitration be facilitated by Sam Ericsson, former executive director of the Christian Legal Society.

Calling binding arbitration "simple, inexpensive and scriptural," Thomas said, "we would stand by that decision and waive any right" to further legal action.

Executive Committee member John Bowman of Macon, Ga., said, "I feel like the Lord is leading me to vote for arbitration. I believe the watching world is waiting to see what kind of witness we have."

Countering the BJC's contention that the \$300,000 belongs to them, Executive Committee member Rex Terry, a layman from Fort Smith, Ark., said the money was not a gift to the BJC.

Thomas said BJC attorneys believe they would win a lawsuit, in part because the fund account was in the name of the BJC, which also made investment decisions.

However, Guenther maintained the SBC has controlled the fund. "The only reason the BJC has received the interest is because the SBC had said it would go to the BJC."

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In a show-of-hands vote, Executive Committee Chairman David Hankins, a pastor from Lake Charles, La., estimated the vote was about two to one with an "unusual number of abstentions."

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SBC Pastor's Conference
targets issues Baptists face

By Joni B. Hannigan

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Preachers from across the nation addressed worship, the Christian walk, witness and spiritual warfare as they interpreted the "The Church in the 21st Century" theme at the 1992 Southern Baptist Pastor's Conference.

Speakers at the June 7-8 meeting in the Hoosier Dome rallied around the Bible, proclaiming their insights into many current political and social issues facing Southern Baptists. The conference precedes the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 9-11.

"We hear about ... how society is going down the tubes," said pastor Mike Hamlet of First Baptist Church in Spartanburg, S.C. "It's time to stop talking about it and time to start doing something about it."

The changes start at the top, said many of the speakers, exhorting listeners to be examples.

"No church is going to rise above its leadership," said Larry Thompson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala.

Leaders "must be willing to take risks, not chances," Thompson emphasized.

James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church in Snellville, Ga., noted, "If you fight this world on their battleground, you will lose every time. You can't argue anyone into heaven. Great preaching doesn't complicate the simple, but simplifies the complicated."

Many of the speakers advocated change, but outlined parameters.

Evangelist Jay Strack of Dallas compared the church body to a biological system, saying, "A single cell in the body does whatever is best for the entire body." But when a cell "mutinies," he said, "this is what medical experts call cancer."

Beware of the potential "cancer," he said, for Christians who try to accommodate everyone or go to the opposite extreme and alienate everyone.

Fred Lowery, pastor of First Baptist Church in Bossier City, La., questioned listeners about why they don't get out more.

"Why are Southern Baptist churches not more like good news clubs, spreading the word of Jesus Christ?"

Megachurch pastor Bill Hybels from Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, echoed that same sentiment.

"Lost people don't feel loved by Christians very often," Hybels said, and he asked if any listeners had recently invited a non-Christian from their neighborhood or community over for a visit or out to dinner.

Ed Young, pastor of Houston's Second Baptist Church, decried the need for change in the church.

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"We do not marry methods," Young said. "The church needs to learn again how to be a friend to sinners, how to be all things to all people without compromising one syllable of God's Word."

And speakers said change must never compromise to sin.

Applauding Vice President Quayle's stand on family values and not hiding his light under a bushel, Joseph Stowell, president of Chicago's Moody Bible Institute, challenged listeners to do likewise.

Stowell referred to Quayle's criticism of a popular unmarried TV character who had a baby -- and sparked debate about the moral issues raised by single motherhood.

"We need to quit debating family values," Stowell said, "because when we begin debating whether or not family values are important, we've come a long way baby, and way in the wrong direction."

Several speakers addressed homosexuality, a hot issue among many Southern Baptists.

"We don't have to be held hostage to homosexual lobbyists anymore because we have a standard that supersedes," said Anthony Evans, pastor of predominantly black Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, Dallas.

On racism in America, he asked, "How can it be that we can be Christians in this society for so long and not be able to beat the race crisis?"

Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., talked about the moral decline in America, noting, "When I was in school, if they found a guy with a condom ... they kicked him out. Today they give condoms out in school."

On homosexuality, Henry said, "Whenever I tell a person who is practicing a gay lifestyle he is wrong, I'm not gay-bashing. I love him and care for him and don't want him to hurt himself.

"That's the highest kind of love there is," Henry said. "God condemns homosexuality but we must not close the door to these people. The good news of Jesus Christ can change them and set them free from that bondage."

Joel Gregory, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, spoke of spiritual warfare in the fight against the "strong bones of indifference" to spiritual matters. He cited a recent poll in which 25 percent of Americans claim to be Christian while 24 percent claim to be other and 51 percent said, "I don't care," he recounted.

Prayer and praise is what is needed to fight the battle, Gregory said.

Pastor Adrian Rogers of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn., talked about the message of "worship" found in Psalm 22 and told listeners to keep in mind: "The Bible has but one hero, but one villain and but one message. And the hero is Jesus, the villain is Satan and the message is Jesus saves!"

Something "glorious" happens in reading the verses, Rogers said, pointing to Jesus as "the one who is prophet, priest, and king."

"We are living in a time when the Republicans and Democrats and Perot -- I don't know what he is -- we can't identify with any political party as such ... Point at all of them and say repent and get right, we have a king."

Other speakers at the conference were O.S. Hawkins, pastor of First Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and Kenneth Cooper, physician and founder of Cooper Fitness Center of Dallas.

Officers elected by acclamation for 1993 are Fred Lowery, pastor, First Baptist Church, Bossier City, La., president; Jack Millwood, pastor, First Baptist Church, North Mobile, Ala., vice president; and John Yarborough, pastor, Tabernacle Baptist Church, Cartersville, Ga., secretary-treasurer.

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David L. Chancey and Greg Tucker contributed to this report.

African American Fellowship
organizes, honors McCall

By Brenda Sanders

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Participants in the June 8 meeting of the Southern Baptist African American Fellowship voted to officially establish themselves as a national organization.

The fellowship also honored Emmanuel L. McCall, retired Home Mission Board liaison with black churches. Joe Ratliff, pastor of Brentwood Baptist Church in Houston, was elected as the first president of the new organization.

"The value of this fellowship is significant," Ratliff said. "At state and associational levels, I think we (African American Southern Baptists) have made tremendous strides ... but at the national level there's a need to focus our energies and to have a channel through which we can access power.

"The agenda ought to be that whenever the African American Fellowship speaks, it speaks on behalf of a lot of people who can't get through and have their voices heard any other way," he added. "I think that is what our body is about."

In addition to Ratliff, members of the fellowship elected five other officers to guide the work of the new organization for the coming year: E.W. McCall Sr., pastor of St. Stephen Baptist Church, La Puente, Calif., first vice president; Eugene L. Gibson Sr., senior pastor, Mission of Faith Baptist Church, Chicago, second vice president; Dennis Mitchell, pastor, Central Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala., secretary; Jerry Dailey, pastor, Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas, treasurer; and Thelma Kennedy, member of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Flint, Mich., historian.

Participants also elected nine at-large members of an executive board authorized to execute the work of the fellowship between annual meetings: Ricky Armstrong of Syracuse, N.Y.; Joseph Coats, Miami; Kevin Conway, Kansas City, Mo.; Laura Mae Dorsey, Southfield, Mich.; Leon Johnson, Chicago; Joseph Lyles, Fort Washington, Md.; George McCalep, Atlanta; Byron McClure Jr., Chattanooga, Tenn.; and Carolyn Shack, Gilroy, Calif.

Regular meetings of the fellowship will be held in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

Participants in the organizational meeting adopted a constitution which says the purposes of the national fellowship are:

-- To work in harmony with the Southern Baptist Convention in fulfilling the Great Commission through support of the Cooperative Program.

-- To sensitize the Southern Baptist Convention and its entities to the concerns of the African American community.

-- To help one another in church growth.

In honoring McCall, guests from several SBC entities paid tribute to him as being a "trailblazer" in involving black pastors and laypeople in the SBC.

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Charles Chaney, vice president for the HMB extension section, said McCall has been a "pioneer" among Southern Baptists by encouraging black churches to get involved in the denomination and to support missions. He also noted McCall has been a "prophet" among denominational workers by helping white Southern Baptists realize the contributions black churches could make to the convention and by opening their eyes to the needs of black congregations.

McCall retired in July 1991 after 23 years on the HMB staff to become the founding pastor of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in College Park, Ga. Previously, he was director of the HMB black church extension division from 1989-91; director of the black church relations department, 1975-88, and associate director of the department of cooperative ministries with National Baptists, 1968-74.

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Parks shares gospel views
in address to WMU members

By Susan Todd Doyle

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--R. Keith Parks challenged Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union members to dare to share the truth of the gospel -- free from legalism and divisiveness.

Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, addressed the group June 8 during the closing session of their annual meeting. Parks will retire from the board Oct. 30.

The true, God-given gospel will require a faith which expresses itself through love, not through enslavement, exclusiveness, fighting, anger and controversy, he said.

"Any time religious leaders, be they Baptist preachers or whoever, begin to add laws as requirements to a gospel of grace, the truth of the gospel is at stake for all the peoples of the world," he said.

"Today's orthodoxy may be tomorrow's heresy. It is inconceivable that anyone could claim to know all 100 percent of God's truth."

The true gospel is God-given, he said. The priesthood of the believer is a truth of the gospel, he told the applauding crowd of more than 2,500 men and women.

At times, Southern Baptists have felt they had to control local believers on the mission field by imposing Southern Baptist culture, Parks said.

"This is not the true gospel. The true gospel has only divine control," he said.

The true gospel also is a gospel of grace and not a gospel of law, Parks said.

"Those who follow legalistic religions with human control agents always persecute those who believe in grace," he said. Most Christians seem to want to add laws to the gospel instead of accepting the gospel through grace.

"Most of us want to put our own interpretation on it," he said. "Most of us want to say to others, 'Unless you do what I do, believe what I believe and act like I act, you are not a Christian or at least not the kind of Christian you ought to be.'"

This mindset is inevitably imposed on every generation to some degree, Parks said. He recounted the early days of the Southern Baptist Convention when women were told they could not have a voice in convention affairs.

"I certainly am glad that your spiritual ancestors didn't accept that as the truth of the gospel. Had they done so, the vitality, vibrancy, strength and growth of Southern Baptists' mission outreach would have been stunted, thwarted and, perhaps, lost by now."

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The truth of the gospel also features followers who are missionary, he said. God's blessings to his children are to be used so that blessings can be passed on to others.

"Often, the way we spend the money given for the Lord's work is an abomination. We cannot revel in self-indulging luxury as Christians, churches or denominations and still be missionary," Parks said.

Sharing the truth about the gospel mandates that there be unity among God's people, he said. There are no conservatives, moderates, males, females, Jews or Greeks.

"We are Christian now," he said. "That's our identification. There are no second-class Christians. All are made in the image of God and gifted to be of service in upbuilding the body of Christ and extending his kingdom."

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Doctor cites anti-aging
benefits of exercise

By Ray Furr

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Simple changes in lifestyle can increase quality of life, alter the aging process and save money, said Kenneth Cooper, director of the Aerobics Center in Dallas.

"It is not so much that we die than that we kill ourselves," Cooper, noted physician and fitness author, told the Southern Baptist Pastor's Conference June 8.

Cooper revealed results of a recent study comparing Southern Baptist ministers and other professionals. The ministers are younger but fatter and less active than their peers, he said.

"The three factors that increase aging the most are smoking, inactivity and obesity," he said.

Cooper cited a landmark study by the Cooper Institute for Aerobics that found if people moved from the lowest fitness category to the next level, death rates dropped 55 percent.

He told conferees they could improve their fitness level by simply walking, suggesting several acceptable walking routines: two miles in 30 minutes three times per week; two miles in 40 minutes four times per week; or two miles in 45 minutes five times a week.

On obesity, Cooper said Americans need to change their diets. "A 1 percent reduction in cholesterol can reduce the risk of heart attacks by 2-4 percent."

Cooper said life expectancy is 74 years but research indicates only 62 of those years are useful.

"I've been running for 33 years, 12 to 15 miles per week. Being physically fit allows me to square off the aging curve. We need to wear out, not rust out.

"Southern Baptist health insurance premiums have increased 410 percent from 1980-89 and that cost is going to continue to increase," Cooper said, quoting statistics from the Southern Baptist Annuity Board, the agency that administers a medical insurance program for Southern Baptist ministers and agency employees.

"Too much of our health-care dollars are spent on disease and not on health."

Cooper urged churches to follow the lead of corporate America, setting up programs that emphasize disease prevention.

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He said 65 percent of corporations have wellness programs but he knew of no churches that do. He cited statistics documenting that the businesses have seen decreases in health-care costs and absenteeism and an increase in productivity. Also, he said, corporations with good wellness programs are better able to recruit outstanding people and their employee turnover decreases.

A wellness program should include programs in nutrition, exercise, stopping smoking, alcohol/drug abuse, stress management and regular physical examinations, Cooper said.

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Rapha luncheon underscores
reaching broken people

By Kay Moore

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Broken and hurting individuals "will beat the doors of our churches down" if churches will welcome them as they are, the president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board told a luncheon audience prior to the Southern Baptist Convention.

James T. Draper Jr. told the audience of 1,500 at the annual Rapha luncheon the Sunday School Board is introducing new materials to bring renewal to people held captive by such ills as codependency, abuse, eating disorders, and addictions.

"You will have to decide," Draper said, "whether you are going to minister to the people Jesus ministered to and minister to their needs as he did."

Draper addressed the June 8 luncheon sponsored by Houston-based Rapha Medical and Treatment Centers as the Sunday School Board inaugurated its new LIFE Support Series of biblically based support group materials to help churches reach individuals suffering from addictive behaviors and codependency. The board has adopted materials developed by Rapha in a clinical setting and will publish, market and distribute them as part of the LIFE Support Series.

"Search for Significance" by Rapha founder and president Robert S. McGee is among the board's first LIFE Support releases, to be available in October. The material is designed to help approval addicts, self-blamers and others build their self-worth on the forgiveness and unconditional love of Christ.

"Our churches must change," Draper said. "We must become a hospital for the broken instead of a country club for the well. We must welcome the prodigal world into our churches and welcome that world to our Savior."

Draper said churches must follow the example of Christ's ministry to the poor, brokenhearted, captive, bruised and physically and spiritually blind. He said churches often seek to minister only to people who can "help us" instead of seeking those who truly need help.

He said Christ invited the weary and heavy-laden to come to him instead of telling them, "What's wrong with you? Why can't you shape up?"

"The church is not buildings, bulletins, budgets and business," Draper said. "It's God's people meeting needs."

To illustrate these needs, Draper cited these figures: Alcoholism affects 76 million family members in the United States; 40 to 80 million Americans suffer from compulsive overeating; half of all U.S. marriages end in divorce; and almost 1 million people are in prison in this country.

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Such problems have prompted almost 15 million Americans to attend self-help groups, with the number expected to double in the next three years, he said. Draper said most groups occur in secular settings with no emphasis on bringing participants into personal relationship with Jesus Christ or on interpreting their need by biblical principles.

Support groups such as those LIFE Support materials facilitate "are places where we can help each other be accountable for our faithfulness to the lordship of Christ," Draper said.

The first LIFE Support product, "First Place: A Christ-Centered Health Program," developed by First Baptist Church in Houston, is available now; another product, "Making Peace with Your Past," by Tim Sledge, pastor of Kingsland Baptist Church in Katy, Texas, is designed to help people from dysfunctional families and will be released in October.

Gary Smith, pastor of Fielder Road Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, said he feared the suicide of his 13-year-old son six years ago would ruin his reputation, self-esteem and ministry.

Smith said the incident initially plagued him with fears about what others thought of him. Part of his healing was acknowledging "in reality, all that matters is what God thinks," he said, noting the incident caused him to see people's hurts in a new way.

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Speakers urge forgiveness
at national prayer conference

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
6/9/92

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--Southern Baptists must forgive one another and begin praying for one another for God to let them be part of spiritual awakenings in the world today, according to speakers at the National Prayer Conference prior to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Do you realize how tragic it is that we can't agree to pray with or for one another?" asked James T. Draper Jr., president of the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

Bob Dixon, executive director of Texas Baptist Men, said, "The great need of Southern Baptists, if God is going to let them be part of what he's doing, is to have his forgiveness. According to his book, the forgiveness will not come 'til we forgive one another."

Decrying the distrust, anger and hostility that has characterized the attitudes of many Southern Baptists toward each other during the controversy of recent years, Draper pled for Baptists to pray together.

"There's enough prayer power in this room tonight to loose the power of God on Southern Baptists," Draper told the group of state prayer coordinators.

Chastising Southern Baptists for learning how to do religion without the power of God, Draper said, "When we spend more time strategizing and planning than we do praying, we're saying we can do it better than God."

There are signs people are praying in that 300 churches have been involved in the SBC's Watchmen National Prayer Alert this year in which churches commit to pray one hour a week in an around-the-clock prayer chain, Draper said.

"We're going to extend it another year," he said.

Another positive sign in America, he said, is, "People are seeking God, wanting God. They're tired of church and denominations and religious charlatans but not tired of God. There's never been a time when this country is more receptive to things of God than today."

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