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**Changes in SBC leave
WMU leaders in quandary**

By Marty Croll

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Recent developments in the Southern Baptist Convention have left the Woman's Missionary Union in a quandary about how to fulfill its calling to promote missions, the head of the women's auxiliary admitted July 12.

The WMU can no longer sidestep the effects of the denominational controversy, Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien told about 200 Southern Baptists who took part in an hour-long dialogue session during Jericho: A Southern Baptist Missions Festival. The festival, which drew nearly 1,300 participants, was held at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

O'Brien's response came after she and leaders from the convention's other four mission agencies were asked how Southern Baptists' debate over orthodoxy and changes in leadership positions have impacted mission outreach.

"For all these years, WMU has really tried to stay out of the controversy. We've seen it as a men's fight," said O'Brien, a former Southern Baptist missionary in Indonesia, during the open question period.

Not long ago it was rare for a Southern Baptist church to support its own missionaries, she said. But now -- not exclusively because of the controversy -- there seems to be a trend toward more churches and coalitions of Southern Baptists doing just that.

"Our hearts ache when Southern Baptist missionaries being appointed by any group need support and we find it difficult to help them," O'Brien said later. "We're in a whole new day as to how we can present the missions cause in the denomination."

WMU programs in local churches have been a cornerstone in supporting modern-day Southern Baptist missions throughout the world.

During the questioning, O'Brien repeated WMU's intent to remain an auxiliary organization that receives no money from the Southern Baptist Convention. This arrangement leaves WMU detached from the denominational appointment structure and free to choose those it will support.

WMU has become known through the years for its unwavering backing of Southern Baptist missionaries, promoting the value of cooperative missions in the denomination's local churches. But so far, by its own choice, WMU has limited the focus of its mission education to the work of some 9,000 missionaries assigned by the Home and Foreign mission boards of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The origin of a new group of Southern Baptists, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and its move to have its own overseas mission work offers an alternative to those who want to cooperate in supporting missions but not convention causes they disagree with. It is an example of WMU's dilemma.

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WMU members are asking whether, for example, WMU will list only Home and Foreign mission board missionaries on its widely distributed prayer calendar next year or whether it will include the fellowship's missionaries and others, O'Brien said. WMU leaders are discussing this. "As you know, we've had dialogues with the Fellowship," O'Brien said. "I don't know now. We'll have to decide by January."

Fueled by those who say they've been stripped of their voice in the convention, the Fellowship has just named the former Foreign Mission Board area director for Europe, Keith Parker, to direct its work in Europe. Parker was one of two FMB administrators who announced early retirement in January in protest to trustee decisions related to work in Europe.

At their June meeting, FMB trustees voted to send a delegation to WMU's national offices in Birmingham, Ala., to help WMU leaders understand how vital their undivided support is to the future of denominational missions. Southern Baptist history indicates missions giving is the fruit of missions education.

WMU chapters in local churches play a key role in promoting annual offerings for home and foreign missions. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions, a WMU brainchild, has become the largest one-time missions collection in Christian history -- and, at \$81.4 million last year, continues to grow. Besides ongoing support, however, WMU's membership network has shown the power to keep Southern Baptist mission programs afloat during past economic crises.

"The things we are facing as a result of the controversy bring about much diversity," O'Brien said. "Through the years we've been able to support missions in every Southern Baptist church the same way. Now we're looking at how -- and if -- we can continue to serve all Southern Baptist churches."

Last year the Lottie Moon offering and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions together raised about \$117 million, financing almost half the \$269 million the convention spent on missions work in 127 nations, including the United States. The Cooperative Program, a convention-wide giving plan that supports denominational causes, accounts for most of the other half.

"Our call is still to provide missions educational support for every Southern Baptist church," O'Brien said. "We recognize that to do anything different from what we've done in the past to meet those needs, we're going to have to pay some prices, and so we're looking at what those costs are to us."

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Keith Parker will head European
missions for Cooperative Fellowship

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THALWIL, Switzerland (BP)--Keith Parker has joined the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as coordinator of its mission program in Europe.

Parker, former Europe area director for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, assumed his new position July 1, according to an announcement from Jimmy Allen, who co-chairs the fellowship's global missions ministry group.

The fellowship, an organization of moderate Southern Baptist churches formed in protest to the Southern Baptist Convention's conservative direction, now has six mission workers in Europe and expects to have 20 by mid-1993, Allen said.

Besides Parker and his wife, Jonlyn, they are John David and Jo Ann Hopper and Charles "T" and Kathie Thomas, former Foreign Mission Board-appointed missionaries. All six have said they resigned in protest to FMB trustee actions and mission philosophies. John David Hopper is president of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

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Parker, 56, retired earlier this year following a trustee decision to defund the international seminary in Ruschlikon because trustees believe the seminary has strayed from biblical orthodoxy. Seminary leaders deny that.

Isam Ballenger, 57, then the board's vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, also took early retirement in protest to the Ruschlikon action, which caused widespread controversy in the United States and Europe.

Meanwhile, Foreign Mission Board trustees have elected Sam James, a 30-year veteran of Southern Baptist missions, to succeed Ballenger. Trustees hope to meet with European Baptist leaders in September in an attempt to re-establish relationships.

In a prepared statement, Allen said, "The Parkers will set up a basic operation within Europe to receive and work with any new missionaries (missionaries) that will join the CBF Europe team." The Europe office will be in Thalwil, Switzerland, near Ruschlikon.

Allen said over the next six months Parker will continue to have "partial responsibilities with a private Swiss foundation ... working on developmental projects in Eastern Europe with the European Baptist Federation and national (European Baptist) unions (conventions)."

But he said Parker and two agriculturists from North Carolina already have left on a fact-finding trip to Albania to fulfill the fellowship's "commitment to the European Baptist Federation to assist in opening Albania for the gospel" and meeting human needs.

The Europe operation will start out as "lean" and "challenging" and will neither work in competition with, nor actively recruit from, any other group, Parker said in the prepared statement.

"We rejoice in the diversity of our Baptist heritage in America and Europe and look with excitement to God's use of the many gifts and different emphases of our new colleagues, both male and female," Parker said.

The Parkers, 23-year veterans of missions, were appointed for service in Europe in 1969. Over the years, Parker, a native of North Carolina, taught pastoral care and counseling at the Ruschlikon seminary, was associate to the area director for Europe and the Middle East and then was area director for Europe during his final five years, 1987-92. He played an active role in ministries related to pastoral care and counseling, church development and evangelism.

Besides church and home work, Mrs. Parker, a native of Virginia, has worked in the seminary's administration and as social worker in the Swiss prison system.

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SSB trustees to consider
employee retirement 'window'

By Charles Willis

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board will be asked in their Aug. 17-19 meeting to approve an early retirement "window" for employees who qualify with a specified combination of age and tenure.

President Jimmy Draper said the proposal, which has been affirmed by the trustee board's general administration committee, would provide a one-time voluntary retirement incentive for any of the 188 employees who qualify. Employees must be at least 52 years old and their age and years of service must total at least 77. Qualifying employees would have from Sept. 1 to Oct. 15 to consider the option and could retire as late as Nov. 1.

The announcement came as a part of ongoing work to restructure the board for more efficient operation and followed the June announcement of eight long-tenured employees retiring from middle- and upper-management positions.

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The restructuring process, guided by task forces of employees from throughout the organization, reduces both the number and levels of management and the number of positions at middle and upper levels. More than 1,000 of the board's 1,915 employees have provided input through task forces, surveys and focus groups thus far, Draper said.

He said structural changes are designed to simplify the process and make it easier to make decisions and accomplish work. This will give employees greater personal accountability and encourage greater initiative.

The early retirement window recommended to trustees "is a voluntary retirement opportunity," Draper said. "No one will be forced to take it. Every attempt will be made prior to Oct. 15 to inform those employees who qualify for the plan should the restructuring adversely affect their positions. My hope is that we will be able to place in other positions any employees whose jobs are eliminated."

Early retirement reductions in monthly benefits would not be applied in this instance, Draper wrote to employees in a July 7 letter. Employees under 62 years of age who choose this option would receive a benefit enhancement based on their projected Social Security benefits to age 62. Those between 62 and 65 would receive a benefit enhancement based on their projected Social Security benefits until they reach age 65. Any who choose retirement would stay in the board's regular medical plan until age 65 when they would be covered by the board's Medicare supplement plan, along with other retirees.

The program would be financed by the board's pension trust fund, Draper said, "which, due to extremely wise investment and management of resources, is able to fund these early retirements without in any way jeopardizing future benefits."

Draper said a leadership profile, recommended by one of the employee task forces, will be used in filling management positions as the restructuring progresses and employees with leadership potential will be provided training to prepare them for future responsibilities.

He told employees completion of the restructuring process is expected by the end of 1992.

"Even then, some elements will remain to be fully implemented," he said. "Decentralizing some functions such as art, marketing and business, likely will take place in stages. Our employee workgroups addressing these issues have not yet completed their tasks."

In acknowledging the need for employees to cope with a substantial amount of change, Draper affirmed "the countless ways you are continuing to carry out your responsibilities in the midst of change. I am convinced more than ever that we can work together to make this great organization nothing less than the best."

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Effective worship entails
spontaneity and change

By Linda Lawson

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Anyone who believes Southern Baptists don't have ritual in their worship services should try changing the order of service, a drama specialist told participants in a session on drama and worship during the July 11-17 Church Music Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

"Southern Baptists have always been against ritual," Ev Robertson, drama consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department said. "Instead, we have created our own ritual."

"The original purpose of everything we do in worship was exciting but when we do it over and over, it becomes ritual," Robertson said.

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"If we get into simply repeating worship forms, it gets burdened down with baggage. We get the idea that we can't have worship without all of these elements present."

Describing worship as dialogue with God, Robertson listed five basic elements, beginning with the story.

"We have the greatest story ever told, but too often we present it with dullness. Worship occurs when we have good planning that allows for spontaneity and for the Holy Spirit to move," he said.

"It's not so much what we do in worship, as in how we do it, that makes worship come alive," Robertson said.

The second element, conflict, creates interest when used properly, he said. "The kind of conflict that causes us to address our own sin and imperfection is good. Drama is a powerful element to create conflict."

Dialogue, the third element, begins with communication between the worshippers and God. For worshippers to hear God speak, there must be times of silence, Robertson said.

Dialogue also may occur between the worship leaders and the congregation through responsive readings or singing. Dialogue between worship leaders and dialogue among the worshippers also should be considered he said.

Effective worship leaders must be willing to do things differently to get people's attention. "Interesting characters create interest and excitement," he said.

Finally, Robertson said effective worship includes contrast.

"Contrast keeps us on the cutting edge of being not quite sure what is going to happen next," he said.

"For example, for an offertory, have you ever considered having a solo flute number played from the back of the worship center?" he asked. Or he urged consideration of choir members sitting in the audience and then standing from wherever they were seated to sing an anthem.

He urged worship leaders to embark on changes slowly.

"While change can be done by the minister of music alone, the best scenario is having the support of the pastor and the congregation," Robertson said.

"Just begin to institute change. Don't talk about it. Sunday night is a good place to start."

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Ministers call for worship
with planned spontaneity

By Linda Lawson

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Hymn/prayer/hymn/prayer/hymn/prayer/preach describes the all-too-predictable pattern of worship in many Southern Baptist churches.

People who are away from the church on Sunday morning can look at their watches and know what is taking place in the worship service at that moment. Only the titles and names change from week to week.

Instead of routine sameness, planned spontaneity that ties the worship service together in a unified whole while allowing the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of the worshippers should be the goal of worship planners, three leaders agreed during sessions on worship planning at the July 11-17 Church Music Leadership Conference.

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To facilitate flexibility in worship planning, R.G. Huff, minister of music at University Hills Baptist Church in Denver, said he put each element of the service on an individual card so he could easily rearrange them to come up with varied combinations to fit the focus of the service he was planning.

"No one has told us worship has to be hymn, prayer, preach," he said.

Ben Loring, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, and preacher for the conference, said, "I believe the most important thing the church does is worship. I'm a newcomer to that conviction.

"I do believe we have an enemy. If we don't worship and just go through the motions, then the body of Christ, the church, is hampered," he continued. "If everything becomes predictable, you're in a box and don't really worship."

Planning worship services carefully ahead of time should not preclude spontaneously changing something during the service, said Don Blackley, minister of music at First Baptist Church of Richardson, Texas. At the same time, a desire for spontaneity should not eliminate careful advance planning.

"I believe the Holy Spirit can lead me in my preparation just as surely as he can in the spontaneity of the moment," he said.

Worship services should be planned to enable Christians and non-Christians to seek God, Huff said. "The Father seeks people to worship him."

Confession and meditation give Southern Baptists particular trouble, both in corporate and individual worship, Huff and Blackley agreed.

"This is the most uncomfortable Southern Baptists get -- when there's no sound -- and they have to commune with the Lord," Blackley said.

Added Huff, "We Southern Baptists don't do confession well in our worship services. Most of us don't do it well in our quiet times."

Physical movement during worship also makes many Southern Baptists uncomfortable, Blackley said.

"We're too scared of the body in worship. We won't raise our hands and we won't kneel, so we just stand there," he said.

Dead time between elements of the worship service can distract participants from experiencing God, Blackley said.

"If we can make worship seamless and flow from one element to the next, I think we have helped people," he said. He encouraged rehearsals with sound and lighting technicians, musicians and other participants in which they are told what to do and practice doing it. For example, he said minutes can be saved when the leader of the next segment is at a microphone, prepared to lead, as the preceding segment is completed.

While methods and styles of worship are important and should be tailored to the needs of the worshippers, content is more important, Loring said.

"We must always focus on the content as we plan worship. It must be Christ-centered, God-honoring and Spirit-anointed," he said.

"Our communities are not alike. Our churches are not alike. Each must find its own mix of honoring God and bringing people to know him," Loring added.

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Blackley warned against the "copy cat" syndrome of some worship planners who see positive worship in one church and believe they can achieve the same thing in their churches.

Loring urged ministers of music to "gently push" their pastors toward more advance planning of worship.

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Volunteer musician
puts God first

By Linda Lawson

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Manny Buenconsejo has three priorities -- God, his family and his job.

"If I take care of my first priority, he'll take care of my second and third," philosophized Buenconsejo while attending the July 11-17 Church Music Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Buenconsejo, a successful agent with Allstate Insurance Co., also has been volunteer music director 15 years at the Mililani Baptist Church in Mililani, Hawaii. During that time he has led the music program to grow from a 12-member adult choir to a multifaceted music program with 125 participants in adult and children's choirs, instrumental ensemble and a handbell choir.

Sunday is his longest day of the week, beginning at 5:30 a.m., "and I do it for free!" he laughed.

He directs the music for three worship services on Sunday morning and then leads rehearsals and the evening service.

"God has blessed me in my business and my family," he said. "There's no way I could tell him I wouldn't do the work at the church."

Buenconsejo's introduction to directing music came about 17 years ago when he regularly drove his wife to rehearsals of a women's choir at her church. While they practiced, he sat on the back pew and listened or slept.

One evening as the choir rehearsed The Lord's Prayer, "I sat up and said, 'You're not singing that like it's the Lord's prayer.'"

The director, who also was the organist, replied, "Why don't you direct?"

And so, for the next 18 months, he did.

Though raised a Baptist, Buenconsejo had quit attending the Baptist church. After he was called in 1977 to direct the music at Mililani Baptist, his wife, Junette, and daughter, Jolie, joined him.

Buenconsejo, a self-taught musician, said, "I'm not a vocalist. I don't play an instrument. The gift I have is interpreting the music, to express what the composer is trying to say.

"This is my formal training," he said while attending his first church music conference at Glorieta. He attended the 1991 conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"I have always put God first in my life," Buenconsejo said. "It's been working all these years. I don't see any use in changing now."

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