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January 22, 1993

93-13

NASHVILLE -- CP budget proposal takes from Executive Committee, gives to CLC.
NASHVILLE -- Lean giving & SBC changes fuel budget hearing scrutiny.
NASHVILLE -- SBC agencies, institutions seek \$9.6 million in increases.
NASHVILLE -- Budget planners highlight accomplishment of CP giving.
SOUTH CAROLINA -- Baptist association protests WMU changes, cancels O'Brien.
LOS ANGELES -- Church involvement vital to healing of inner cities, L.A. pastor says;
photos.
NASHVILLE -- SBC agencies affirm work with Christian schools.
NASHVILLE -- Inter-Agency Council opposes continued U.S.-Vatican ties.
MASSACHUSETTS -- Baptist Convention of New England names Lyle new executive director; photo.
YEMEN -- Physicians needed to work in Yemen.
NASHVILLE -- Fitness vital to faith, nutrition expert maintains.
TENNESSEE -- Sunday school girl's balloon touched his life 100 miles away.
NORTH CAROLINA -- Minister's call depends solely on God, prof says.
NASHVILLE -- Correction.

CP budget proposal takes from
Executive Committee, gives to CLC

Baptist Press
1/22/93

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE (BP)--Members of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee will be asked to sacrifice some of their own budget to strengthen the SBC Christian Life Commission.

The Executive Committee's program and budget subcommittee decided Jan. 21 to recommend protecting the CLC from an otherwise across-the-board budget reduction in fiscal year 1993-94. Funds to sustain the CLC at its current budget level would be taken from the SBC operating budget allocation supervised by the Executive Committee.

The subcommittee met in Nashville Jan. 20-21 to prepare its recommendation on allocation of 1993-94 Cooperative Program funds. That recommendation must then be approved by the full Executive Committee in February before being presented at the SBC annual meeting in Houston in June.

Subcommittee members wrestled for the second year with how to divide a budget pie for the coming year smaller than the one for the current year. By mandate of SBC policy, the budget total for 1993-94 cannot exceed total receipts for fiscal year 1990-91.

CP gifts that year were \$138.23 million, an amount 1.40 percent below the current year's budget. That means next year's budget must be 1.40 percent less than this year's, a reduction of \$1.97 million.

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How to make that reduction was the primary point of discussion during the two-day meeting, although members also used the occasion to question executives about their attempts to save money and about the amount of money they are receiving from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The CBF is an organization of Southern Baptist moderates displeased with the Executive Committee and other SBC conservative leaders. The Fellowship offers its own funding plans that bypass the CP and certain SBC agencies controlled by conservatives.

However, the CBF channel does process money going to SBC agencies, institutions and commissions. Last year, SBC organizations reported receiving \$3.12 million from the CBF.

But those CBF funds get distributed in a manner different than the ratios approved for CP contributions by the Executive Committee. Compared to where the money would have gone based on CP ratios, last year's Fellowship contributions favored the Foreign Mission Board strongly and discounted the CLC, SBC operating budget, six seminaries and Home Mission Board.

The attempt to shore up the CLC in next year's CP budget is driven in part by concern that the CLC has been targeted by moderates for exclusion. It is further driven by the belief of some subcommittee members that the CLC is perhaps the third-most-important SBC entity, behind only the two mission boards.

The CLC's strong stand against abortion and homosexual rights and its other conservative agendas will become even more essential now that Bill Clinton has become president, subcommittee members said in debate. During last fall's presidential campaign, the CLC and its staff at times were critical of the Democratic Party platform's and Clinton's positions on abortion and homosexual rights.

In presentations to the subcommittee, the CLC was one of two entities requesting more than a 25 percent increase in CP allocations. The CLC asked for a 29.26 percent increase while the Stewardship Commission requested a 57.33 percent increase. Other budget requests ranged from a 1.40 percent decrease by the Executive Committee to a 13.1 percent increase by the Radio and Television Commission.

In requesting the large increase, the CLC cited a need to hire an associate general counsel for religious liberty issues, a person to direct the program of marriage and family ministries, additional support staff and to provide a 7 percent cost-of-living adjustment.

Subcommittee members considered giving the CLC about one-eighth of the \$400,891 increase it requested by taking money either from the Foreign Mission Board -- CP's largest recipient -- or from all other CP recipients evenly.

Another proposal would have given the CLC a \$21,370 increase by significantly reducing allocations to the SBC operating budget, Education Commission and Historical Commission.

In the end, subcommittee members decided it would not be fair to penalize some CP recipients more than others this year, although several did express concern that the effectiveness of allocations to some smaller agencies and commissions ought to be closely evaluated.

The final recommendation gives an across-the-board reduction of 1.4 percent to all CP recipients except the CLC and SBC operating budget. The CLC is recommended to have no budget change, and the SBC operating budget would take a 2 percent reduction.

That recommendation counters several recent years of significant increases given to the Executive Committee as expenses for annual meetings and committee meetings have increased and as new initiatives have been started.

The proposed budget would allocate:

- \$69.12 million to the FMB.
- \$28.02 million to the six SBC seminaries.
- \$27.03 million to the Home Mission Board.
- \$5.49 million to the Radio and Television Commission.

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- \$3.14 million to the SBC operating budget and Executive Committee.
- \$1.37 million to the CLC.
- \$1.06 million to the Annuity Board.
- \$977,186 to the Brotherhood Commission.
- \$498,001 to the Historical Commission.
- \$491,168 to the Education Commission.
- \$485,677 to the Stewardship Commission.
- \$294,998 to the Southern Baptist Foundation.
- \$260,017 to the American Baptist Seminary Commission.

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Lean giving & SBC changes
fuel budget hearing scrutiny

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
1/22/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--The decreasing revenues available through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program -- combined with advances in alternative funding plans -- colored discussions about future SBC budgets Jan. 20-21.

Members of the SBC Executive Committee's program and budget subcommittee wrestled for two days with the difficult question of how to reduce 1993-94 CP allocations by 1.4 percent.

They also gathered information about how much money the SBC's agencies, institutions and commissions are receiving from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or are giving to Woman's Missionary Union.

The CBF, a group of moderate Baptists displeased with convention leadership, has established an alternative giving mechanism that passes some money on to SBC entities while bypassing the CP structure.

WMU recently voted to expand its traditional support of the SBC Home and Foreign Mission boards to include the CBF and other evangelical groups. That decision was not well received among the SBC's conservative leaders, who believe the CBF is becoming an independent denomination that will drain resources from the SBC.

During presentations to the subcommittee in Nashville, heads of SBC agencies, institutions and commissions often took pains to demonstrate their support for the traditional CP plan. Some also were careful to distance themselves from the CBF, even though their organizations have received contributions through the Fellowship.

Each leader had been asked in advance to provide an accounting of how much CBF money their organization had received in the previous year. The 18 entities said they received a total of \$3.13 million from the CBF in 1991-92.

The largest portion of that money went to the Foreign Mission Board: \$1.76 million. Some subcommittee members questioned whether the CP allocation to the FMB ought to be adjusted downward to compensate for its extra revenue from the CBF.

However, a consensus developed that predicting future CBF contributions to SBC entities would be impossible. Some also expressed concern that the Executive Committee's process not be driven by responding to the Fellowship's actions.

Faced with a mandatory CP budget reduction, some subcommittee members wanted to know if FMB and Home Mission Board leaders still had confidence in WMU to raise money on their behalf through the two annual missions offerings. WMU traditionally has raised large portions of the FMB's and HMB's annual budgets through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions.

Subcommittee members also questioned the budgeting of mission board funds to WMU for offering promotion and other needs.

Denominational politics aside, the subcommittee heard repeated reports of how declining offerings are severely hampering some agencies, institutions and commissions.

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Two other common factors cited in reports are drastically increasing medical insurance costs and decreased earnings on investments due to lower interest rates.

For example, the cost of providing medical insurance for HMB staff and missionaries will increase nearly \$1 million next year but the proposed CP budget will give the HMB a decrease rather than an increase.

Several entities reported they are at the point of having to lay off personnel or eliminate programs if further budget reductions are required.

For example, the written report of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary said 1992-93 expenditures already have been reduced \$485,000 and "further reductions in internal expenditures are now impossible without employee layoffs."

Subcommittee members repeatedly asked agency and institution heads whether they could draw down operating reserves to supplement their budgets. However, several reported they could not draw on reserves any more without imperiling their necessary safety cushion.

Another common theme was the need to walk through newly opened doors of opportunity at a time when the doors to additional financial resources appear to be slamming shut.

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SBC agencies, institutions
seek \$9.6 million in increases

Baptist Press
1/22/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention's agencies, institutions and commissions say they need at least \$9.6 million more than the Cooperative Program unified budget is likely to give them next year.

In presentations to the program and budget subcommittee of the SBC Executive Committee Jan. 20-21, leaders of 18 SBC entities requested budget increases ranging from 1 percent to 57 percent. The increases are necessary to meet basic ministries and respond to new opportunities worldwide, they said.

Here's a sample of what the leaders said they want to accomplish but need additional gifts from Southern Baptists to do:

- A major initiative to share the gospel among the Islamic peoples of the world.
- Increased efforts to respond to ministry opportunities in the newly opened countries of Central Asia and Eastern Europe through personnel, theological education and communication.
- Development of a national strategy for reaching Muslims in the United States with the Christian gospel.
- More assistance for the 70 percent of SBC churches plateaued or declining in membership.
- Salary increases for personnel of some SBC agencies and institutions who have not received significant increases in three to six years.
- Maintenance of existing programs in various agencies and institutions where budgets have been stretched to the limit by continuing increases in medical insurance for employees.
- Development of new coeducational missions materials to meet changing needs of church programs for children and youth.
- Addition of a staff person to direct marriage and family initiatives through the SBC Christian Life Commission.

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Budget planners highlight
accomplishments of CP giving

Baptist Press
1/22/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--While making their cases for allocations of Cooperative Program funds for next year, leaders of Southern Baptist agencies and institutions did a little bragging.

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During presentations to the program and budget subcommittee of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, the leaders highlighted accomplishments of the past year made possible by gifts to the unified budget plan.

Here are some of the accomplishments highlighted:

-- The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board operates with only about 12 percent of its gifts used for administration.

-- Southern Baptist representatives now work in 25 of 31 provinces in mainland China, a nation generally considered closed to traditional missionary endeavors.

-- Baptist bodies overseas affiliated with the FMB recorded 251,000 baptisms last year, exceeding the previous record of 233,000 baptisms.

-- Baptists overseas affiliated with the FMB started 1,605 new churches last year.

-- Expansion of the broadcast markets available to the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission brought response from previously unresponsive territories. In the heavily Mormon state of Utah, RTVC programs drew seven calls for spiritual assistance in the last two months of 1992, whereas no calls from Utah had been received before.

-- Two one-hour inspirational programs were produced by the RTVC to air on national TV networks.

-- Personnel supported by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board led 44,030 people to profess faith in Jesus Christ last year.

-- Retired ministers living on poverty-level incomes received relief assistance totalling \$726,312 from the Annuity Board. An average recipient is 77 years old with monthly income of \$577 and monthly expenses of \$686.

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**Baptist association protests
WMU changes, cancels O'Brien**

By Sue Harper-Poss

Baptist Press
1/22/93

CONWAY, S.C. (BP)--The executive committee of Waccamaw Baptist Association has voted to rescind its invitation to national Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien to speak at its annual fall associational meeting in 1995.

The committee also adopted a resolution strongly affirming the Cooperative Program and encouraging churches to give only through traditional Southern Baptist channels.

Both actions came Jan. 18 during a regular meeting of the association's executive committee, comprised of the pastor and one layman from each church.

Several pastors present for the meeting said the vote was 25-22 to rescind the invitation to O'Brien.

O'Brien had been invited last year to speak at the associational meeting at Juniper Bay Baptist Church in Conway in 1995. The association has traditionally invited one SBC agency head to speak at the annual meeting.

At the executive committee meeting, the pastor of Juniper Bay church, Charles Thrower, made the motion to rescind the association's invitation to O'Brien.

Thrower said he made his motion for two reasons: "The main reason is that WMU is linking up with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and seems to be abandoning its historical heritage," he said.

He also said he "is not in favor of women speaking from the pulpit when they are listed as delivering a message."

Thrower said he did not suggest a replacement for O'Brien but would prefer it be a man.

Moderator Kevin Childs, pastor of Green Sea Baptist Church, said the motion was based on WMU's decision "to forfeit their historic position as exclusively supporting Southern Baptist causes."

Childs said the vote "was not a repudiation of WMU, just an effort to send a signal."

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Bill Harrill, director of missions for the association, was not at the meeting because his wife was ill. He said he has not read the minutes but thinks the committee "misinterpreted what WMU has done." He said he thinks the decision was made hastily without all the facts.

The recommendations approved by WMU do not mention the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and reaffirm support for all traditional Southern Baptist giving channels. The six recommendations call for a recommitment to missions, providing prayer support and resources for any Southern Baptist group which requests such help, producing generic literature, promoting volunteerism, emphasizing a particular social issue each year and promoting and accepting contributions for WMU.

The executive board of Woman's Missionary Union in South Carolina met Jan. 22 to hear a report from state president Virginia Caughman and executive director Evelyn Blount about the action of the national WMU board.

The state board is setting up a series of listening sessions throughout South Carolina during the first week in February to explain the recommendations and what they mean. A session has been scheduled Feb. 2 in Waccamaw Baptist Association.

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Church involvement vital to healing
of inner cities, L.A. pastors say

Baptist Press
1/22/93

By Chip Alford

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Almost nine months have passed since riots rocked Los Angeles, leaving scores dead, hundreds injured and damage estimated at more than \$1 billion.

Most of the burned-down buildings have been razed and the lots cleaned. A few businesses are being rebuilt. But while wounds are beginning to heal in California's largest city, pastors of two of the largest black Southern Baptist congregations are not interested in seeing things get back to "normal."

"Things have got to change now; timing is everything," said Lonnie Dawson, pastor of New Mount Calvary Baptist Church. "We've got to keep (the push for change) on the front burner. There seems to be a lot of sword rattling going on, but we're not seeing much action."

While not condoning the violence, Dawson said the civil unrest in Los Angeles resulted not just from the acquittal of the four officers in the Rodney King beating case, but from years of discrimination, brutality and "a constant chipping away of dignity" that leaves people frustrated and angry.

"The destruction of buildings and businesses are the symptoms of greater social illnesses -- hopelessness and despair. Our people feel they have no ownership in the community. They didn't burn down their neighborhood. They burned down businesses they didn't own."

Willie Simmons, pastor of Greater Cornerstone Baptist Church, said many south-central L.A. residents resent businesses making money in the area but failing to reinvest in the community.

"The Watts riots in 1965 were over the same things -- a lack of jobs and (business) opportunities, discrimination, police brutality. Here we are 28 years later and we're almost back at the same place," he said.

For significant and lasting change to take place, the pastors said churches are going to have to get more involved in improving conditions in the inner city, not only in Los Angeles, but in metropolitan areas across the country.

"As a black Southern Baptist, I have always hoped that the eyes of the convention would open and refocus some of its priorities," Dawson said. "The convention needs to consider the plight of inner cities in the same way it considers conditions in foreign countries. Charity begins at home."

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In the past, Dawson said Southern Baptists often used the excuse of not having churches in inner cities as an explanation for a lack of involvement. "But that's not the case anymore," he explained. "The outlet is here now. We have churches in place that can do the job."

To help provide training, New Mount Calvary already has established a relationship with Compton Junior College and is offering six college courses in computer literacy and other subjects at the church. "We've got 150 students involved right at the church," Dawson said.

The South Central Los Angeles Planning Committee (composed of Dawson; Simmons; E.W. McCall, pastor of St. Stephens Baptist Church in La Puente; and Luther Keith, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Inglewood) also has a proposal on the table to help stimulate business development.

Committee members have suggested creating a "business incubator" to train blacks in marketing, bookkeeping, computer skills, networking and other business practices to help them start and maintain their own businesses. Greater Cornerstone has purchased a building near the church that could be used to house such a training center. Simmons said about \$35,000 in repairs and renovation is needed to make the building operational.

"We need community ministries, to get out there and touch the needs of the people. But just passing out food isn't the answer," Simmons said. "We've got to help our people become more independent. We want to focus our training on entrepreneurship. Once people feel they are a part of the community they won't be so quick to destroy it."

Tom Kelly, director of black church extension/development for the California Southern Baptist Convention, said he hopes churches from across America will catch a vision for ministry and form partnerships with the scores of Southern Baptist congregations in Los Angeles.

"The ministry needs are really unlimited," he said. "First, they can help through prayer. Some financial help is needed and we could also use experts in business to give their time for training."

South central L.A. "is really not the bad, bad place that people fear it might be," Dawson said. "There are a lot of really good things going on here. Good will come out of this."

Churches or individuals interested in helping in the Los Angeles area should contact Robert Wilson, the newly-appointed black church extension coordinator for south central L.A., through the California Southern Baptist Convention office in Fresno.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

SBC agencies affirm work
with Christian schools

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press
1/22/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention agencies affirmed Christian schools and home schooling and will develop materials and provide support for them, according to a plan adopted by the Inter-Agency Council Jan. 20 in Nashville.

All heads of the 20 SBC institutions, agencies, boards and commissions -- the IAC -- approved the special report of the IAC's coordinating committee. The report listed three general principles of support and seven specific actions.

The principles "recognize and affirm the role, value and ministry opportunity" of Christian teachers and administrators serving in public and private schools, Christian elementary and secondary schools sponsored by Southern Baptist churches and their teachers and administrators.

But the action, IAC officials said, should not be interpreted as a move to abandon public schools.

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"The study group calls upon appropriate SBC (entities) to encourage and undergird the thousands of excellent Southern Baptist public school teachers, administrators and parents in their critical spiritual and educational tasks with the public school system," the preface of the report states. "Actions projected by (the IAC) are in response to those thousands of Southern Baptists who desire to have their children educated within a highly Christian context inappropriate to a public school.

"We acknowledge the impossibility of assuming responsibility for educating all children through Christian schools and encourage Southern Baptists to work toward improving Christian and public school education."

Both the chairman of the IAC, William O. Crews, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mall Valley, Calif., and the chairman of the coordinating committee, Richard T. McCartney, executive vice president of the Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth, Texas, in statements to Baptist Press were quick to point out the action should not be interpreted as critical of public education.

"The action is a recognition of the growing need in Southern Baptist churches who have these schools," Crews said.

"Neither the findings nor the recommendations in the report should be interpreted as critical of public education, but as a recognition of existing realities," McCartney said.

The seven specific actions the IAC approved include requesting:

- the Sunday School Board to serve as the lead agency in service and staff support to coordinate the SBC effort which includes providing curriculum and support material for Christian schools, home schoolers and released time programs. The board also would provide consultant service for Southern Baptist churches "having or desiring to begin" schools as well as training for administrators, teachers and others to support the use of the materials.
- the Education Commission to establish a forum to communicate the needs of the schools, home schoolers and released time to Southern Baptist colleges, universities and seminaries and provide counsel for Christian schools on accreditation issues.
- the Christian Life Commission to provide information on public issues and legislation pertaining to Christian schools, home schools and related matters.
- the Home and Foreign Mission boards, Brotherhood Commission, Woman's Missionary Union to develop opportunities to work with the Christian schools and home schoolers in mission education and mission action programs as well as provide opportunities to engage students, teachers and administrators in short-term mission work.
- the Stewardship Commission to develop stewardship education materials in cooperation with the BSSB and develop plans to strengthen the financial base of the schools in the context of a church ministry.
- the Historical Commission to develop a forum to explore the history and influence of the schools and home schooling.
- the Annuity Board to develop a strategy to enlist Christian schools and the sponsoring church to provide insurance and retirement benefits for administrators, teachers and support staff.

James T. Draper Jr., president of the Sunday School Board, told Baptist Press in light of the IAC action the agency would be taking a new and expanded look at what materials and services need to be provided.

"Through our general leadership department, we have had a liaison relationship with the Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools, and the Sunday School Board cosponsors a Christian school management seminar each summer," Draper said. "Also we have produced Bible curriculum for elementary and secondary Christian schools."

The IAC was asked a year ago by the Sunday School Board through the coordinating committee to do a study because church members and leaders in Southern Baptist churches "are looking to alternatives to education currently provided in their communities."

Christian schools sponsored by Southern Baptist churches increased from 345 in 1976 to a reported 580 in 1986, although that included more than 100 weekday early education programs (mothers-day-out, day care). Officials said the actual number of elementary and secondary Christian schools in 1992 was about 425 to 460, with an enrollment of about 105,000 students. The schools spent about \$7.5 million in 1991-92 for curriculum materials.

Home schooling in America has grown from about 15,000 students in the 1970s to more than 260,000 in 1988. Release time Christian education is an arrangement in which local public school students, with their parents' consent, leave the school grounds to attend religious classes taught by teachers representing sponsoring churches.

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**Inter-Agency Council opposes
continued U.S.-Vatican ties**

By Louis Moore

**Baptist Press
1/22/93**

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Inter-Agency Council unanimously adopted a resolution urging President Clinton to "strike a blow" for religious liberty and church-state separation by revoking diplomatic ties to the Vatican.

The resolution points out Southern Baptists have been historically in the forefront of opposition to the United States and the Vatican exchanging ambassadors.

"The Holy See of the Roman Catholic Church is an ecclesiastical entity synonymous with the Roman Catholic Church," the resolution said. "The Holy See is located in an entity called State of Vatican City which is headed by the Bishop of Rome and in which office and citizenship are conditioned on some relationship with the Roman Catholic Church."

The resolution also stated, "Maintaining diplomatic relations with the Vatican is clearly a violation of the First Amendment guarantee of separation between the institutions of church and state."

The Inter-Agency Council adopted a similar resolution in 1984 while the U.S. Senate was considering President Ronald Reagan's nomination of William A. Wilson as ambassador to the Vatican.

The resolution points out that the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has spearheaded the current effort to persuade President Clinton not to reappoint an ambassador to the Vatican. In a letter to Clinton, CLC Executive Director Richard D. Land said such an appointment contradicts historic Baptist beliefs on religious liberty and the separation of church and state.

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**Baptist Convention of New England
names Lyle new executive director**

By Allyson Clark

**Baptist Press
1/22/93**

NORTHBOROUGH, Mass. (BP)--The Baptist Convention of New England's executive committee voted unanimously Jan. 19 to call Kenneth R. Lyle as executive director.

Lyle, approved during the regular meeting of the committee, will assume the duties of the six-state convention April 15.

Lyle has served the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware as executive director-treasurer since 1982. Previously he was pastor of Atlanta Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta and director of missions with the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association. Lyle also has been a pastor in New York, Texas and Mississippi.

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The search for a new director began in May 1992 following the sudden death of James Currin, the former executive director, last April. Currin began serving in New England in 1978 and led in the formation of the state convention in 1983. Currently, the convention encompasses approximately 200 churches and missions.

Lyle, a native of Houston, and his wife, Judy, have four married children. He has earned degrees from Mississippi College, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Ron Huffman, search committee chairman, said, "Ken Lyle is a creative leader whose leadership is inspired by the Spirit of God." Huffman added, "While his leadership is definitely visionary, his demeanor is truly pastoral." Huffman has served in three of the New England associations and is currently pastor of Middletown Baptist Church in Middletown, Rhode Island.

Speaking to the executive committee, convention staff and guests, Lyle shared briefly his vision for New England. The basis of this vision is a deep, two-fold commitment to missions: He affirmed New England as a mission field and recognized it as a mission base, each having an impact on the world for Christ.

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(BP) photo available upon request by calling Allyson Clark, (617) 899-8125.

**Physicians needed
to work in Yemen**

**Baptist Press
1/22/93**

JIBLA, Yemen (BP)--Southern Baptists need permanent and short-term physicians to reinforce their medical staff at Jibla Baptist Hospital.

Two Southern Baptist physicians have just left Yemen permanently to come back to the United States and marry, said Gerry Volkart, the Foreign Mission Board's associate area director for the Middle East. Both were in their first term.

With others on furlough, that leaves only one Southern Baptist physician working there. Southern Baptists try to keep at least three to four physicians under appointment to work at the Yemen hospital, with short-termers available as needed, Volkart said.

The most immediate need is for short-termers until new career missionaries respond to this need and are appointed, she added.

The 77-bed hospital, opened by Southern Baptists in 1967, treats up to 40,000 people a year and performs an average of 400 surgeries monthly. It offers Yemenis one of their few opportunities to have contact with Christian people.

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**Fitness vital to faith,
nutrition expert maintains**

By Terri Lackey

**Baptist Press
1/22/93**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Christians who take seriously the creed of striving to be more like Jesus should hit the streets in their walking shoes and tone up their bodies, a Southern Baptist nutritionist said.

"Why should Christians become fit physically?" Dick Couey asked a group of about 150 in Nashville attending the national launch of a Christian health care program.

"Because Jesus was fit," said Couey, nutrition expert, author and professor of health and physical education and recreation at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Jesus didn't hop in his car and drive to the nearest temple to spread the word, Couey said.

"He walked. The Bible describes how he walked over 50 miles once from sunup to sundown. Another time he walked 120 miles in three days. Guys, he was walking about a 14-minute mile. I want you to get out there tomorrow and try a few of those."

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Couey was guest speaker at the Jan. 15-16 national launch of "First Place: A Christ Centered Health Program." Billed as a spiritually based education program to teach participants to eat right, exercise and get enough rest, First Place is a joint venture between the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and First Baptist Church of Houston.

The 13-week fitness course includes Bible study, Scripture memorization, prayer sessions, exercise guidelines and a sensible eating plan allowing participants to successfully lose up to two pounds a week.

"Jesus was not only physically fit, he was mentally fit," Couey said. "At age 12, he amazed a priest with his knowledge. We must learn to develop mentally, too.

"If you don't go home and read, study and learn, you're not going to be like Jesus," Couey added.

Americans, Christians especially, are in a physical slump, Couey indicated.

"Nearly 40 percent of all Americans are overweight," he said, adding 62 percent of ministers who died last year died as a result of heart attacks.

Other facts Couey cited about the health of Americans included:

-- The U.S. leads the world in the number of cases of hypertension, cancer and heart attacks.

-- 60 percent of all cancer is caused because of improper nutrition.

-- 80 percent of Americans suffer from lower back pain, which is a result of inadequate exercise.

Couey advised the First Place participants to "stay in shape. Develop your cardiovascular fitness, develop flexibility, keep your body fat down and develop good body composition."

Couey said one is never too young or too old to exercise.

"The only reason you don't eat right or exercise is because you're lazy," he said.

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Sunday school girl's balloon
touched his life 100 miles away By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press
1/22/93

SODDY-DAISY, Tenn. (BP)--A "seed" planted by a girl in Sunday school has borne fruit more than 100 miles away.

In 1982 Missy Hatmaker, as part of a Sunday school project at New Salem Baptist Church in Soddy-Daisy, Tenn., released a balloon with the Scripture message: "Behold, I (Jesus) stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

That was the last anyone knew about that note -- until 10 years later when the New Salem church received a letter from Randal Perkins of Jacksboro, Tenn., saying he had found the note in November 1982 while on a hunting trip in the mountains of Campbell County.

Perkins noted he read the verse, put it in his wallet and, over the years, had taken it out and reread the message.

"After a rough life and a friend witnessing to me, and several people praying for me, I was saved on Feb. 9, 1990, at the age of 31," Perkins shared. He told the Soddy-Daisy church he had been baptized, joined Wood Lake Baptist Church in Jacksboro and had married a wonderful Christian wife.

After receiving the letter to New Salem, pastor J. Ted Painter made arrangements for Perkins to share his testimony with the congregation.

Perkins came to the church in November and told how he had picked up the note, read the verse, but "just could not throw it away." He admitted he was leading the wrong kind of lifestyle at that time, that he "used bad language and drank heavily. After eight years, I knew the Lord was dealing with me, so I decided to go to church" and later accepted Christ as his Savior.

During the service New Salem presented Perkins with a Bible.

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Hatmaker, now a young woman, also was excited to learn what happened to her note, though, now, laws prohibit the sending of balloons into the environment.

"I was just tickled to death to find out after all this time how God worked through this balloon," Hatmaker said.

Though sending a balloon does not seem significant, it can be when God is in it, said Painter. "To find out, 10 years later, that this slip of paper was found and used by God in the salvation of one soul in Campbell County just proves that little is much, when God is in it."

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Minister's call depends
solely on God, prof says

By Jon Walker

Baptist Press
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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary preaching professor Wayne V. McDill said a call to ministry is not about a person's future, rather it is about God and what God is going to do through that person in the future.

"Your call does not depend on what is in you, but what is in God," McDill told the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary community during its spring convocation.

Jeremiah's call to ministry, McDill said, is an encouragement to all Christians who have ever faced a task with a better chance of failing than succeeding.

First of all, God assures his servants they are destined for their callings, McDill said. "Many of us, when we get confused, have the idea that God may have made a mistake. If God knew you were called before you were born, then he must have put you together in such a way that you can fulfill your calling."

Jeremiah also teaches that God will direct his servants and accompany them in their callings, McDill said. Recalling a time when he was a boy, McDill said he used to sit on his father's lap and think he was driving the car even though he could not reach the gear shift or the pedals.

"We sometimes think we are driving (in our ministries) when we can't even touch the pedals. It's God's ministry and God who is driving."

McDill said God assures his servants he will equip them for their calling -- and that is based upon how well they know the Word of God. "Do any of us think we are clever enough to say anything that is not from the Word of God?" he asked.

God also authorizes his servants for their calling through "delegated authority," McDill pointed out. "The authority is where it has always been, it is with God. There are some things in this world that need to be rooted up (or torn down). Can you do that, or do you need a tool that is sharper than any two-edged sword?"

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CORRECTION: In the (BP) story titled "Missouri governor, a Baptist, boosts schools, is pro-choice," dated 1/21/92, please correct the sixth paragraph to read: "Calling for 'world-class schools' in Missouri, where one in four high school students fails to graduate, ..." In the fourth paragraph, please correct Gov. Carnahan's inauguration date to Jan. 11.

Thanks,
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