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April 12, 1995

95-61

TEXAS--RTVC trustees express serious concern with SBC restructuring.  
WASHINGTON--Gingrich advocates prayer statute, confuses amendment supporters.  
ZAMBIA--Work permit dispute involves Zambia VP, attorney general.  
TENNESSEE--Campolo: Divorce, not immorality, biggest threat to families.  
CALIFORNIA--New director to lead multiple approaches in Golden Gate Seminary music school.  
SOUTH CAROLINA--China missionary veteran James Herring dies at age 90.

RTVC trustees express serious  
concern with SBC restructuring

By Toby Druin

Baptist Press  
4/12/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission flirted April 11 with asking that the commission be retained as a separate agency rather than being merged with the Home Mission Board and Brotherhood Commission as proposed in the "Covenant for a New Century."

But when the rhetoric had cooled, they settled for a watered-down resolution to be sent to the SBC Executive Committee along with a list of "serious concerns" which they said need to be resolved before the matter is voted on by the Southern Baptist Convention in June.

Among the concerns, which they said have not been answered to date, are the cost of the move and how much it will save, why the need for relocation and why Atlanta, the number and division of trustees from each of the current three boards who will serve on the new board and is there a proper understanding of the differences and uniqueness of the ministry of the RTVC.

A motion asking for a study of the current effectiveness of the RTVC and the effect of the proposed merger with the results to be given to SBC messengers was referred to the RTVC executive committee

The proposed "Covenant" to be considered by the SBC in Atlanta, June 20-22, would reduce the number of SBC agencies from 19 to 12 and the RTVC would be one of the casualties, apparently losing its separate identity in a merger with the Home Mission Board and Brotherhood Commission in a new North American Mission Board. The RTVC, which was moved from Atlanta to Fort Worth in 1955, would move back to Atlanta.

The RTVC trustees were to be briefed Monday evening, April 10, by a member of the Program and Structure Study Committee, which drafted the proposed restructuring, and by two members of the SBC Executive Committee, which approved it and will recommend it to the SBC annual meeting.

The two Executive Committee members, Richard Cagle of Alabama and James Merritt of Georgia, were at the briefing, but Rex Terry, the PSSC member from Arkansas who is also an Executive Committee member, was unable to attend because of bad weather. Because of Terry's absence, one commission member told the Texas Baptist Standard newsjournal, many of the trustees' questions went unanswered, and many of the answers given by the SBC Executive Committee members were qualified by "I think."

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When the trustees convened in their first plenary session Tuesday morning April 11, Jerry Holbert, trustee from Springfield, Mo., presented a statement asking the trustees to go on record saying they could not at present accept the merger; that it would downsize the RTVC, whose ministry needs to be enhanced rather than jeopardized or minimized; and called on the SBC Executive Committee to amend the study to retain the RTVC as a "separate communications agency" of the SBC.

Holbert said the statement was intended to give the Executive Committee an indication of where the trustees stand on the merger question and was not meant to reflect on the position of RTVC President Jack Johnson, who in statements following announcement of the proposal had indicated general approval. Holbert said he felt his (Holbert's) statement reflected the position of those who had asked questions the previous evening.

But while most reportedly had expressed reservations or asked questions about the restructuring the previous evening, several spoke against Holbert's proposal.

D. J. Benson of Mississippi said he felt it was premature and was "more of a September concern (after the SBC meeting) than an April concern"; Ernie Helton of Ohio questioned if any downsizing would actually occur and Garland Morrison of Indiana questioned if a proposed resolution already drafted by the RTVC executive committee didn't address the question in better form.

Morrison tried unsuccessfully to call the trustees into executive session. Richard T. McCartney, retired former executive vice president of the commission now serving as consultant to the president, spoke against going into executive session, saying Baptist business is done best in the open and reporters should hear the opinions expressed rather than get them second-hand after the meeting.

Toni Clevenger, trustee from Florida; Gen. Jack Marcom of the Washington, D.C. convention; and Lori Davis of Texas all spoke in favor of Holbert's proposal; Clevenger at one point calling for a vote on it but agreeing to allow more time for discussion when appealed to by Chairman Dallas Bumgarner of Maryland.

Benson again questioned the statement, saying it sounded like an ultimatum and was joined by Helen George of North Carolina who said she felt it was premature and that the trustees' "mode is to be one of cooperation" and of "subjection." She also noted Johnson's statement of approval of the restructuring.

Clevenger, urging a vote on the Holbert statement, said to do less than make a statement would be to "devalue" the history of the commission.

Johnson, asked to express his opinion, said he felt the resolution already drafted by the RTVC executive committee "pretty much says what you want to say."

"My opinion is that you want to make a statement that you are seriously concerned," Johnson said. "I just have to say I would choose the document of the (RTVC) executive committee."

Commission trustees followed with adoption of a substitute motion by Wyman Copass of Kentucky approving largely unchanged the statement of their executive committee. It commends the PSSC for its time and effort in drafting the restructuring proposal, affirms the trustees' responsibility to implement the actions of the SBC if the proposal is approved but states the RTVC trustees have "serious concerns," which are to be attached to the resolution and which need to be resolved prior to the Southern Baptist Convention's consideration of the restructuring proposal.

McCartney said the list of concerns will be synthesized from the Monday evening discussion and included in the resolution.

In other business, the trustees approved a series of resolutions including one guaranteeing a \$950,000 loan by FamilyNet for the purchase of equipment to uplink and downlink satellite signals.

Copass was elected chairman of the commission, succeeding Bumgarner. Others elected were first vice chairman Omer Ray Finch Jr., Oklahoma; second vice chairman Billy R. Thomas, Louisiana; and secretary Nancy Berlin, Colorado.

Gingrich advocates prayer statute,  
confuses amendment supporters      By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich has sent apparently new signals on the issue of religious expression in public schools, and proponents of a constitutional amendment to protect students' religious rights confess to some confusion.

Gingrich, R.-Ga., said April 9 Congress could solve religious speech problems in schools with a new law rather than an amendment.

"I am told it is not necessary," Gingrich said on CBS' "Face the Nation" of a religious freedom amendment. "I am told that we can create a legal framework that allows us to recognize that this is a profoundly religious country, but there is no state church."

Two days later, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, fresh from announcing his candidacy for the 1996 GOP presidential nomination, said he would prefer a legislative remedy to an amendment. Either way, it is doubtful the Senate will have time this year to act on such a proposal, he said.

Gingrich's comments marked a switch from a position he had taken months earlier. Before the November elections, Gingrich said when, not if, he became speaker the House of Representatives would vote by July 4 on a school prayer amendment. After the Republican Party gained a majority in the House in the elections, making Gingrich the speaker, he repeated his pledge. While he since has retreated from the timetable, Gingrich had not rejected an amendment as the solution.

Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said he would like to know who told Gingrich an amendment is unnecessary.

"I have spoken to nearly every conservative religious liberty group in town, and there is virtual unanimity that a constitutional amendment is needed," Whitehead said. "We remain committed that a constitutional amendment is the surest way to achieve the objective of expansive protection for prayer and religious speech by students and others in public places.

"A statute that purports to provide greater religious liberty protection can always be declared unconstitutional. On the other hand, the courts have no choice but to hold that a constitutional amendment is constitutional. They can interpret it, but they cannot discard it."

A federal judge's recent decision declaring the Religious Freedom Restoration Act unconstitutional demonstrates the need for a constitutional amendment, Whitehead said.

A spokesman for the American Center for Law and Justice agreed with Whitehead.

"The prayer amendment is the only thing that is going to correct the skewing of the establishment clause interpretations" which defines private speakers as government spokesmen, said Colby May, ACLJ's senior counsel for governmental affairs. "Our reaction is: 'I'm not sure what the speaker means.'"

After the elections, Gingrich selected Rep. Earnest Istook, R.-Okla., to lead the effort on a school prayer amendment. A spokesman for Istook expressed surprise at the speaker's comments.

"The way I read his comments, I believe he was giving his personal viewpoint," said Steve Jones, press secretary for Istook, "but he has certainly never said to us he will not accept a constitutional amendment. ... so far as I know, that's what we'll continue to work on."

He does not consider Gingrich's comments "to be particularly damaging news," Jones said. The House speaker is committed to protecting people's religious liberty, Jones said.

Calls to the speaker's press office were not returned in time for Baptist Press' deadline.

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After a March 13 meeting with Istook, the CLC's Whitehead said there was consensus for a "religious equality" approach in an amendment. Such a proposal would direct government to treat religious expression the same as other kinds of speech. The CLC and other amendment advocates say their intention is not to reverse the Supreme Court's 1962 and '63 decisions outlawing government-controlled prayer and Bible reading.

In his April 9 comments, Gingrich said hearings probably will be held on the religious liberty proposal this summer with a vote possible in the fall. He opposes an organized, official or teacher-led prayer, Gingrich said.

Istook and Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde, R.-Ill., will write the proposal, Gingrich said.

While he prefers a statute, Dole said April 11 he also would support a constitutional amendment.

"We must guarantee that every American has the right to enjoy religious liberty and freedom of conscience," Dole said at Des Moines, Iowa, one day after officially announcing his candidacy, according to The New York Times. "If students can discuss sports, music or drama at school, they should also be allowed to voluntarily pray."

In addition to the CLC and ACLJ, other organizations with representatives at the March meeting with Istook were the Christian Legal Society, National Association of Evangelicals, Liberty Council, The Rutherford Institute, Concerned Women for America, Christian Coalition, Family Research Council, American Family Association and Christian Action Network.

The Baptist Joint Committee, former religious liberty representative for the Southern Baptist Convention, has joined other organizations in opposing a school prayer or religious expression amendment.

An amendment requires a two-thirds majority in both the House and Senate, as well as ratification by three-fourths of the states, to become part of the Constitution. A bill requires only a majority vote to become law.

The recent ruling against RFRA was made in Texas. RFRA, signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1993, reversed the Supreme Court's 1990 Employment Division v. Smith opinion. In Smith, the court ruled government no longer has to demonstrate a "compelling interest" before restricting religious freedom. RFRA restored the "compelling interest" test. The government also must demonstrate a policy is the "least restrictive means" in fulfilling the government's interest before limiting the free exercise of religion.

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Work permit dispute involves  
Zambia VP, attorney general

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
4/12/95

LUSAKA, Zambia (BP)--The impasse over work permits for Southern Baptist missionaries in Zambia has reached the offices of the country's vice president and attorney general.

The attorney general intervened and instructed the chief immigration officer to grant 30-day extensions to the work permits of four missionary couples after the immigration official's repeated refusals to obey a court order to do so.

He even refused after the Baptist Mission of Zambia filed a contempt citation in court on March 28 to keep four missionaries from being expelled March 31 while the mission continues efforts to resolve the dispute between it and the convention.

The attorney general's decision allows Ed and Linda Miller, Mike and Lindy Howard, Dwayne and Betty Mitchell and Jim and Thelma Cooke, all from Texas, to retain their legal status at least until the end of April.

Zambian Vice President Godfrey Miyanda entered the discussion in early April. After meeting with leaders of the Baptist Convention of Zambia to learn their views, he invited missionary Bonita Wilson, acting administrator for the mission, to meet with him April 5.

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Miyanda stressed at the meeting that it's not his role to solve church matters. But, as a Christian brother, he said, he's concerned about the two-year old problem that has only recently come to his attention.

Wilson shared a history of Baptist work in the country. That included (1) the work of the Zambia Baptist Council which, until the dispute of work permits, coordinated and planned the evangelism work of the mission and the convention, (2) the Baptist position on autonomy of the local church and other Baptist organizations (such as associations, the convention and the mission), and (3) the difficulty missionaries are having concentrating on anything other than the work permit issue -- especially the four families going through monthly trauma wondering if the permits will be extended.

An earlier meeting between leaders of the mission and the convention on March 24 surfaced basic differences between missionaries and the convention over the philosophy of mission financing and the nature of church autonomy.

Besides control over work permits, the convention wants control of the budget and program of the Baptist Mission of Zambia and the authority to tell churches what to do. That fits more the pattern of a hierarchical form of church government than the Baptist congregational approach.

In the April 5 meeting with Miyanda, Wilson emphasized again the mission wants to reconcile and rebuild a joint partnership with the convention. But she pointed out the mission cannot surrender basic beliefs, such as autonomy. In this situation, she said, that means the convention cannot dictate to another Baptist body like the mission.

"I shared that we're open to talking through any of the issues before us," Wilson said. "We'd like for the threat surrounding work permits to be solved, but once that threat is removed the mission is even open to further discussions on how the convention and mission can cooperate in determining work permit requests."

Vice President Miyanda "is a very nice Christian man who seemed genuinely interested and understanding," Wilson said. "I am to meet with him again as soon as his schedule allows for another meeting."

The Zambia Baptist Council was dissolved and all formal cooperation between the mission and the convention halted in late 1993 when the convention executive committee wrote the chief immigration officer and requested that he not approve any work permits for Baptist missionaries without its approval.

He agreed, despite the fact the two organizations are registered separately as societies with the Zambia government. The American embassy protested the action since the Baptist mission was being treated differently under the law than other societies.

The dispute also halted the on-going transfer of church property from the mission to the convention; severely limited work permits for professors to teach at the Zambia Baptist Theological Seminary; created hard feelings between pastors and in churches between "pro-mission" and "anti-mission" factions; caused some churches to withhold their financial contributions to the convention in protest and, in general, distracted Zambian Baptists from the evangelism that was producing record numbers of professions of faith and new church starts.

The convention executive committee says the issue is the mission's reluctance to turn over control of Baptist work to nationals. The mission says the conflict centers on Baptist autonomy and notes that the process of nationalization was on schedule to be completed by the year 2000.

A convention reorganization plan calls for all mission property and all budget coming from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board be controlled by convention committees. The mission says such an arrangement would be in violation of FMB policies.

In mid-March the mission agreed to begin working on areas of compromise that would not violate board policy or basic Baptist beliefs, but the convention continued to insist on the right of approval on all work permit requests.

**Campolo: Divorce, not immorality,  
biggest threat to families** By Keith Currey

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP)--While the term "family values" has become a political buzzword across the nation, evangelist and author Tony Campolo believes issues other than homosexuality and adultery are destroying the American family.

Campolo visited Union University's campus April 5-7 to lead the 24th annual Spring Bible Conference/Jones Lecture Series. Drawing from his experiences as a sociology professor and as founder of the Wake Up America! movement, Campolo shared insights on the conference's theme, "Courtship and Love, Marriage and Family."

"Family Values is used to campaign against homosexuality, but it's used more for political purposes than for moral causes," Campolo said in an interview following one of his sermons. "The media loves to paint a picture of America going down the tubes, but incidents of sexual immorality are declining. America is a moral nation, and it's probably becoming more moral."

Citing a University of Chicago study, Campolo noted only 6 percent of married American men committed adultery last year, while only 1 percent of the population had a homosexual encounter. Despite these statistics, Campolo said he believes family advocates still have reason for concern.

"People are more moral today, but immorality has been replaced by a pious, mean egocentrism which may prove more damaging than crime or homosexuality," Campolo said. "Divorce, not gays and lesbians, is what will destroy the American family."

"Americans today are more selfish than ever before," Campolo said. "Christians are quick to condemn drugs, crime and homosexuality, but slow to acknowledge their own shortcomings. Pious, insensitive attitudes concerning issues like poverty and discrimination are contributing to the overall decline of the family."

Campolo emphasized the importance of marriage and promise keeping throughout the conference, underscoring his words with the themes of love and grace.

"Every wedding creates the possibility for a marriage; the secret is knowing how to love one another after the romance wears off," Campolo said. "After a wedding, the intense romance in a relationship only lasts about a year."

Using Christ as the model for a marriage partner, Campolo described the attributes necessary for a love relationship.

"Love isn't a feeling that 'just happens,' it's a decision to do the right thing; to do what Jesus would do in your situation," Campolo said. "In the midst of cultural definitions of what a man or woman should be, we've forgotten what Jesus is all about. We all need to know the meaning of the word 'grace.'"

"Loving someone is about looking into them, not at them," Campolo continued. "If what you see is what you get, then you're not a Christian, because Christians get something that cannot be seen."

According to Campolo, "looking at" rather than "looking in" has plagued America's Christians in other areas, as well.

"Now that communism is gone, no one is critiquing capitalism," Campolo observed. "It has become an unrestrained monster, and now we believe the poor are not our problem."

Campolo noted Christianity exists in two realms, the abstract and the physical. Abstract Christianity is based on theological concepts, while physical Christianity is practiced through feeding the hungry and caring for the sick and suffering.

"We have become like the Pharisees of Jesus' time; placing greater emphasis on bickering about the abstract than caring for the physical," Campolo said. "The church shows hypocrisy when it passes strong resolutions against homosexuality but maintains a lax position on divorce and remarriage. We have a tendency to pick on the things we don't do."

Church involvement, tithing and a solid system of beliefs are important for Christians, according to Campolo, but more important is the promise to serve.

"Being a Christian is about keeping promises," Campolo said. "Whether standing by your mate or embracing those in need, commitments establish identity. If you have no commitment, then you have no identity. Only one thing takes precedent over a calling; that's a promise."

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New director to lead multiple approaches  
in Golden Gate Seminary music school

Baptist Press  
4/12/95

By Cameron Crabtree

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Gary W. McCoy has been named to a two-year renewable appointment as director of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's Bill and Pat Dixon School of Church Music, according to seminary officials.

McCoy will lead the school in adding two new thrusts to its traditional church music education program:

-- training for leadership in contemporary approaches to diverse music, worship and ministry styles.

-- training for volunteer and bivocational music and worship leaders.

McCoy, associate professor of church music since 1991, came to Golden Gate from Korea, where he served as a Southern Baptist missionary for 17 years. He replaces Craig Singleton as the school's director. Singleton will continue serving as associate professor of church music.

"I am excited by the vision Dr. McCoy has expressed for contextual approaches to worship and music," said Rodrick Durst, vice president for academic affairs at Golden Gate. "His leadership will help Golden Gate provide worship leaders for the diverse church approaches in our region."

Durst indicated a "coordinated change in directorship and directions" at the music school would more effectively communicate the seminary's seriousness about the new training emphases.

"As we continue our strong accredited program, we will seek to associate the classroom more closely with the local church in terms of philosophy, content and practice," noted new director McCoy. "We can build on our diversities in culture and musical styles to facilitate greater opportunities for lay music training, continuing music education and accessible study opportunities for bivocational church music and worship leaders."

McCoy also expressed appreciation for the partnership the seminary has with the office of worship at the California Southern Baptist Convention in providing various conferences and seminars related to training for local churches.

In addition, "we want to develop course offerings for music leaders which integrate studies in worship theology, church growth and music," McCoy said.

"These expanded directions are commitments to the vision of Golden Gate Seminary becoming the primary provider of worship and music leadership for the diverse churches of the West in the 21st century," said Durst. "Traditional, accredited music education will always play a strong role in our training, but we must also help churches in the West equip those called to reach people for Christ within diverse cultural contexts."

Durst said the added emphases rest on missiological understanding of culture and ministry in the western United States and Pacific Rim, churches in the region are continually applying new and diverse paradigms of worship and ministry.

"Teaching the great hymns in the context of the unchurched West is primarily a discipleship tool, not an evangelistic tool," he said. "The great hymns will ever be taught and sung, but we must be sure today to train leaders to function effectively in diverse contexts so that they may help the unchurched distinguish the differences between Christianity and culture. We must never inadvertently put up missiological barriers to their understanding those differences."

The former California pastor acknowledged the new emphases will receive both criticism and commendation. They will generate "proper, germane and thoughtful discussion" about local church ministry in the 21st century, Durst added.

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"The music school must build toward the future to fulfill Golden Gate's vision by leading this new working of God in contemporary worship while still offering training in the proven historical approach," Durst said. "Ministry realities demand we make 'course corrections' if we are to meet the diverse worship and music leadership needs of churches."

Durst expressed appreciation for Singleton's past direction of the music program.

"Significant achievements have occurred under the direction and dedication of Dr. Singleton," Durst said. "The Dixon school has earned a 10-year notation-free accreditation and it is the only triply-accredited school of church music west of Texas." An alternative master's degree in music utilizing a year's internship will have its first students this fall.

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China missionary veteran  
James Herring dies at age 90

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press  
4/12/95

TAYLORS, S.C. (BP)--An early Southern Baptist missionary to China, who narrowly escaped death during the communist takeover in 1948, died April 7 in Taylors, S.C.

James Alexander Herring, 90, was the son of David Wells and Alice Rea Herring, Southern Baptist missionaries to China, 1885 to 1929, and contemporaries of famed Southern Baptist missionary Lottie Moon.

Born Feb. 1, 1905 in Taian, China, Herring lived there with his parents until age 10, when he returned to the United States for his education. He returned as a Southern Baptist missionary with his wife, the former Nan Trammell, Belton, S.C. in 1935.

Herring was leading a revival in the interior city of Tsining when the communist revolution in the country began in 1948. When communication lines to the city were severed, Herring and two other Southern Baptist missionaries broadcast an urgent radio message to a pilot friend in Shanghai. Then they fled to Yenchow, a nearby town with an airport, to meet their rescuer.

They arrived at Yenchow, however, only to come under heavy shelling from communist forces. The trio took shelter in the compound of the Roman Catholic mission, where they hid under beds for protection.

When the shelling let up, they crawled out and rested against the wall. But the whistle of another incoming round sent them diving for cover, just as the shell exploded outside their room.

They emerged to find the wall pocked by shrapnel where Herring had been sitting. The holes traced the outline of his body -- he had escaped unharmed.

Three days later, a mule cart carried them into nationalist-controlled territory.

Herring returned to the United States, where he and his wife waited in vain until 1953 for the door to China to open again. They were reappointed by the FMB in 1957 as missionaries to Taiwan, where they served until retirement in 1970. He served as pastor of the Kaohsiung Baptist Church until 1964, when he was transferred to Taitung. There he built a house and opened a chapel to work with refugees from the mainland.

A graduate of Baptist Bible Institute (now New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary), Herring also served as pastor of churches in Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

Survivors include his wife, Nan; two daughters, Sarah Alice Edward, Taylors, and Nan Scott, Corvallis, Ore.; two sons, James A. Herring Jr., Knoxville, Tenn., and Gordon R. Herring, Virginia Beach, Va.; and a sister, Mary Herring, Raleigh, N.C.

Funeral services were held April 11 at Lee Road Baptist Church, Taylors, under the direction of Mackey Mortuary, Greenville, S.C. Memorials may be made to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230.

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