

# Baptist Briefs

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**American Baptists move collection south.** The [American Baptist Historical Society](#), which claims the world's largest collection of Baptist resources, is moving to [Mercer University's](#) Atlanta campus. While the history-rich collection is a treasure trove for researchers, it has been inconveniently divided between two sites 350 miles apart—Valley Forge, Pa., where American Baptists have their national office, and the Samuel Colgate Library in Rochester, N.Y. “The history of Baptists is the history of religious freedom in America,” Mercer President Bill Underwood said, “and the American Baptist Historical Society is the single most significant depository of that history.” Relocating the historical collection to Mercer’s Atlanta campus serves to “preserve the collection, ... foster the examination of this history by future generations of students, scholars and others, and ... establish Mercer as the leading center for Baptist scholarship in North America.” Mercer’s McAfee School of Theology and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's main national offices are on the Atlanta campus as well. The university's main campus is in Macon, Ga.

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**Coalition urges SBC policy on clergy sexual abuse.** Members of the coalition that fought the Roman Catholic Church’s hierarchy over sexual abuse by priests are asking the Southern Baptist Convention to prevent similar clergy abuse in the denomination’s churches. Members of the [Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests](#), or SNAP, recently delivered

a letter to the SBC Executive Committee at its Nashville headquarters. It asks convention leaders to form an independent review board to receive and investigate charges of clergy abuse in Southern Baptist congregations. Part of the difficulty the SBC faces in taking aggressive action involves the autonomous nature of local churches in Baptist polity. Since individual congregations have full control over their decision-making and governing processes, the SBC can't dictate rules or punishment to them.

**Cooperative Program giving tops \$200 million.** For the first time, Southern Baptist giving through the [Cooperative Program](#) surpassed \$200 million for national causes during the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, according to an announcement by [SBC Executive Committee President Morris Chapman](#). Churches gave \$200,601,536 in the recently ended fiscal year—a 2.37 percent increase over the previous year.

**Embattled NAMB presidential search committee chair resigns.** Terry Fox—who resigned as pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Wichita, Kan., following charges of financial impropriety—has resigned as chair of the Southern Baptist [North American Mission Board](#)'s presidential search committee. Bill Curtis, chairman of the NAMB board of trustees, named Greg Faulls, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Owensboro, Ky., as the committee's new chair. Fox's resignation as chair—but not as a member of the search committee—came soon after some members of his former church issued a statement linking his departure from Immanuel Baptist to accusations that he had reallocated the church's Cooperative Program contributions to a radio program without authorization. Fox—co-host of a satellite radio program—has denied the charges and started a new church 10 miles away from Immanuel Baptist.

**N.C. Baptists propose bylaws changes.** Directors of the [Baptist State Convention of North Carolina](#) recommended changes to the convention's bylaws that would give North Carolina Baptist institutions a greater say in choosing their trustees and directors. The board also implemented a motion excluding from the convention churches that "affirm, approve, endorse, promote, support or bless" homosexuality. The board approved specific guidelines for determining if a church is too approving of gays. Both changes are subject to a vote by messengers to the convention's annual meeting in November.

**Tennessee Baptists sue Belmont.** The [Tennessee Baptist Convention](#) filed a lawsuit against Belmont University, citing breach of contract and seeking damages equal to all contributions the convention has made to the school since 1951—more than \$58 million, without factoring inflation. The convention's Executive Board filed the suit, pointing to an official repayment agreement reached by the convention and Belmont in 1951 that said if the school ever passed from Baptist control, it would repay the convention the value of any assets transferred to it. Last November, Belmont filed a request with the state to change the school's charter without convention approval, establishing a self-perpetuating governing board that could be 40 percent non-Baptists. Executive Board President Clay Austin said he hoped the convention and the school could reach an amicable resolution through mediation. Belmont Board Chairman Marty Dickens said trustees were "astonished" to learn about the lawsuit, which he characterized as "meritless."

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