

Memphis Declaration voices dissatisfaction

May 11, 2006

Posted: 5/12/06

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (ABP)—About 30 Southern Baptist conservatives from diverse backgrounds announced they repent of the “triumphalism,” arrogance and isolationism they believe threatens the integrity of the 16-million-member denomination.

Saying they represent “disparate constituencies” in the Southern Baptist Convention, the participants met behind closed doors in Memphis, Tenn., early this month and later issued a “Memphis Declaration,” expressing concern and dissatisfaction over the current direction of the SBC.

But the group stopped short of proposing a candidate for SBC office or actions to be taken at the SBC convention next month—to the surprise of some participants.

Couched in terms of repentance, the statement says in part: “We publicly repent of triumphalism about Southern Baptist causes and narcissism about Southern Baptist ministries which have corrupted our integrity. ... We publicly repent of an arrogant spirit that has infected our partnership with fellow Christians”

The closed-door Memphis meeting was organized by a group of mostly

young pastors who have called for more openness in SBC life, particularly among agency trustees.

Benjamin Cole, pastor of Parkview Baptist Church in Arlington, acknowledged he and a few others called the invitation-only meeting. Only one media representative, Don Hinkle, editor of the Missouri Baptist Convention's conservative Pathway newspaper, was invited.

The meeting included participants in the SBC's loose-knit young leaders network, "emerging church" pastors, Baptist bloggers, leaders of Calvinist groups in the SBC, and others on the outside of convention leadership.

Some in the Memphis group are urging dissident International Mission Board trustee Wade Burleson, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Enid, Okla., to be nominated for SBC president during the Greensboro, N.C., convention as an alternative to the established leadership. So far, he has declined interest publicly. But in a recent blog, he seemed more open to the possibility.

The "Memphis Declaration" is posted at www.twelwitnesses.blogspot.com.

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