

American Baptists shut news office in revamp: Chief spokesperson leaves after 23 years

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Richard W. Schramm, chief news spokesman for the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. for the past decade, will soon leave that post in a reorganization at the denomination's headquarters.

Schramm and the two other staffers in the communications office will depart October 31 and their functions will become part of "a new ministry to be called Mission and Resource Development," A. Roy Medley, ABC general secretary, announced September 26.

Schramm, 55, who has worked at the ABC headquarters in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, since 1973, said the "mission development redirection will be defined when the associate general secretary for that newly created position is named and starts to map things out."

The moves came amid controversies over homosexuality and local church autonomy that were often reported minimally by the communications office. The conservative Pacific Southwest region recently announced its intent to leave the ABC, and its executive minister met September 22 with conservative counterparts from seven other regions to affirm traditional positions. More than 350 conservative church leaders, meeting two days later at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Illinois, discussed forming a new body for mission work, said the sponsoring American Baptist Evangelicals.