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EDITORS' NOTE: The following five stories focus on the nation's struggle with legalized gambling.

Mississippi Gulf Coast eyeing  
Las Vegas, Atlantic City status

Baptist Press  
7/11/96

BILOXI, Miss. (BP)--"There are only three viable gaming markets," Sarah Ralston, a spokeswoman for Circus Circus Enterprises, known for packaging its casino hotels as family resorts, told The New York Times.

"Las Vegas, of course. Atlantic City, of course. And now, the Gulf Coast of Mississippi."

Mississippi. A state where one out of four residents, demographically, are called Southern Baptists.

And now, a state sporting 30 gambling casinos, from the Gulf of Mexico shoreline north to Tunica and Coahoma counties -- less than 20 miles south of Memphis. In Tunica County, once known as the nation's poorest, the new Grand Casino, billed as the nation's third-largest, opened June 24, attracting 70,000 enthusiasts.

The growth of gambling in Mississippi made its way onto the front of The New York Times business section July 9.

In a \$482 billion industry nationally, Las Vegas is a \$5.7 billion gambling market and Atlantic City, \$3.7 billion, with the Mississippi Gulf Coast -- despite its lack of jet service -- soon to reach the \$1-billion level, nearly half the total for the whole state, the newspaper reported. Mississippi's target market, the newspaper states, stretches across the Southeast to parts of Texas and, in the winter, the Midwest.

Gambling, to be sure, has become a social force in the state, said Paul Jones, director of Mississippi Baptists' Christian Action Commission.

In addition to fostering an economic and political dependence on casinos, Jones said of the gaming industry: "They're after the mothers, fathers and children. They have to create a new generation of gamblers and will do everything possible to convince people that gambling is a harmless form of entertainment."

In Mississippi, a lone casino in 1992 grew to 30 in two years, and the damage now appears in daily headlines, Jones said.

For example, he mentioned a 47-year-old woman serving eight years in prison for embezzling \$40,000 from her Baptist church and \$5,000 from a library fund.

Professionals like stockbrokers and others with access to clients' funds also have abused their trust to support gambling habits, Jones said, while others have committed suicide due to the pressure of gambling debts.

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Two years ago developers tried to get a permit to erect a casino next to Gulfshores Baptist Assembly, the state's largest retreat center. Jones said they failed because of the state Baptist convention's opposition -- and soon after the group was proven to have ties to organized crime.

Among the other social disasters Jones listed are parents dropping their children off on street corners to roam the streets while they gamble. Others leave their children locked inside cars in the casino parking lot.

One time a couple gave an automatic weapon to their young son, who pointed it at a security guard when he approached the car, Jones recounted.

"When that happened they realized they had to do something," he said, adding, "The casinos are worried about children dying of heat exhaustion in the summer."

Despite the negative consequences, the influence of casinos has even penetrated churches, Jones said, noting that Sunday school teachers in two of Jackson's largest Baptist churches recently had suggested having class parties at a casino.

Concerning churches, The New York Times reported: "Although some Biloxi churches still scorn their new neighbors, the region's moral qualms appear to be receding. Even churches run bus trips. Margaret Murphy, playing the nickel slots at Grand Casino, came on one of two 44-passenger buses filled with retirees from St. Dominic's Church in Mobile.

"For \$12, she gets the bus ride, a 77-item lunch buffet and the show. 'You can't beat that for a whole day out,' Murphy said. In the end, though, the casino almost always comes out ahead. Murphy usually bets until she's lost \$50, switching to the nickel machines from the quarter machines as her cash runs low," the newspaper reported.

Jones noted the Six Flags amusement park chain has opened smaller attractions next to casinos called "Funtricity." Some pastors have gotten mad at him for advising them not to hold youth outings there, he said.

"Some churches heavily use these facilities," Jones said, "even though they have all kinds of activity together. You can't separate the casino from the amusement park. But one pastor is into church growth and he thinks anything that brings people in is fine."

The New York Times, recounting the growth of gambling on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, reported: "Four 1,000-room hotels are now being built, and a fifth is planned. Mirage Resorts, vowing to outdo all comers, announced a \$200 million, 1,000-room hotel and casino last fall, raised the stakes in April to \$325 million and 1,200 rooms and then upped them again in May to \$475 million and 1,800 rooms -- more than any hotel in Atlantic City can boast. ... Imperial Palace, which owns a major Las Vegas resort, is building (a) 1,000-roomer here with a 30-story tower, the tallest in the state. Circus Circus wants to be next with an equally tall 1,400-room hotel."

The newspaper reported the casino industry "is throwing most of its resources into states that welcome it. And Mississippi, desperate and poor, sees the business as its economic savior. It has enacted some of the most liberal gambling laws, with unlimited licenses for dockside casinos, this side of Reno."

Part of the Gulf Coast's appeal, the newspaper reported, involves the region's beaches and year-round golfing and fishing.

Mississippi politicians seem to have avoided "the quarrels and meddling that slowed Atlantic City's growth and helped kill plans for the world's largest casino in New Orleans," the Times reported.

"State laws have been loosened to the point where, while casinos still must float, they don't ever have to move," it noted. "The newest are just vast boxes built on flotillas of barges welded together and permanently moored. At the Grand Casino in Biloxi, doors, passages and entryways from the hotel and parking lot to the casino all but erase the shoreline."

"That probably is our biggest challenge: making people understand that these are casinos you would see in Las Vegas," Denis O'Brien, regional manager for Grand Casinos, was quoted as saying.

Addressing their economic impact, the newspaper said the average house price rose to nearly \$90,000 in 1994 from \$68,500 in 1992, while employment soared 17 percent, to 159,270 jobs at the end of 1995 from 136,250 three years earlier.

In the only sentence about gambling's moral effects on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, The New York Times stated, "The police and social workers say that on the coast as elsewhere the growth of gambling has led to higher rates of divorce, crime and personal bankruptcy."

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Compiled by Art Toalston, with reporting by Ken Walker. Betty Kemp contributed to this article.

Louisiana voters weighing  
state's gambling addiction

Baptist Press  
7/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Can Louisiana kick the habit -- the state's addiction to gambling?

Voters get to decide in a two-step process Sept. 21 and Nov. 5.

"Louisiana tends to be like an alcoholic -- we can't just take one drink," anti-gambling lobbyist C.B. Forgotston told National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" recently.

"And gambling was a prime example of that, where we just said, 'Just one thing, just have the lottery.' And then the next year we took on video poker and riverboats. Then the next year we took on (a New Orleans) land-based casino. All kinds of people were warning us, 'Look, you can't just take one little drink; you're going to become a drunk.' And that's what we did," Forgotston said.

NPR reporter John Burnett recounted as the state widened its doors to legalized gambling the past six years, "trouble followed. Federal agents uncovered Mafia involvement and alleged political bribery, and the giant New Orleans casino went bankrupt."

Burnett further reported: "An eight-month investigation by the New Orleans Times-Picayune revealed that former Gov. Edwin Edwards saw to it that his friends and relatives made millions profiteering from the gambling industry.

"On the criminal side, the FBI is investigating Louisiana legislators for possible illegal ties to the video poker business. And in an unrelated case, 24 Mafia members have been sent to prison for siphoning off video poker profits. One state representative has pleaded guilty in that case."

Gov. Mike Foster, swept into office in a November 1995 anti-gambling backlash, said at the governor's prayer breakfast earlier this year, "I think if we pray, if you talk to your neighbors around the state, we can rid ourselves of something that is morally wrong, economically wrong for our state."

Foster, an Episcopalian, noted he has proposed a 1996-97 budget that includes extra state spending -- made possible by growth in non-gambling revenue in Louisiana.

"If I wasn't convinced before, I am convinced now that we can live without that (gambling) revenue," Foster said -- a lofty goal if, as NPR's Burnett reported, "collectively, gambling paid the state more than \$400 million in taxes last year, or a dime of every dollar in the state treasury."

What voters will decide on Sept. 21 is a constitutional amendment that would prevent the Louisiana legislature from legalizing gambling without local option votes and to vote yes or no to forms of gambling already legalized in the state.

The constitutional amendment must be approved by a simple majority of voters and would require local option elections:

- before any new form of gambling could be conducted within a parish.
- before any existing form of gambling could be introduced and conducted in a new parish.

- before additional riverboat gambling or riverboat gambling at a different docking facility could be conducted within a parish in which it already is approved.

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If approved, the amendment would ensure that the scenario of the past few years -- when the state legislature approved gambling without a vote of the people -- could not occur again.

Then, on Nov. 5, Louisianians in each parish will be given the opportunity to decide what gambling will be allowed in their area.

Under the plan, voters in every Louisiana parish will decide whether video draw poker will be allowed in their area. Voters in any parish adjoining a waterway included in riverboat gambling legislation will vote on that form of gambling.

And voters in New Orleans will decide the fate of the land-based Harrah's casino at the foot of Canal Street once touted to become the world's largest. The day before Thanksgiving last year, after repeated assurances all was well, Harrah's -- the nation's largest casino company -- declared the \$850 million project bankrupt, closed its nearby temporary casino, laid off 3,000 workers and discontinued work on the mammoth structure.

"It looked like a sure bet: the world's largest casino, a Las Vegas under one roof, in the heart of New Orleans, a city with 10 million tourists a year," an article in The New York Times recounted June 2. Wagering at Harrah's nearby temporary casino, however, amounted to only 40 percent of what had been expected, and much of it was by local folk, the newspaper reported.

Louisiana's Sept. 21 and Nov. 5 gambling ballots revolve around one's view of money, Lynn P. Clayton, editor of the Baptist Message, the state convention's newspaper, noted.

In a June 13 editorial, Clayton wrote: "Louisiana Baptists must decide if they will accept the standard of the world that says, 'Money is best; if something means money, it is good,' or the standards of the Bible that say, 'You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor,' and, 'You shall not make other gods besides me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves' (Exodus 20:17;23)."

Of Louisiana's six-year gambling money flow, State Rep. Tony Perkins, a Republican, told NPR: "It was such an intense period of time where so much money was coming into the state that it was like a feeding frenzy. It was like mixing, you know, gasoline and a bonfire. It just -- it exploded, and that's what we saw happen in terms of the federal investigations, the alleged criminal activity, all of that."

Average people helped fuel the money explosion, NPR reporter Burnett added, interviewing a restaurant video poker patron named "Chuck" as a case in point.

"They had a guy come in here the other day," Chuck recounted, "and he was trying to get some positive response from the people who were playing the poker machines about, 'Well, why do you play video poker?' And I said, 'Because I'm addicted to it.' And he says, 'Oh, no, no, can I just say it's like a hobby?' And I said, 'No, it's an addictive game,' you know?"

"It started with poker machines about two-and-a-half years ago, OK? And they're all around," Chuck continued. "I mean, with a casino, at least you have to make a special trip to go out there, OK? Poker machines are in all the restaurants, all the bars. If you have a little bit of an addictive personality, man, that's it, you're gone, you know? I had -- I walked in today to work, I had \$75 in my pocket. I'm broke right now. ... I'm not the only one like this, but it happens all over the French Quarter, all over New Orleans. The bar owners make money off of this. The state makes money off it. The only people it hurts are like who you see -- working-class, middle-class people who really don't have the money to spend on it because it's extremely addictive."

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Compiled by Art Toalston, with reporting by C. Lacy Thompson.

**Minnesota may reflect tide  
turning against gambling**

MINNEAPOLIS (BP)--No longer is the spread of gambling "seemingly inevitable," an article in The New York Times stated June 2.

After all, in eight years, gambling spread from two states to 24.

But, the newspaper reported, "Only two states have legalized gambling since the beginning of 1994. In 22 others that have faced the issue, voters, lawmakers or the courts have refused to do so."

Additionally, "Industry lobbyists no longer predict that almost every state will have casinos by the turn of the century," the Times reported.

Maybe Minnesota is one reason why.

Reader's Digest, the nation's most widely read magazine, carried a report in its April issue about the disastrous consequences of casinos in that state.

"In less than a decade legalized gambling ... has created a new class of addicts, victims and criminals whose activities are devastating families," it said.

"Even conservative estimates ... suggest that problem gambling costs Minnesotans more than \$200 million per year in taxes, lost income, bad debts and crime."

Taken from a report in the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, the Reader's Digest story said the state's eight-year-old gambling experiment has caused many ills, such as:

-- Between 1988-94, counties with casinos saw crime rates rise twice as fast as those without casinos.

-- A huge increase in bankruptcy filings, with more than 1,000 people a year taking that action, with average debts of \$40,000. Among the filers was a county commissioner who estimated her gambling losses at \$100,000.

-- Seventeen new pawnshops have sprung up near casinos, as gamblers hock possessions to support their habits.

-- At least half a dozen suicides have been linked to gambling, and the report said the rate among pathological gamblers is believed to rival that of drug addicts.

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Compiled by Art Toalston, with reporting by Tom Strode.

**Kentuckians brace for onslaught  
of gambling woes from Indiana**

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press  
7/11/96

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Energized by two more Indiana casinos opening their doors for business in 1997, Kentuckians Against Casino Gambling recently held their first strategy session in a year.

The group includes representatives from a diverse spectrum, such as the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Kentucky Temperance League, Kentucky Council of Churches, Roman Catholics and Lexington's Keeneland Race Track.

"We hope to get other participants," said Nancy Jo Kemper, director of the Kentucky Council of Churches and an outspoken casino opponent, "groups like the Urban League, PTAs and some other civic and community organizations.

"We're a pretty massive group and we think we can amass some pretty good arguments against it."

While the broad-based coalition succeeded in preventing casino interests from getting legislation to the floor of the 1994 Kentucky General Assembly, some may think they lost the war.

After the Indiana Gaming Commission recently awarded Caesar's World a license for Harrison County, the company announced a plan for a \$228-million complex southwest of downtown Louisville.

A riverboat casino also is planned for the Lawrenceburg, Ind., area, a half hour from Cincinnati and its northern Kentucky suburbs. The pair will join Indiana and Illinois casinos operating next to Henderson and Paducah.

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The neighboring casino push is part of a national trend in the 1990s that has seen more than 500 spread across the country, according to a recent issue of Christianity Today magazine.

That article said casinos now operate in 27 states, providing a million jobs and \$40 billion in annual revenues.

Claude Witt, director of the Kentucky Temperance League, declined to reveal the anti-casino group's battle plan but said it will try to educate people about the threat casinos pose to Kentucky's businesses and other interests.

He also pledged an active campaign against Caesar's plans to erect a multi-million-dollar gondola system that would ferry people across the Ohio River from Jefferson County to the casino.

"I think we won the battle and the war continues," he said. "I don't think we've lost. The thing that concerns me the most is the tragedy of the church as a whole not being willing to recognize this as a problem. There's no unified effort to look at this as a moral issue."

Witt, a member of Farmdale Baptist Church in Louisville, said while it is difficult to cite a "thou shalt not" from the Bible, Scriptures about covetousness, stealing and being good stewards apply to gambling. So does the verse about Roman guards casting lots for Christ's clothing, he said.

Witt finds agreement from Bill Patterson, a Baptist pastor in Henderson, Ky., which last November saw Casino Aztar open for business in neighboring Evansville, Ind.

Henderson has its own gambling problem, too, he said, with that city's Ellis Park attracting a bevy of gamblers to wager on live and televised horse racing.

"God's way is to work for what we have," said the pastor of First Baptist Church. "Gambling undercuts the work ethic and breeds the something-for-nothing attitude, which is getting more pervasive in our society."

Yet, Witt acknowledged the issue must be fought on economic grounds, which he said will be an uphill battle because so many states have bought the argument that gambling represents a "quick fix" for budget problems.

The budgetary bonanza for Harrison County has certainly attracted the attention of officials there. Caesar's was to present two community foundations with \$6.75 million in June to pay for road construction, economic development and expansion of the county library, according to the Louisville Courier-Journal.

But Kemper said he believes the impact of such eye-popping development will only have short-term effects on Kentucky. And, she said, the proliferation of casinos may soon cause their attractiveness to sputter.

The more states that legalize it, the easier it will be to resist, she said, with the "glut" helping to illustrate the threat casinos pose to Kentucky's horse industry.

"Politically, that's a good axe to grind in this state," said the pastor of Lexington's New Union Christian Church. "If the state can stay free of casinos, we will be in an economic advantage in the long run."

"They would create a number of social and economic problems for small business, families, recreational opportunities, domestic abuse and other problems."

Witt traveled to Gulfport, Miss., three years ago to learn more about the impact of that state's casinos. He said those problems include a proliferation of prostitution, thievery, restaurant closings, bankruptcies and a general increase in crime.

"It's universal," he said. "I look for the same problems here. It's easy to get lured into it. Everyone is congenial in casinos; they go out of their way to be nice to you and come around with free food and drinks."

Randy Jones, who recently left the Northern Kentucky Baptist Association to become Kentucky's state director of missions on July 1, pledged assistance for DOMs around the state who are opposed to casino interests.

He said he worries about the impact they have on those who can least afford it, since he observed problems with the poor in Covington and Newport misusing scarce resources to gamble.

"People who need money to put food on the table use it to buy lottery tickets," he said. "It's almost like a tax on the poor. But in southeastern Indiana there was barely a whimper against casinos. Most seemed glad to have it. They looked at the bottom line without considering the broader social implications."

**Gambling's first-glance appeal  
draws Baptists' wary response**      **By Ken Walker**

PADUCAH, Ky. (BP)--At first glance, the Players River Boat Casino in neighboring Metropolis, Ill., has had few negatives on this western Kentucky city of 27,000.

Hotel and motel construction have increased the past several years, according to Bill Bartleman, a reporter for the Paducah Sun and a member of Reidland Baptist Church.

Restaurants are on the upswing, too, he said, as people dine here before crossing the Ohio River to gamble.

Key crime indicators show mixed results. While 1995 larcenies rose 9.4 percent over the previous year, the former was still 8.9 percent lower than in 1991. Embezzlements dropped from 11 to five over that four-year span.

However, burglaries rose 9.5 percent and auto thefts increased 17.7 percent.

"We haven't attributed any major problems to the casino," said Danny Carroll of the Paducah Police Department. "It's been great for our area. In Metropolis, I'm sure they've seen an increase in everything."

That includes social costs not readily reflected in statistics, said Paul Blizzard, pastor of Reidland Baptist Church. He learned about them when he took advantage of Players dropping its cover charge for a two-hour gambling cruise.

Blizzard went last fall to investigate the activity, while witnessing to gamblers and sticking gospel tracts in the slot machines.

On his trip a security guard bragged how a former schoolteacher had quit her job and was earning more money as a full-time gambler.

"I said, 'Isn't that great? She was helping kids and now she's a gambler,'" he recalled. "The boat has drawn a lot of people with the idea they can get rich. I saw a lot of working-class people who can't afford it. The majority are retired, though; they bring bus loads from Chicago and all over."

The pastor saw many sad events on the river, such as:

-- A gambler who scanned more than a dozen credit cards in a futile attempt to find available credit to buy more tokens.

-- People who won as much as \$600 or \$700 ultimately dumping all their money back into the slots.

"I never saw them empty the machine and go home with their winnings," he said. "You could see the gambling fever. They were never satisfied with what they had."

At First Baptist Church, pastor Kevin McCallon said many scoffed when the Sun printed a story about "prosperity" spurred by the casino.

The reason is a job on the boat doesn't pay much better than working at McDonald's or a local retail outlet, he said.

"We don't think there's a money tree across the river," said McCallon. "It hasn't done anything for the quality of life in this area."

Still, he said, First Baptist tries to influence that activity by ministering to newcomers who work at hotels and other businesses -- including the casino.

"They're like anyone else," the pastor said. "People are often looking for a church home. We reach out and treat them like anyone else; we don't shun them. We don't like the business but we try to reach them and thus affect the business."

Further up the river, the city of Henderson, Ky., saw Casino Aztar -- which advertises in downtown Louisville and other Kentucky cities -- open in Evansville, Ind., last November.

Although residents say it's too early to determine the impact, Bill Patterson has noticed a number of "quick-loan" operations popping up along Ky. 41, the main highway to Evansville.

"What I expect to happen is the Atlantic City story," said the pastor of First Baptist Church. "It's a flash for awhile and then other crime elements begin to move in, more river boats and strip joints, things like that."

While pastoring in Louisiana, he knew people whose gambling caused them to lose their homes and families. He looks for similar tragedies in Henderson before long.

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In Louisiana he counseled with one man who had saved \$10,000, hoping to buy a new home for his mother. Confident God would help him win, the church member ignored his warnings against gambling with his savings.

"When he lost, he didn't want to come back to church," Patterson said. "He dropped out for awhile and came back defeated. There's a deceptive element about this."

In preparing a recent sermon, John Dunaway dug up a telling statistic from the "1993 Yearbook for American and Canadian Churches." While residents of the two nations gave \$3.2 billion to churches that year, they gambled away that much in just three and a half days.

"I wish it wasn't here," said the pastor of Community Baptist Church and a longtime foe of the Kentucky Lottery. "It's not a good influence. When people go in there, most of them will come out losers."

Steve Thompson, director of missions for the Green Valley Baptist Association, said he read recently the average person loses \$83 per visit to Aztar.

"People who are throwing that \$83 away could use it better somewhere else," he said.

And, other negative effects are showing up in Evansville, according to the director of missions for the Southwest Indiana Baptist Association.

Don Childress said there already have been arrests for embezzlement by people who fleeced their employer to support their gambling habit.

"It's amazing the newspaper came out with that after the fact but didn't mention it before the election," said Childress, recalling the losing battle 40 SBC churches fought against the casino.

"I believe in time (the damage) will become very obvious. There will be a movement to get rid of gambling and it won't be very long coming."

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Clinton praises unity in effort  
to combat black church burnings      By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
7/11/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Clinton praised congressional and religious unity in a July 10 White House ceremony signifying the enactment of legislation intended to combat the arson of church buildings of predominantly African American congregations.

The Church Arson Prevention Act expands the federal government's authority in investigating and prosecuting crimes of defacing or damaging churches or other religious property on the basis of race, color or ethnicity.

The president signed the bill July 3 immediately after receiving it from a Congress which approved it without opposition. With the agreement of congressional members, Clinton said, he signed the bill while Congress was recessed.

Congress and Clinton acted in response to the growing problem of the burning of predominantly black congregations' houses of worship. About 40 church buildings of predominantly black congregations have been burned since January 1995. There have been 190 incidents of fire or desecration to houses of worship during that time, the president said, but the proportion of black church burnings has risen dramatically.

"Everyone involved -- Congress and the president -- has moved very swiftly on an issue which well deserves swift action," said Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission staff member Will Dodson, who attended the ceremony in the Rose Garden. "They are to be commended."

The attacks "may be intended to divide Americans, but they have had just the opposite effect," Clinton said at the ceremony. "We all know when someone burns a house of worship it must mean that the person committing the crime views the people who worship in that house as somehow fundamentally less human. We know it's wrong, and we know it violates everything that this country was founded upon. We see a spirit today with Republicans and Democrats here that rejects that and says America is better than that."

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The president cited the bill's chief sponsors: Sen. Edward Kennedy, D.-Mass.; Sen. Lauch Faircloth, R.-N.C.; Rep. Henry Hyde, R.-Ill; and Rep. John Conyers, D.-Mich. He also expressed gratitude to the many religious groups which have offered aid to the victimized black churches.

"We have to continue our struggle against racism and religious bigotry," Clinton said. "I want to compliment all the religious organizations and other groups in this country that have agreed to come together to help to rebuild these churches, showing that we can reach across lines of race and religion and region to bring all law-abiding Americans together in this rebuilding effort."

The Southern Baptist Convention has been among those groups which have provided assistance.

The convention passed a resolution at its June 11-13 annual meeting condemning the arson of black churches and pledging support. At the same meeting, about \$280,000 in gifts and pledges was received in a special offering to help rebuild the churches, according to SBC officials. More than 17,000 Southern Baptist volunteer construction workers also are available to assist the churches in rebuilding.

Dodson, the CLC's legal counsel and director of government relations, participated with about 50 religious leaders and government officials in a June 26 White House prayer breakfast focused on the church burnings.

The president "emphasized that he did not want this to be a political issue, and he noted that a broad spectrum of religious and political leaders were indeed cooperating in the spirit of unity to address this issue," Dodson said.

The Church Arson Prevention Act not only expands the federal government's authority to prosecute such crimes, it doubles the maximum prison sentence to 20 years for damage to religious property that causes bodily injury. It increases the statute of limitations from five to seven years. It also authorizes the Department of Housing and Urban Development to guarantee \$10 million in private loans to help rebuild churches and other houses of worship which are damaged in such crimes.

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Seminary Extension names  
director of the year

Baptist Press  
7/11/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Richard Tapscott, director of Seminary Extension for the Caldwell/Lyon Baptist Association, Princeton, Ky., has been named Extension Center Director of the Year.

Tapscott was presented a plaque by Seminary Extension representative, Leon Boyd, at the director of associational missions meeting during Home Missions Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Tapscott has been his association's Seminary Extension center director 16 years. During that time, the center has had at least two classes each year, with an average of 20 students enrolled in each.

Tapscott, a retired pastor, has personally taken advantage of the learning opportunities available through Seminary Extension. In completing 35 courses, he has earned the pastoral ministries diploma, growth in ministry diploma and advanced diploma.

Harold Greenfield, director of missions for Caldwell/Lyon Baptist Association, said Tapscott "has been dependable, diligent and faithful in promoting Seminary Extension work. He is 'Mr. Seminary Extension' in our area."

Seminary Extension, with offices in Nashville, Tenn., is governed by the presidents of the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries. The presidents recently announced the current program of Seminary Extension will continue for five years. Any changes thereafter, they said, will come as a result of strategic planning designed to improve, update and enhance the program without sacrificing its present strengths.

The presidents also indicated they plan to name a new director for Seminary Extension soon. Meanwhile, Doran C. McCarty continues as interim director.

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**Missouri's executive director,  
Donald Wideman, sets retirement**

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Donald V. Wideman has announced his retirement as executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention, effective Aug. 31, 1997.

Wideman, 68, made the formal announcement during the quarterly meeting of the MBC executive board July 9. The board accepted his retirement announcement and elected a search committee to seek his successor.

"I will have concluded 10 years of service, which will be a fulfillment of the suggested tenure by the search committee," said Wideman, who noted he will be 70 by the time he retires. "By starting the process now, this will allow sufficient time for a search committee to conduct a thorough search and have a replacement on the job by the time I leave.

"There are no living ex-executive directors (in Missouri); my ambition is to be the first," he said. Wideman noted the past two executive directors, Earl O. Harding and Rheubin L. South, both died in office, Harding from a heart attack and South from leukemia.

The board's administrative committee, charged with recommending a search committee and the guidelines for the process, opted to follow the same process in seeking Wideman's successor as it used to call him.

The four current executive board officers and the chairs of the board's six standing committees will comprise the search committee. Should the committee's work continue into the next convention year, the new MBC president would join the committee as an ex-officio member.

The board officers are chairman Doyle Sager, pastor, First Baptist, Sedalia; first vice chairman Jeff Barnes, pastor, First Baptist, Blue Springs; second vice chairman Arthur Mallory, member, First Baptist, Springfield; and recording secretary Drew Hill, pastor, First Baptist, Lamar. The six committee chairs are Fred Fishel, pastor, First Baptist, Ferguson, St. Louis; John Tindel, member, First Baptist, Cabool; Donald Bridges, pastor, Jefferson Heights, Imperial; Dalton Ham, member, Riverview Baptist, Osage Beach; Lucy Engelbrecht, member, First Baptist, Tipton; and Lyndell Worthen, pastor, First Baptist, Springfield.

A native of St. Louis and a lifelong Missourian, Wideman was pastor of four churches from 1955-87. The last of those, First Baptist in North Kansas City, was a 14-year pastorate.

The retiring executive director was second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1984-85, and president of the Missouri Baptist Convention, 1979-80. He has been a trustee of Baptist Memorial Hospital, Kansas City, Mo.; William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo.; and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

Wideman attended St. Louis Baptist College (Hannibal-LaGrange extension) and graduated from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City. He received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from William Jewell in 1980 and an honorary doctor of sacred theology degree from Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, in 1989.

Wideman and his wife, Marian, have four children and six grandchildren.

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**Pate retiring from BSSB  
after 40 years in SBC work**

**By Chip Alford**

**Baptist Press  
7/11/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Billie J. Pate, associate director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division, has announced plans to retire, effective Sept. 30, following a 40-year career in denominational work.

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After her retirement, Pate will serve one year as a special consultant to Bill Taylor, director of the Bible teaching-reaching division. Taking over many of her administrative duties will be Dick Gillespie, currently senior manager of the division's management support section. Gillespie has been named director of a newly formed administrative management department, effective Oct. 1.

"It is difficult to accurately measure the enormous contribution Billie Pate has made to the Lord's work for 40-plus years of denominational ministry," Taylor said. "During the last 27 years at the Baptist Sunday School Board, Billie's keen insight and perceptive understanding have helped provide structure and foundation which have influenced churches and Bible study leaders around the world."

Pate assumed her current position with the Sunday School Board in September 1992. With almost 200 employees, the Bible teaching-reaching division produces three Sunday school curriculum lines -- Life and Work, Convention Uniform and Bible Book -- and other Bible study resources for churches and individuals. Ninety-three percent of Southern Baptist churches purchase some or all of their Bible study literature from the BSSB.

Since joining the Sunday School Board staff in 1969, Pate has served as associate director of the former Sunday school division and as supervisor of the pilot project section, supervisor of the youth section and growth coordinator in the former church training department. She also has been editor of event, a leisure-reading magazine for youth, and Youth Leadership, a quarterly magazine for Sunday school workers.

Prior to joining the Sunday School Board, Pate was director of field services for the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham, Ala.

"The highlight of my journey in the Southern Baptist Convention has been my association with competent, committed people in the agencies, in the state conventions, in associations and in the churches," Pate said. "I have received more than I have given. As a steward of this rich heritage, and because my calling has not retired, I look forward to being a part of God's continuing work."

Pate is a graduate of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and holds the M.R.E. degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. She also received the M.S.S.W. degree from the University of Louisville.

A recognition banquet for Pate will be held at the Sunday School Board during the annual December planning meetings with state convention workers.

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(BP) digital photo of Billie Pate is posted in the SBCNet News Room. Prints are available from the Baptist Sunday School Board's communications department.

Minister's Wives fellowship  
award to Crumpler criticized

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press  
7/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--An award to a former moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship by the Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives during the recent annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention has drawn criticism from some of the group's key supporters but was defended by a former president who was responsible for the nomination.

Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, former executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to the SBC, was awarded the Mrs. J. M. Dawson Distinguished Service Award for the Outstanding Minister's Wife during the 41st annual luncheon of the group June 11 in New Orleans. Crumpler left WMU in 1989 and married a pastor in Cincinnati. Later, she became active in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a group of moderate Southern Baptists critical of SBC leadership, and was the group's moderator, similar to a president, for a year.

The Indiana Baptist, newsjournal of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, reported in its July 2 edition several women active in the Ministers' Wives group were upset the award was given to someone actively involved in a group competing with the SBC.

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Delilah Sullivan, wife of the executive director of the Indiana convention, told the Indiana Baptist, "I felt like there were ministers' wives who have served in that role for years and years that are more deserving. Giving this award to Carolyn Crumpler was a shocker."

Sullivan felt Crumpler's short tenure as a pastor's wife was not worthy of this type of award, the newspaper reported, adding it was "inappropriate" for the leader of competing missionary funding organization to be esteemed for her denominational service within the SBC.

But the former president of the ministers' wives group who proposed the Crumpler nomination said proper procedures were followed and Crumpler was deserving of the award.

"I find it particularly distressing that a servant of Christ like Carolyn Crumpler, who has served our denomination so faithfully, should be 'demonized' for participating in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," Alice G. Marshall told Baptist Press July 10. Marshall was the president of the group in 1995 which approved the award to be presented in 1996. Marshall is the wife of the executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Ministers' Wives officers for 1996 found themselves in a difficult position, according to this year's president, Betty Baggott, who said, "I sought the heart of the Lord in every decision I made, and from the positive spirit and wonderful attendance at the luncheon, it is evident God honored my request. Giving Carolyn Crumpler (the award) was a matter of integrity. She was announced as the recipient both at the 1995 (ministers' wives) executive committee luncheon and at the annual luncheon (last year in Atlanta).

"As to the protocol followed in Crumpler's selection by the 1995 officers, concerning that the entire board was not polled, I chose to believe it was an oversight and lack of studying the bylaws on the part of the 1995 officers," said Baggott, wife of a pastor in Opelika, Ala.

"I did feel the presentation of this award was poor timing because of all the conflict in our convention right now," Baggott told Baptist Press. "But this did not alter the fact that (Crumpler) and the WMU have been friends to the SBC Ministers' Wives conference over the years." Baggott said the WMU has contributed a sizeable monetary gift and makes contributions of gifts and other favors for all women who attend the luncheons.

Following the New Orleans luncheon, Baggott appointed a committee to "look into how often (the award) should be given."

Marshall, who was out of the country when the award was presented in New Orleans, defended the manner in which Crumpler was presented to the 1995 executive committee meeting. Although Crumpler's name was presented without prior notice to the group, Marshall contended no member of the executive committee "expressed disapproval or voted against it at that meeting."

The award, given sporadically, was established to honor "distinct denominational contribution beyond the local church" and is given when the group's executive committee feels it is advisable. It has been given to eight women, all pastors' wives, in the past.

The Indiana Baptist reported some of the 1996 officers expressed reservations about the award but it was decided the award would be presented at the close of the luncheon without significant fanfare.

Another former president of the women's group, Nancy Sullivan, wife of the executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, also was not comfortable with the Crumpler decision. Sullivan acknowledged she did not stand to oppose the selection; "I should have because I did not favor it."

"I was not in favor of it, not because Carolyn Crumpler doesn't deserve an award," Sullivan said, "but she doesn't deserve this award. Others have served in the position of a minister's wife for years and years and have never been awarded anything."

The New Orleans wives' luncheon drew a capacity crowd of 800 women to hear Jeanette Henry, Orlando, Fla., wife of Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, and president of the SBC the past two years.

Dolores Taylor, wife of the pastor of First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Ga., was elected president for 1997 and will preside at next year's meeting in Dallas.

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