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**Dirksen Asks Congress
For Prayer Amendment**

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Sen. Everett M. Dirksen (R., Ill.) has introduced in the United States Senate a proposed constitutional amendment which he says is designed to provide or permit voluntary prayers in public schools and other public buildings.

The Senator claims that polls show that 81 per cent of people disagree with earlier Supreme Court rulings on prayer and Bible reading in the public schools.

The bill is co-sponsored by 16 other Senators. Since this is an election year, some Baptist observers here feel it could become a campaign issue.

In 1964 seven weeks of hearings were conducted by the House Judiciary Committee on the so-called "prayer" amendments to the Constitution. Chief among these was the "Becker Amendment." The Dirksen proposal is essentially the same, except that it is not as comprehensive.

Prior to the 1964 hearings, mail to Congress was overwhelmingly in favor of some type of prayer amendment to the Constitution.

During the hearings, when the issues were debated, popular sentiment shifted 10-1 against the proposals. The Judiciary Committee took no further action then or since.

In the 88th Congress there were 115 Congressmen who introduced 152 proposed "prayer" amendments. There were 28 Senators who introduced resolutions.

Interest during the current 89th Congress, however, has been comparatively dormant with only 35 Congressmen introducing prayer amendments and only one Senator up until the time of the Dirksen proposal.

Dirksen is reported to be determined to press the issue of a prayer amendment to a vote in the Senate. He reportedly said that if the Judiciary Committee does not report out his bill he will attach it as a rider to some other bill.

In his speech on the Senate floor Dirksen said that his proposed prayer amendment comes from confusion resulting from three court cases.

The Regents' Prayer Case in New York prohibited official prayers composed by a public agency. The Schempp Case in Pennsylvania prohibited the required reading of 10 verses of the Bible in schools daily. The Stein V. Oshinsky case prohibited kindergarten school prayers under the direction and supervision of teachers, even though it was asserted that they were voluntary prayers.

The Illinois Senator attacked the lack of time for children to pray in their churches and in their homes.

"Glibly and superficially," he said, "it is argued that the place for this is in the church which children attend once or twice a week, or in the home" where the time is consumed in other activities.

Dirksen claimed that the "alert hours" for children are those spent in school. "These are the hours when the habit of prayer can best be nurtured," he continued.

He concluded, "How strange that we spend hundreds of millions of public funds every year to develop physical fitness and harden the muscles of American youth but when it comes to hardening the spiritual muscles through the practice and rehearsal of prayer, it becomes enshrouded in quaint legalism and the jargon of church and state."

Here is the text of the Dirksen proposal:

"Nothing contained in this Constitution shall prohibit the authority administering any school, school system, educational institution or other public building supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds from providing for or permitting the voluntary

participation by students or others in prayer. Nothing contained in this article shall authorize any such authority to prescribe the form or content of any prayer."

Baptist leaders here said it is too early to predict whether or not the Dirksen proposal will become a serious issue before the nation. At first glance it would seem that the odds are against it, but Dirksen is a determined man, is the Senate minority leader, is a most astute politician, and has large resources at his disposal.

Only time will tell what to expect from this latest attempt at a prayer amendment.

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Rural Texas Church
Named Tops in SBC

3-23-66

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GULFPORT, Miss. (BP)--A small, rural church at San Gabriel, Tex., that found it had to take Spanish-speaking people into its membership to minister to them, became Southern Baptists' outstanding congregation for 1965.

Recognition of the church's accomplishments in church development came during the denomination's nationwide Rural Church Conference here. (March 22-24)

"We had special missions for the Spanish people in our community; but until we started taking them into the church not much progress was made," said William R. Parmer, pastor of the San Gabriel Baptist Church during 1965.

The farming community found its population changing to 40 per cent Spanish-speaking people, and the church is trying to keep pace.

Now more than ten per cent of the 140 membership are Spanish-speaking, and one adult Sunday school class is taught in Spanish.

"There're not many people here", Parmer said, citing figures of about 350 people for a 500 square mile area. "We've had to run to keep up.

"In the six years I was pastor (he's now at Lorena, Tex.) we baptized 76 people, received 30 by transfer of membership, but only increased our membership by 20."

San Gabriel, about 60 miles from Austin, Tex., supports its people with farming and livestock. There's one industry about 14 miles away, an aluminum plant.

The awards come as part of the church development ministry of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and state Baptist conventions.

C. Wilson Brumley, secretary of the mission agency's rural-urban missions department, said the ministry provides churches with a method of planning projects in three areas: the church, the community, and the world.

Each church usually starts with a survey of its work, its opportunities, and its potential. Members share in planning projects, staffing them, checking on progress, and reporting to the church.

A record of progress is kept and becomes the basis for the judging and national recognition.

Other churches and pastors recognized in the church development ministry of the Baptist Home Mission Board as outstanding were:

In category one, which includes congregations of 100 members or less, co-winners were named.

They were the First Mexican Baptist Church, Cameron, Tex., where R. R. Martinez is pastor; and Argyle Baptist Mission, Defuniak Springs, Fla., where M. Lee King, is pastor.

Co-winners also were named in category three, congregations of 201-300 members. They were the Emmanuel Baptist Church, Greenville, Miss., where Robert Perry is pastor; and First Baptist Church, Ganado, Tex., Jerry Lemon, pastor.

Outstanding winner in category four (500-up members) was the Golden Gate Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Tex., Jim Humphries, pastor.

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The San Gabriel Church won recognition in category two, between 101 and 200 membership; then was selected as the outstanding church.

It is more than a hundred years old, having been organized after a brush arbor revival in 1856.

Parmer said some of their accomplishments during the year were the coordination of the total program toward church goals and a strong evangelism effort. A number of goals were reached by church organizations, equipment was improved, and growth realized in many areas.

Last year the church was also recognized as outstanding in its category, and Parmer was recognized as the Rural Minister of the Year by the "Progressive Farmer" and Texas A & M University, College Station.

Parmer presently is president of the Town and Country Conference at A & M University.

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Chafin Says Baptists
Must Urbanize Ministry

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NASHVILLE (BP)--A Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor outlined a detailed strategy for ministering to the inner city, saying that Baptists must develop an urban ministry if they want to be effective in the future.

Kenneth L. Chafin, evangelism professor at Southern Seminary who is on sabbatical leave for study in the Harlem section of New York City, outlined his proposed Baptist inner-city strategy to the Southern Baptist Inter-Agency Council meeting here.

"An urban ministry is a Southern Baptist necessity," declared Chafin. "It is not an option.

"Our Southern Baptist heritage is rural, but our future is urban," he said. "Our heritage is to be thankful for, but our future is one to prepare for."

The Billy Graham professor of evangelism who has spent the last six months living with his family in the center of Harlem said that the revolution which most challenges the church today is the move from rural to urban to metropolitan.

In outlining a denominational strategy for ministering to the inner city, Chafin said his suggestions were not intended to be "the last word" but rather a part of a "continuing word" in the dynamic way in which Baptists develop strategy.

He suggested that local Baptist churches must minister to such problems as ignorance, poverty, disease, unemployment, school drop-outs, juvenile delinquency, breakdown of family life, one-parent families, and a host of other ills in the inner city.

Citing the example of a church in Dallas which did not change its ministries when the community around it changed, Chafin said that the church had doomed itself to failure "by feeling that the secret of an effective ministry is built into the program, even when the program did not take into consideration the nature of the community and the needs of the people."

He said that meeting the real needs of the people in the inner-city must be built into the structure of a day-to-day program of the church led almost entirely by laymen.

"The different types of ministries are as infinite as the needs of the people," he said. Listing a few, he cited literacy classes, week-day Bible clubs, work with alcoholics or addicts, tutoring culturally-deprived children, counseling people in need, medical and legal services, recreation, nursery school for children of working mothers, and sewing clubs.

"This is no new type of ministry," he said. "Unfortunately, we (Baptists) have tended to think of such an approach as a special approach for a special place and not the normal approach for a church located in the inner-city."

The church must also determine its relationship between government programs of aid and the programs of social agencies, because of overlapping between the church and these social and government agencies, he said.

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He urged churches to establish good communications with social agencies and to cooperate with them in referrals. One recent study revealed that out of 965 referrals to a social worker, not one came from a church. Although 75 per cent of the problems confronted by the social workers could have been helped by the church, only 16 referrals were made, and all of them were made to ladies' aid societies for economic aid.

Chafin said that Urban Renewal developments so drastically affect the church that the Southern Baptist Convention should provide some kind of help to the churches in understanding the extremely complex matter.

Southern Baptists must also devise some way to deal with an entire metropolitan area as a unit, rather than ministering to only a portion of the metropolitan complex, he said.

Baptist missions work and church organization has not developed the way the cities have developed, he observed, and as a result Baptists have strong missions work on one side of the river in a big city and weak work on the other side.

"If our compassion can be controlled by a river that divides one section of a city from another, then Southern Baptists are doomed to failure in the inner-city," Chafin declared.

As an example, he said Baptist work in Kansas City is much stronger on one side of the river than it is on the other. And in Washington, D. C., where there are two million people living in one vast metropolitan unit, there are three distinct state Baptist conventions.

"No long-range approach to the inner-city will be possible unless some structure for planning is devised which involves the whole community of Baptists in the mission to a whole community," Chafin said.

He added that Baptists must re-think their standards of "success" among their churches.

"This is a cancer at the heart of the denomination," he said. "It is a sad day when our best ministers will not consider accepting churches in the most needed areas because there is no possibility of a 'successful ministry' as measured by present standards."

The seminary professor said that the denomination also needs "a long-range, competent, correlated study of urbanization and the questions it raises for our ministries."

Baptists must do all of this based on sound theological moorings, he said. "Some are suggesting that the church needs to urbanize the language of its theology.

"Now if you're talking about semantics and communication, I'll buy that," he said. "My best illustration in preaching is about a settin' hen, and most folks in the city have to go to a zoo to see a chicken. We're simply not communicating with urban people."

He said that the church must ask itself why it wants to minister in the inner city, or anywhere else. If the church is to have a unique role in the inner city it will be one which finds both its direction and stability in its theology.

He listed four other questions which Baptists must ask themselves about their future ministries in the city:

--Are we willing to accept the responsibility for the cities, to win people to Christ, and minister in His name there?

--Are we still flexible enough to make the changes which need to be made to have an effective inner-city ministry?

--Is our concern deep enough to unite all the diverse elements in the life of the denomination and focus them upon this one great need?

--Do we have enough unselfishness, compassion, and humility left to get involved with the poor, the ignorant, the homeless, and the oppressed?

"Gentlemen," he said. "The answer must be yes."