

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director**REGIONAL OFFICES**

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Editor, 161 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30303, Telephone (404) 523-2593

DALLAS R. T. McCartney, Editor, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) RI 1-1996

WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Editor, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

BUREAUBAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD Lynn M. Davis Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203,
Telephone (615) 254-1631

August 17, 1967 108

**Baptists In Fairbanks
Suffer From "Worst Flood"**

FAIRBANKS, Alaska (BP)--The raging waters of the Chena River which buried this city of 30,000 under nine feet of water brought damage estimated at hundreds of thousands of dollars to eight Baptist churches, and left more than 200 Baptist families homeless.

The raging floods hit Fairbanks just one day before the Alaska Baptist Convention was scheduled to begin, forcing its cancellation.

There wasn't a home in Fairbanks undamaged by the raging flood, termed by some the worst in Fairbank's history. Total damage was estimated at more than \$200 million.

Mid-winter, with sub-zero temperature, is only six weeks away, compounding the tragedy which was compared to the 1964 Good Friday earthquake here.

Almost immediately after the floods, Baptists began rallying to the aid of the flood-stricken city. An estimated 98 per cent of the damage was not covered by insurance.

The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta sent \$10,000 from the board's disaster fund.

Paul R. Adkins, secretary of the board's department of Christian social ministries, flew immediately to Anchorage, taking the funds to help provide food, clothes and shelter.

The Alaska Baptist Convention mobilized its total resources to help the victims of the flood.

E. W. Hunke Jr., executive secretary of the Alaska Baptist Convention, issued a plea for Baptists throughout the nation to respond to the crisis, to pray for the flood victims in Fairbanks.

Hunke said that the people of Fairbanks badly need carpenters and plumbers to come to the northern-most state and volunteer their services to help rebuild the homes and churches destroyed or badly damaged by the floods.

Adding to the tragedy, he said, is the fact that Fairbanks has only about six weeks to recover from the floods before everything freezes up in the sub-zero weather. It will take nearly two weeks for the flood waters to subside, so construction workers will have only about four weeks to rebuild the city.

"We're going to have to have help fast," Hunke said. "This has nearly wiped Fairbanks off the map."

The floods hit Fairbanks on the night of Aug. 15 after four inches of rain fell within 48 hours. It had been 1937 since comparable rains fell.

"We were running for our lives," said Hunke, who plowed through the rising water in a U. S. Army armored truck equipped with oversized tires to his home in Anchorage before the flood hit a crest.

Several well-known Baptist leaders in Fairbanks to appear on the program of the since cancelled Alaska Baptist Convention were among the evacuees of the flood.

Glendon McCullough, secretary of missionary personnel for the SBC Home Mission Board, escaped with only the clothes he wore and his briefcase. He stood for more than four hours in waist-deep water waiting for a boat to take him to a makeshift airfield.

Hunke said shuttle flights were run from Fairbanks to Anchorage (where Alaska Baptist Convention offices are located).

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Several Baptist leaders were awakened in a hotel and evacuated in the middle of the night to the local high school and the University of Alaska.

Evacuated to the higher ground were Mr. and Mrs. Porter W. Routh, executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee and his wife; Mr. and Mrs. H. Leo Eddleman, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and his wife; E. H. Westmoreland, pastor of South Main Baptist Church in Houston and president of the SBC Annuity Board; and Donald Ackland, of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Sunday School department.

When most of the Fairbanks residents and visitors went to bed on Tuesday night, the radios were announcing that the Chena River was expected to crest at 15 feet, three feet above flood stage. The crest came, however, at 19 feet.

Some sections of the city were under nine feet of water.

A new house purchased by the new pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Fairbanks, Ethridge Miller, slowly collapsed under the suffocating water pressure. Miller and his wife and seven children had arrived in Fairbanks only ten days earlier.

The First Baptist Church of Fairbanks where the Alaska Baptist Convention was scheduled to meet was under six feet of water on the day the convention was to begin. Oliver Marson, pastor of the church and president of the convention, said the church had been newly decorated for the meeting.

The new University Baptist Church building completed only one week earlier was covered by seven feet of water.

A work crew of 12 students from the Tennessee Baptist Student Union had spent the summer working with J. T. Burdine, pastor of the church, on the construction project near the University of Alaska campus.

The Friendship Mission for Indians and Eskimos in the downtown area where John Isaacs is pastor was also under water.

Hunke said all of the Baptist churches and missions were severely damaged by the floods. "Everything we have up there is under water." Damage estimates could not be determined until after the water subsides, but Hunke said damage to Baptist churches probably would be around \$200,000.

The Alaska Baptist Convention Executive Committee held an emergency session and made plans to supply water pumps and dryers for the buildings in Fairbanks. They were coordinating relief plans with the U.S. government and the Red Cross to prevent duplication of efforts.

The SBC Sunday School Board in Nashville pledged to replace any church literature destroyed by the floods.

Hunke and Routh said that the churches would have an especially hard time recovering from the disaster, because all of the 1,820 Baptists in Fairbanks had suffered so much damage to their homes and businesses that rebuilding the churches would be even more difficult. And they have only six weeks to do something before the hard freeze comes.

Hunke asked that any carpenters and plumbers who can come to Fairbanks to help to contact him, and requested that relief funds for the Baptist churches in Fairbanks be sent to the state convention office, Box 80, Anchorage, Alaska, 99501.

Routh suggested that some Baptist churches or associations might want to pay the expenses of a carpenter or plumber to come to Fairbanks to help rebuild the city.

"There are simply not words to describe how terrible it is to see the whole city covered with flood waters," Routh said.

(BP)

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---FEATURES

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August 18, 1967

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Dentist Leads Campaign
Against Obscenity, Wins

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By Larry Jerden*
Baptist Press Staff Writer

SMYRNA, Tenn. (BP)--A Christian dentist in this Tennessee town of 11,000 recently became concerned about a rising flood of obscene literature in his community, and did something about it.

Morris L. Frank is a deacon in the First Baptist Church, Smyrna. He is also a Sunday School teacher and the church's Training Union director.

But more important, he is concerned.

"For three or four years," Frank said, "the circulation of obscene literature in Smyrna went from bad to worse. The 'girlie' magazines were bad enough," he observed, "but soon paperback books started appearing on the stands.

"Some of these," he quipped, "made 'Playboy' look like a Sunday School quarterly by comparison. This hard-core pornography was what moved me to act."

Frank especially became concerned when he learned that some of the Sunday School and Training Union young people were picking up the obscenity from the stands.

A sign read "No one under 21 permitted to read these novels," but when a boy known to be under-age purchased one of the worst smut books on the stand, it was sold to him with no questions asked, Frank observed.

His first attempt at controlling the problem was simply personal contact with the dealers.

"Oftentimes the men who run the local drive-in markets or drug stores are Christians," he said, "but are not aware of the material on their bookshelves. Others have not really let themselves face the damage they are doing to their community."

Frank went around to everyone in town who sold offensive books and magazines, pointing out the harm he felt they were doing. Some removed the most offensive materials at once, others did so that night.

It became apparent, however, that to keep the materials off the stand would take more than the good will of some dealers. Frank didn't think it was necessary to prosecute under the state laws, or to publicly embarrass anyone through the press. Such display was not the goal of his concern. The removal of the harmful literature was.

Feeling that the church should do something about the problem, Frank bought some of the most offensive material, initialed and dated it in the presence of the dealer, and brought it to the next regular Brotherhood meeting. Frank presented a film about pornography to the layman's group then read some of the most offensive passages aloud to the members.

"They were really shocked," Frank said. "Some of them almost wanted to throw me out for reading such trash in the church building. But I just asked them, 'If it is bad to read it here, isn't it just as bad for your boy to read it, or for a boy to read it before coming to get your daughter for a date?'"

"With that," he said, "I think I hit home."

"You cannot believe how powerful this smut is," he said. "I know my life has been hurt, my mind affected by the poison in these books, by just reading them aloud for dramatic effect. No one, adult or young, is immune to their destructive power. This is why they are so dangerous, why they must be stopped."

The group was incited to action, some wanting to prosecute, others to attack through the press. Finally the Brotherhood voted to make the same presentation it had just received to the City Council.

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With copies of the state laws on obscenity in the councilmen's hands, Frank presented the film and again read from the books. This time, passing them around, but posing the same question: "Is this what you want your sons and daughters reading?"

Mayor Sam Ridley, also a Baptist deacon, led the vote to enforce the laws of the state. The next day Ridley and the chief of police called on all merchants of the literature, telling them of the council's decision.

"By nightfall," said Frank, "the stores almost looked like Baptist Book Stores."

Frank made some points for others to consider. "Most Christians honestly don't realize what is on the newsstands," he said. "Those who would most likely do something about it just turn their backs in disgust when they see it displayed. That is maybe solving their problem--but it helps no one else."

"There is often no need to prosecute. The change in Smyrna was made with the majority of the citizens unaware it was happening--but they all benefited. Sometimes open publicity in the press can help, but it may be better handled quietly, and out of court."

Frank pointed out that courts can be used when all other forms of persuasion fail. But suits rarely make friends--persuasion often can.

"Some people aren't crusaders," he said, "but anyone can talk to a friend who is."

Morris Frank sincerely feels obscene literature is as much a poison to the mind and soul as any device ever created by the forces of evil. As he sees such moral laxity, he realizes the obscene literature traffic can be stopped only if concerned Christians are willing to inconvenience themselves a little and act.

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* Larry Jerden is staff writer for the Baptist Sunday School Board Bureau of Baptist Press.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: BP PHOTO being mailed to state Baptist paper editors.



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Social Security Status
Of Clergy May Be Changed

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By Beth Hayworth

WASHINGTON (BP)--The House of Representatives has passed a bill that would reverse the Social Security status of ministers.

The new bill would make coverage automatic for all ministers as self-employed persons unless the minister objects on grounds of conscience.

The new provision, a part of a revamped Social Security program, now goes to the Senate where committee hearings begin Aug. 22.

Under the present Social Security law, clergymen are exempt unless they irrevocably choose to participate. The new proposal would make coverage automatic unless the minister chooses not to participate on grounds of conscience.

For ministers not presently covered by the program and for those persons ordained or employed as ministers in the future, there would be a two-year period in which they could apply for exemption.

The new bill states that the application for exemption would be allowed only if "...he is conscientiously opposed to the acceptance of any public insurance which makes payments in the event of death, disability, old age, or retirement or makes payments toward the cost of, or provides services for, medical care."

The proposed bill appears to meet the requirements of resolutions passed over a decade ago by both the Southern and the American Baptist Conventions.

In 1954, a Southern Baptist Convention resolution asked that any Social Security coverage be "a contract between the federal government and the individual, without, in any, sense involving the churches."

A resolution passed by the American Baptist Convention in 1953 asked that Social Security legislation allow a clergyman exemption on grounds of conscience.

When this bill was introduced in Congress earlier this year by Rep. George M. Rhodes (D., Pa.), the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs issued a report in which they said that the bill should not be opposed for any reasons related to religious liberty or church-state relations when compared to the present Social Security program.

Since the proposal leaves the minister in the self-employed status, the Baptist Joint Committee staff report continued, the suggested change does not directly affect churches or church agencies.

As self-employed persons, the ministers themselves are now responsible, and would continue to be if this bill becomes law, for the full amount of the Social Security tax.

This distinguishes self-employed coverage from regular coverage where the employer and employee pay equal amounts. The self-employed tax is two-thirds that of the regular tax.

The Baptist Joint Committee staff observed that if the change is approved, more churches would "feel obliged to supplement their ministers' salaries to help them bear the additional expense, but this would not be mandatory."

Under the present program 75 per cent of all ministers have chosen to be under Social Security. Ninety-five per cent of older ministers are covered. Sixty per cent of younger ministers are covered.

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Walfred H. Peterson, a member of the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said that if the new bill becomes law the initiative required to decide not to be covered by the program "would be a slight hinderance to the minister's free choice."

But, he continued, since the minister will be significantly taxed if he does not show this initiative, it does not seem likely that this hindrance will keep many ministers from acting to exclude themselves. This is one of those rare cases, Peterson observed, where "conscience is buttressed by immediate economic considerations."

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Atlanta Baptists May Create
Pastor-Church Relations Groups

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ATLANTA (BP)--The executive committee of the Atlanta Baptist Association grappled here with the problem of tensions between pastors and church members, voting after heated debate to recommend creation of two committees to deal with pastor-church relations.

The Atlanta Baptist Association will be asked in October to give final approval to creation of a Church-Related Vocations Liaison Committee, and to a Fellowship Committee.

The liaison committee would serve as a channel for communication between prospective pastors and church staff members and churches, providing information to each on a request basis.

The fellowship committee would "consider requests that involve alleged questionable conduct or doctrine on the part of pastors, other staff ministers or the church."

It also would "handle matters involving fellowship between churches and/or questions of fellowship between the association and a church, or any denominational body involving the Atlanta Baptist Association."

Both proposals were hotly debated within the executive committee. The liaison committee was approved by a 16-9 vote, and the fellowship committee by a 14-8 vote.

John J. Buell, pastor of White Oak Hills Baptist Church in Atlanta, made the motions calling for both committees and was chief spokesman for their adoption.

Supporters of the proposals were primarily concerned with getting to the truth when church staff members are accused of various moral failures.

"Baptists need some sort of recourse for pastors who are falsely accused and whose reputation is ruined," said one committee member. "Too much, our Baptist pastors are at the mercy of one congregation."

"We need to protect churches, pastors and staff members from improper ethics and conduct by those who down-grade the church and God's calling in Christ," said another. "There is too much religious hypocrisy in this area."

An editorial in The Christian Index, official publication of the Georgia Baptist Convention, commended the association executive committee for "being willing to face a tough problem."

"No more vital question faces Georgia Baptists today than pastor-church relationships," wrote Christian Index Editor Jack U. Harwell. "Every active layman, every pastor and every denominational employee could relate dozens of heart-breaking testimonies about church splits, pastor firings, false accusations and bitter tensions that cause inestimable damage to the cause of Christ."

The editorial said the problem is acute, not only in Atlanta, but throughout the Southern Baptist Convention. "Some of our seasoned counselors indicate it is reaching crisis proportions."

The editorial did not endorse the Atlanta association's proposed committee approach, however. "We haven't heard enough of the details as to how the committee would actually function to know that this procedure is the answer," said the editorial.

Harwell said in the editorial that local church autonomy must always be protected, and that explicit restrictions would have to be carefully spelled out and faithfully followed in the future.

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"Baptists are historically leary of outside machinery which could lead to a bishopry, or a denominational clearing house of any kind, especially as it relates to staff members. And they are right," said the editorial.

Harwell cited, however, the problems that result from little or no control over bad pastor-church relationships.

"Too many young ministers are leaving the Baptist faith because of the 'insecurity of one Baptist pastorate'. Too many good men have had their reputations and careers wrecked by smear campaigns started by opposing laymen. Too many pastors have entered secular work because they were forced out of pastorates and had no person or group to which to turn."

The editorial commended the Atlanta association for facing squarely the problem, and called on Baptists in Georgia to pray for the Atlanta Baptists as they deliberate on the matter.

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Six Southwestern Profs
On Sabbatical Leave

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FORT WORTH (BP)--Six professors at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary have begun their sabbatical leaves while seven others are returning to Fort Worth for the fall semester beginning Aug. 28.

William R. Estep Jr., professor of church history, is serving as guest professor in the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Ruschlikon, Zurich, Switzerland, and plans further study at the Universities of Zurich and Basel.

C. W. Scudder, professor of Christian ethics, is working on a research project in cooperation with the Baptist Sunday School Board of Nashville, on the needs of Southern Baptists families.

A. Donald Bell, professor of psychology and human relations, is beginning work as visiting professor at the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary at Baguio City. At the close of the school year he will go to Hong Kong where he will lecture in the Hong Kong Baptist College.

David L. Conley, associate professor of music theory, is studying at the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York, and working on his doctoral dissertation.

Virginia Garrett Seelig, resident teacher of voice, is doing graduate study at the School of Music at North Texas State University, Denton.

Returning after a year's sabbatical are Mrs. Robert D. Melton, professor of social work; T. M. Bennett Jr., professor of Old Testament; Robert Coleman, associate professor of Biblical backgrounds and archaeology; Harvey B. Hatcher, professor of educational arts; Ralph D. Churchill, professor of religious journalism; Cecil M. Roper, associate professor of ministry of music; and J. W. MacGorman, professor of New Testament.

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Brotherhood Secretary Earns
Certified Professional Rating

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MEMPHIS (BP)--A secretary for the Brotherhood Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Miss Carolyn Wise, has earned the rating of Certified Professional Secretary.

An official of the Brotherhood Commission said the rating is the equivalent of a doctor of philosophy degree for a secretary, and that only 300 of the secretaries in Tennessee have earned the rating.

Miss Wise, secretary to Brotherhood Commission assistant executive secretary George Euting, earned the recognition after successful completion of a six-part examination measuring abilities in human relations, business law, business administration, secretarial accounting, secretarial skills, and secretarial procedures.

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