



BAPTIST PRESS

Press Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

450 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, 1350 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Billy Keith, 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

BUREAU

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

April 9, 1970

Missing Missionary
Found Safe In Beirut

RICHMOND (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board learned early today (April 9) that missionary James F. Kirkendall, missing in Beirut, Lebanon, since Tuesday, had returned home weary but unharmed.

A call from missionary James K. Ragland in Beirut to Foreign Mission Board Executive Secretary Baker J. Cauthen, conveyed the information but was guarded in detail. Ragland said simply that Kirkendall had been detained by "non-official forces" and had been well treated.

An Associated Press release, datelined Beirut, says Kirkendall took "a wrong turn" and drove into the Sabra area, where he was stopped and held for 42 hours by Palestinian guerrillas. They gave no clear reason for their detention of Kirkendall. His associates said there had been no "rough stuff."

The Foreign Mission Board was informed by the State Department Wednesday morning that Kirkendall was missing. Ragland said Kirkendall was last seen en route to a police station, where he intended to have some changes made to his passport.

Wednesday afternoon, Mrs. Kirkendall called their daughter Ann, a college student in Shawnee, Okla., to say that Kirkendall was safe and would be released by the guerrilla group.

The 47-year-old Kirkendall, native of Birch Tree, Mo., was pastor of the Moline Baptist Church in St. Louis before his missionary appointment to Lebanon in December, 1962. In recent months he has conducted an unusual itinerant ministry among U. S. citizens living in places in the Middle East where there are no Southern Baptist missionaries or churches.

Sometimes called a "jet-riding circuit rider," Kirkendall's ministry takes him throughout the Persian Gulf area to visit Baptist families, most of whom are associated with American oil companies.

Prior to assuming this ministry last September Kirkendall was pastor of English-speaking University Baptist Church in Beirut.

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Baptist Win Seven of 13
Top Religious PR Awards

4/9/70

CHICAGO (BP)--Southern Baptists won seven of the top awards presented by the Religious Public Relations Council here for outstanding public relations efforts in 1969-70. Sixteen awards were given 13 winners.

The top \$150 cash award, called the Paul M. Hinkhouse Graphic Arts Award, was presented for the second time in three years to Floyd A. Craig, public relations director for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Nashville, for a series of pamphlets called "Issues and Answers."

Second place in the Hinkhouse design category carrying with it a \$50 cash honorarium, went to John Earl Seelig, assistant to the president at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, for a brochure. Seelig won the top Hinkhouse award in 1967.

Billy Keith, director of public relations for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, was one of three members of the organization to receive two awards each.

Keith won an award of excellence in the audiovisuals category for production of the film, Who Will Walk Out Among The Tears, and a first place award for a photograph taken by a photographer on his staff, Bryan Price, who resigned recently to join a Dallas church staff.

First place in the writing category went to Jim Newton, assistant director of Baptist Press, Nashville, for a news story on Baptist response to Hurricane Camille.

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Newton later in the meeting was elected national treasurer of the Religious Public Relations Council.

Winning third place in the public relations campaign category was Edward Shipman, promotion director of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, Fort Worth, for promotion of the NBC-TV program, "Tell It Like It Is," featuring a Baylor University choral group.

Mrs. Dorothy Jackson of Nashville, public relations director for Guaranty Bond and Securities Corp., won third in photography for a photo taken by her husband, Rob Jackson, photographer for the SBC Sunday School Board, to illustrate an article in Church Administration magazine.

The Religious Public Relations Council met prior to the opening of an International Religious Communications Congress at the Sheraton Hotel.

Earlier at the same hotel, the Baptist Public Relations Association had presented its own top public relations awards to its members. The Religious Public Relations Council is an interdenominational organization.

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Republican Leader Asks School Prayer Amendment

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Senate Republican leader has proposed a new constitutional amendment, which declares that voluntary prayer in public buildings and schools is a "right of persons lawfully assembled."

Senator Hugh Scott (R., Pa.) said in his announcement that voluntary prayers in schools are "now forbidden by a controversial Supreme Court ruling."

In 1962 (Engel v. Vitale) the Supreme Court ruled that a state-composed prayer required for recitation in New York schools is prohibited by the first amendment.

In 1963 (Schempp and Murray Cases) the Supreme Court ruled that devotional exercises of Bible reading and recitation of the Lord's Prayer required in schools are a violation of the first amendment.

These two rulings have been interpreted by some as prohibitions of voluntary expression of religion in public schools. Others have said that the Supreme Court decisions are not related to voluntary prayers but apply only to officially sponsored or supported religious exercises.

The new "Scott Amendment" is a refinement of the old "Dirksen Amendment," which lost its chief spokesman with the death of Sen. Everett M. Dirksen (R., Ill.) last year.

The Scott amendment is broader and more flexible than the Dirksen proposal. Specifically, the proposed amendment says:

"Nothing contained in this constitution shall abridge the right of persons lawfully assembled, in any public school or other public building which is supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds, to participate voluntarily in non-denominational prayer, or meditation."

In introducing his amendment Scott said that it permits "meditation" as a substitute for voluntary, non-denominational prayer. "By doing so," he continued, "my resolution addresses itself to the basic issue in a manner which still permits the greatest possible flexibility for a divergence of religious belief."

The Senator further explained: "Individual or group prayer or meditation on a voluntary basis need not be formalized or institutionalized, but at the same time, such activities should not be penalized."

Scott complained that efforts "for Senate hearings on this question in the last session of Congress failed to draw a favorable response." He hoped that the new proposal would renew congressional interest in the subject of school prayers.

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NEWS ANALYSIS:

Shortcomings Found In
Scott Prayer Amendment

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--The newly proposed constitutional prayer amendment in the U.S. Senate is defective as was its predecessors. Senator Hugh Scott (R. Pa.), Senate Republican leader, is attempting a resurrection of the old "Dirksen Amendment" which has lain dormant since the death of Sen. Everett M. Dirksen (R., Ill.) last year.

With the addition of nine new words the "Scott Amendment" is the same as the "Dirksen Amendment." The new revised proposal reads:

"Nothing contained in this constitution shall abridge the right of persons lawfully assembled, in any public school or other public building which is supported in whole or in part through the expenditure of public funds, to participate voluntarily in non-denominational prayer, or meditation."

The new words added to the Dirksen Amendment are: "in any public school or other," "voluntarily," and "or meditation."

Among the objectionable features of the proposed prayer amendment are the following:

1. It is based on a false assumption.

Sen. Scott said in his press release that his proposed amendment "would permit voluntary prayer, now forbidden by a controversial Supreme Court ruling." This, of course, is not what the Supreme Court rulings on prayer and Bible reading in public schools did.

The Supreme Court did not rule on the right of persons to pray but rather restricted the powers of government in directing the prayers and meditations of school pupils.

The Supreme Court held that public schools may not sponsor religious exercises regardless of their voluntary nature and regardless of whether the exercises include state-written, non-sectarian prayers or scriptural prayer and Bible reading.

2. It is not a corrective of the alleged Supreme Court rulings about school prayers.

The Supreme Court ruled against "an establishment of religion" in the public schools. It did not rule on the "free exercise of religion" on the part of school pupils or of school officials.

The Scott Amendment does not achieve anything that is not already covered in the "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution. The first amendment continues to be adequate to protect "voluntary" prayers and the "free exercise" of religion on the part of school children.

3. It continues to make a political, partisan football out of the sacredness of prayer.

To be for God, Mother and the flag is always a popular political strategy. For a politician to appear to be against these is unthinkable. This makes it most difficult for those who choose to stand on the solid ground of basic principles in the school prayer controversy.

Championing children's prayers and certain elements of our heritage is popular. Forcing opponents to appear to oppose children's prayers and cherished past practices is politically useful. Since the constitution makes the amending process more or less a part of the regular political process of the nation, such political use of that process is inevitable.

Nevertheless, it should be objectionable to religious people for politicians to seek to make "political hay" out of the religious expressions of little children.

In addition to the above defects, the proposed constitutional prayer amendment raises a number of specific problems. Among them are the following.

1. The proposal injects the problem of limitation to public schools and public buildings.

Would the phrase, "in any public school or other public building", possibly erode the present rights in other public places? That is, does the inclusion of one thing mean the exclusion of another? For some legal purposes it does.

2. The problem of "lawful assembly" is introduced in the context of free religious practice. The ramifications of this provision and restriction could be endless.

3. The proposal limits a person's rights to "non-denominational prayer, or meditation."

Would this mean that if a group of Baptist students got together at lunch in a public school to pray, the location of their prayer would determine that it had to be "non-denominational"? What about the theology and prayer convictions of other groups who pray in certain specific ways? Would their "voluntary" prayers be ruled out?

Conclusion: Although the "Scott Amendment" is relatively harmless, compared to other proposed constitutional prayer amendments, it does not solve the problem of praying in public schools. Neither does it add anything to the constitutional provisions for religious liberty now embodied in the first amendment as interpreted by the Supreme Court. There is no need at this time for a constitutional prayer amendment.

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Two Baptist Papers Win
Awards For News Contest

4/9/70

CHICAGO (BP)--Two Southern Baptist publications were among a dozen papers honored by the Associated Church Press in their annual awards to member publications.

The award winners included The Baptist Record in Jackson, Miss., Baptist state paper edited by Joe T. Odle, and The Baptist Program in Nashville, edited by W. C. Fields.

The Baptist Record was one of two papers cited for excellence in news reporting by the Associated Church Press. The paper won the award for news coverage of Hurricane Camille.

The Baptist Program was one of six publications honored for "general excellence in editorial advocacy." The issue that won the award dealt with extremism.

The Associated Church Press was one of several organizations that held meetings in connection with an International Religious Communication Congress at the Sheraton Hotel here.

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*460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219*

DAVID C. WOOLLEY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 NINTH AVE. N.
NASHVILLE, TENN. 37203

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APR 10 1970
HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SBC