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NATIONAL OFFICE
400 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 254-2333
H. C. Pugh, Director
J. W. ...

BUREAUS

- ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1330 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041
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- WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

January 12, 1972

Court Declines Decision on Baptist Church Parking Lot

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court sent the "Baptist parking lot case" back to a district court in Florida to permit trial under a new Florida law which went into effect Dec. 31, 1971.

The case of Diffenderfer and Paul vs. Central Baptist Church of Miami, Fla., concerned tax exemption for a parking lot owned by the church and used commercially on weekdays.

The vote was six to one to remand the case to a lower court. Under the court's rule, the case will not be argued automatically in the district court. The appellants, however, have the right to amend their pleadings under the new Florida statute.

Justice William O. Douglas, the lone dissenter, said that he was "not as eager as is the court to moot a case on appeal which is justiciable in every respect save for an intervening change in the underlying law." Still undecided, Douglas argued, was the appellants' claim that the church be liable for three years' back property taxes under the old law.

The new Florida law provides that church property is exempt from taxation only if the property is used predominantly for religious purposes and only "to the extent of the ratio that such predominant use bears to the non-exempt use."

In a three-page opinion, the Supreme Court said that under the new law "it is clear that the church parking lot which was the subject of the taxpayers' complaint is no longer fully exempt from taxation.

"If, in fact, it can be demonstrated that the lot is predominantly used for nonreligious purposes, it will receive no exemption whatever," the court continued.

The parking lot in question, which has been involved in court cases since 1965, is adjacent to Central Baptist Church in Miami and is used for parking purposes for the church and its activities. In addition, during the week the church rents approximately 290 spaces to people coming into the surrounding business area. The income derived from the parking lot is used by the church for religious and educational purposes.

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Annie Armstrong Offering Sets Record \$5.3 Million

1/12/72

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists gave a record \$5,345,551 to home missions through the 1971 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, the denomination's Home Mission Board reported here.

The amount was \$378,566 above the previous year, and more than \$300,000 over the record set in 1969, according to Arthur B. Rutledge, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

In making the announcement, Rutledge said, "This record offering is extremely significant in the light of the economy. It says our people are concerned about the spiritual, moral and social welfare of the United States.

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"This increased offering has enabled the board to minister to thousands of people of various races and places in the name of our Lord that we could not have otherwise," Rutledge said. "We express our appreciation to all Southern Baptists."

Rutledge said the agency received during 1971 an almost equal figure of \$5,305,084 through the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget for its general work, and an additional \$305,067 for its church loan fund in capital needs.

The Annie Armstrong Offering goal for 1972 is \$6 million, with a strong push for television evangelism funding from all, over and above the goal.

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Mission Board Boosts Salaries
To Adjust for Dollar Devaluation

1/12/72

RICHMOND (BP)--A big boost in total emergency compensation for Southern Baptist missionaries overseas was approved by members of the SBC Foreign Mission Board here in January.

The board members also appointed one new missionary to serve overseas, and heard their executive secretary report on a trip to visit missionaries in several African and Asian countries, including a report on the situation in Bangladesh.

As one of its first major actions of the year, the board appropriated an additional \$186,460 as emergency compensation for its missionaries who have been affected by U. S. dollar devaluation overseas.

This amount, added to a December allocation, makes a total of \$214,460 appropriated for adjustment of missionary support to date during the current period of dollar devaluation.

The total covers only missionary compensation. Steps have not yet been taken to adjust for losses in operational and capital funds of missions overseas, according to Winston Crawley, director of the board's Overseas Division.

One person was added to the board's overseas staff in January. She is Miss Helen Roller of Amarillo, Tex., a retired Navy nurse who expects to work in a Baptist hospital in Rhodesia. She was employed by the board for a four-year term as a missionary associate.

Executive Secretary Baker J. Cauthen gave board members some details of a trip that took him and Mrs. Cauthen to Hong Kong, Saigon, Bangkok, Singapore, India, Ethiopia and Kenya.

Cauthen spoke during the inauguration of the new president and vice president of Hong Kong Baptist College, Daniel C. W. Tse and Jachin Y. Chan, respectively.

Although the Cauthens had wanted to visit missionaries in Dacca, Bangladesh, that was impossible because of unsettled conditions there. However, they talked with two of the missionaries, J. Howard Teel and Dr. John D. Freeman, who had been in Dacca during the India-Pakistan war and had rejoined their families in Bangkok.

Teel and Freeman said that they and the three missionary couples who remained in Dacca during the war were not immediately threatened by the Indian bombing of certain parts of the city.

Mrs. Troy C. Bennett continued to hold regular home-study classes for the missionary children throughout the emergency, and the missionaries remained in their homes and tried to carry on as normally as possible.

Besides the Bennetts, the other couples in Bangladesh are the James McKinleys and the Thomas Thurmans.

"By their having remained in Dacca, the opportunity of the mission is now preserved," Cauthen said. "With the emergence of a new government and a new nation, we would be seeking admission if the missionaries had withdrawn."

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Cauthen also spoke of the "heroism and commitment" of the missionaries in Vietnam "who have served Christ so notably during years of war." He added, "The accomplishments of their labors are outstanding, and the dedication with which they approach their task is contagious."

A Baptist hospital under construction in Bangalore, India, is "a calculated risk," said Cauthen, because of the uncertain future of Baptist work in that area. He suggested that Southern Baptists should make the maximum use of six-month tourist visas to India for the continuation of ministries there.

The executive secretary visited in Ethiopia for the first time. He observed that the gospel is being preached widely and that Southern Baptists have been permitted to work in an area never before served by any missionary body.

The area, a remote highland region, "makes demands upon the missionaries from the standpoint of difficulties of living," said Cauthen, "but they face their situation with a remarkable spirit of commitment and joy in what they are doing."

The East Africa mission, embracing work in Kenya and Tanzania, has shown a good rate of growth in a relatively short time, Cauthen noted, adding, "We are grateful for the strong staff of missionaries who serve in that strategic area."

Turning to the matter of adjustments in emergency compensation, Cauthen said further recommendations aimed at strengthening the support of missionaries are anticipated for later meetings of the board. "It is quite evident that due to the inflationary conditions both in this country and abroad some further steps will be needed," he said.

A committee is studying the whole structure of missionary support, it was noted.

Early indications are that the "spirit" of the 1971 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions is "very high," continued Cauthen, "and we anticipate an excellent report when the total is reached."

Board Treasurer Everett L. Deane reported that the agency's income for 1971 has been tentatively calculated at \$36,231,333, adding that this figure is subject to final change. This is a 4.52 per cent increase over 1970, Deane said, and exceeds the amount projected for 1971 by his staff.

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SBC Seminary Extension
Enrolls Record Number

1/12/72

NASHVILLE (BP)--A record number of students from 48 states and 13 foreign countries enrolled in courses offered through the Seminary Extension Department of the Southern Baptist Convention last year, an annual report prepared by the director disclosed recently.

A total of 4,769 persons took Seminary Extension courses last year, an increase of nearly 350 over last year's 4,420 students enrolled, according to the annual report submitted to the presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries which sponsor the department.

Raymond M. Rigdon, director of the Seminary Extension Department, pointed out that the students represented every state in the nation except Delaware and Vermont, and 13 foreign countries. Students from 48 states were enrolled, compared to 45 states represented the previous year.

The 4,769 students enrolled took a total of 6,936 individual courses through the department, an increase of more than 300 over the number of courses taken the previous year.

About one in five of the students did their study through the department's school of correspondence, with the majority doing the work through 187 seminary extension centers located in 30 states and eight foreign countries.

In the school of correspondence, 832 students were enrolled in 1,226 courses. A total of 3,937 students were enrolled in 5,710 courses at the 187 seminary extension centers across the nation and in eight countries.

Two types of study are offered in the centers, according to Rigdon. A basic curriculum, designed for persons who have not completed a high school education, enrolled students in nearly 400 courses; while a college-level curriculum enrolled students in 5,311 courses. The student body included military personnel from the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, as well as numerous ministers in the SBC.

Foreign countries in which there were students studying with the Seminary Extension Department, either in centers or by correspondence, were Canada, Vietnam, Germany, Guam, Guyana, Greece, India, Israel, Macao, Okinawa, Taiwan, the Canal Zone, and the Virgin Islands. Centers are located in all but the last five countries listed.

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