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December 10, 1973

State High Court Rehears
Baptist, Methodist Tax Case

NASHVILLE (BP)--Last year Baptist Press reported "the final judicial step of a tax case which has been in contention since 1969." But it turned out not to be the final step.

On Dec. 5, 1973, the Tennessee Supreme Court requested and heard a new round of arguments in the efforts of Metropolitan Nashville to tax properties of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and the United Methodist Publishing House here.

The five-judge court requested the rehearing--a procedure termed by observers as unusual--without giving a reason.

One new justice, William D. Fones, has joined the state's high court since the 1972 hearing of the case which the chief justice has termed "obviously important and obviously difficult." Besides Fones, who replaced a deceased justice, another new justice, substituting for an ill member of the court, sat at the rehearing.

In 1969, the Metropolitan Nashville tax assessor placed a new assessment on the Sunday School Board's Nashville property. A similar assessment was made against the Methodist publishing house.

Both publishing houses and the metropolitan assessor appealed to the state Supreme Court after they felt the issue was not satisfactorily and clearly decided in rulings by the metropolitan and state boards of equalization, the Chancery Court and State Court of Appeals.

The Baptist and Methodist cases were heard separately before tax boards and lower courts but were combined for oral argument before the state Supreme Court.

The central point at issue is the interpretation of the Tennessee law which provides exemption for "the real estate owned by any religious, charitable, scientific or educational institution occupied by such institution or its officers exclusively for carrying out the purposes for which the institution was created or for which it exists."

In the rehearing, attorneys for the publishers disputed the Metropolitan Nashville attorney's interpretation which emphasized the word "exclusively." The attorneys argued that the bulk of the agencies' properties should be exempt from taxation as integral to the religious purposes of the two denominations.

The Sunday School Board, according to its president, James L. Sullivan, has paid property tax on all properties it owns which are not used for activities related to the charter purposes of the institution since its founding in 1891.

The Baptist agency also pays taxes "where clear legal determinations have been made on properties, such as Baptist Book stores in Nashville and in other locations," a spokesman said.

John E. Procter, president and publisher, United Methodist Publishing House, told Baptist Press his organization "pays tax on properties not related to our main religious purposes as stated in the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church and the corporate charters under which we operate."

Procter said Methodists also pay tax on such properties as Cokesbury Book stores.

BWA Cites Urgency for World-wide Relief Projects

WASHINGTON (BP)--Crippling results of famine, floods, drought and after-effects of war have prompted an appeal from the Baptist World Alliance here that Americans "not let preoccupation with Watergate, the energy crisis or the Middle East erase from their consciousness or their consciences the many suffering people of the world."

Carl W. Tiller, the BWA's relief coordinator, said here the world-wide Baptist body needs assistance in providing aid to people in need in Africa, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, India and Mexico.

Thirty-five million people continue to need food and water to offset famine in the Sahelian nations of Africa, just south of the Sahara Desert, which is gradually moving south because of drought, he said.

The United Nations, Tiller continued, has estimated that two or three million people in the six countries (Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Upper Volta) have already died and that as much as 90 per cent of the livestock has been destroyed.

"The Baptist World Alliance is a channel through which Baptists of America may send gifts to help provide food, dig wells and combat disease in that area," Tiller said. "The BWA uses Baptist personnel and other channels to administer the relief, which is made without regard to religion and solely on the basis of need."

Tiller also cited needs in Ethiopia, where he said "between 100,000 and 150,000 have perished in droughts and another two million are threatened, according to reports." He added that "disease is making matters worse."

Baptists of New Zealand were the first to volunteer aid through the BWA for Ethiopia, Tiller said. Baptists of Australia are taking part in a national effort to raise money for Ethiopian relief.

"Two Baptist bodies of North America (the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist General Conference) have missionaries in Ethiopia, and they can see to a wise distribution of relief there," Tiller said, "although their mission stations are less affected than the more hard hit areas."

The BWA reports that the war in Southeast Asia has "left millions of orphans, many widows and one of history's greatest number of homeless people."

"Relief in Southeast Asia cannot wait for political stability," Tiller said, "for waiting would mean many more needless deaths from hunger and disease."

Tiller said the Southern Baptist Mission in South Vietnam "is assisting the BWA by administering work for refugee resettlement, economic rehabilitation for the war handicapped and a halfway house and foster home service for children."

The Baptist World Alliance, he said, also cooperates with the Quakers in other relief work in Southeast Asia.

Appeals from India also "pour into the Washington office of the BWA with great regularity" for assistance to flood and drought victims.

"There are more Baptists in India than in any other country except the United States, but they are for the most part at the lowest economic levels and need outside help when an emergency occurs," Tiller said.

Tiller said a small sum has been sent to aid earthquake and flood victims in Mexico but that more is needed to help reconstruct damaged church property.

Money given through the Baptist World Alliance for a particular area is transmitted entirely for use there, without any diversion to finance administrative or fund-raising costs, Tiller said.

News Media Protect Freedom
Baptist Educator Declares

MACON, Ga. (BP)--American news media are being impaired by their own imbalances as well as by a nationwide campaign to discredit them, Mercer University President Rufus C. Harris said in a report to the university's board of trustees here.

"We are concerned about the freedom of the public to know," said the president of the Southern Baptist school. "That is the primary concern for press freedom."

Referring to "the dirty truth about the Watergate scandal," Harris said, "If the public ever witnessed glaring evidence of the need for the news media to enable the First Amendment to protect the people, it is witnessed now."

"Indiscriminate abuse of all the news media, as the President's Washington press conference revealed, is improper," Harris continued. "The campaign to discredit the press will succeed unless American citizens understand that free news media, however imperfect, are designed to protect them--not the press--from betrayal.

Harris cited the case of Peter Bridge, a reporter for The Newark News, who was confined in the Essex County, N. J., jail because he would not reveal the sources of his information concerning facts about which he wrote of a public housing scandal in Essex County.

"Such a jailing after a fashion jails all of us, as many have said," Harris continued. "Reporters are sometimes described as persons who are frequently disliked since they 'meddle' in other people's business. Probing irks people who do not want their acts revealed, . . . acts (which) are sometimes stupid and dishonest."

If it were not for the digging of the newspapers, the American people would know little or nothing about the Watergate scandal, Harris said, "nor would we have realized that the craving to retain power is so great that the White House operatives would resort to lawlessness and to ruthless and unethical tactics to gain it, and would even undermine a democracy.

"If we throw all the Peter Bridges in the brig, the press will not be able to ferret out wrongdoing and to report it for the safety of the American people," the Mercer president said.

"Those knowing the background of the constitutional guarantee of a free press understand that the privilege was for the free citizenry of the nation--not for the media's owners for private profit--to . . . (help a citizen) know all the facts, to protect his freedom and to promote his intelligence so that his informed judgement could insure the wisdom and safety of the Republic."

However, there is another side to the coin, Harris said.

"I refer to the imbalances of the media. By these imbalances the sacred privilege of freedom is being impaired.

"Nobody objects to reporting or portraying the protesting voices on any issue," Harris said. "But that which is injurious is a sometimes warped overexposure of the colorful protesting and demonstrating endeavor at the price of ignoring the other 90 per cent of an audience who were not with them. Often this convinces the public that nobody was at the scene except protesters."

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Hastey Takes Position
Vacated by Hayworth

12/10/73

WASHINGTON(BP)--Stanley L. Hastey will join the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs here Jan. 2, succeeding Beth Hayworth, according to James E. Wood Jr., executive director.

Miss Hayworth, assistant for 7 1/2 years to W. Barry Garrett, the director of information services of the Baptist Joint Committee, has resigned to become legislative assistant for Congressman Floyd V. Hicks (D.-Wash.). Her special duties will be in the field of social legislation.

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While with the Baptist Joint Committee, Miss Hayworth also served as assistant to the Baptist Press Washington Bureau chief. As such she was an accredited journalist in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives Press Galleries.

Hastey is a recent graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., with the doctor of theology degree. He is also a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, where he majored in political science. His doctoral dissertation at the seminary was "A History of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, 1946-1971."

A native of Thomas, Okla., Hastey is the son of Southern Baptist missionaries to Mexico, Mr. and Mrs. Ervin E. Hastey. He served Walker Baptist Church, Wynnewood, Okla., as pastor, 1964-66. Other pastorates held by Hastey are the Scaffold Lick Baptist Church, Lexington, Ind., 1967-70, and Hebron Baptist Church, Madison, Ind., 1970-72.

Prior to coming to the Baptist Joint Committee in 1966, Miss Hayworth spent 17 years in Baptist student work. She was campus director, Baptist student ministry, Eastern Kentucky State College, Richmond, Ky., 1949-54; associate director, department of student work, Kentucky Baptist Convention, Middletown, Ky., 1954-60; and associate director, department of student work, Louisiana Baptist Convention, Alexandria, La., 1960-66.

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Women's Prayer Day
Topped Seven Million

12/10/73

WASHINGTON (BP)--More than seven million women participated in the international Baptist Women's Day of Prayer last Nov. 5, according to figures released here by the Baptist World Alliance.

Mrs. R. L. Mathis, president of both the BWA's women's department and the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, said the attendance about doubled that of the year before.

The day of prayer emphasis has been growing steadily since its inauguration at the request of European women immediately after World War II.

Mrs. Mathis said the day's program was distributed in more than 100 languages and was observed either by large groups or "by twos and threes" in countries around the world.

Women in community centers were encouraged to plan joint meetings across racial and convention lines, the BWA reports, "but even in isolated villages in developing countries of the world, they gathered in homes or village churches to meditate on their Christian responsibility and to pray for Christian causes."

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Fields Named Editor of
RA Leadership Publications

12/10/73

MEMPHIS (BP)--Tim Fields, an associate editor of Pioneer Royal Ambassador boys materials for two years, has been named editor of two Royal Ambassador leadership publications at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

Fields, a former Kansan, will edit Crusader Counselor, a quarterly magazine for men who work with Crusader-age Royal Ambassadors, and Pioneer Plans, the leadership portion of Probe, a monthly publication for Pioneer Royal Ambassadors.

The newly created position also calls for Fields to represent the Royal Ambassador division in developing and implementing a public relations program for the commission.

Before joining the commission, Fields was a newspaper reporter and county editor for Townsend Communications of Kansas City, Mo.

A graduate of Kansas State University, with a bachelor of science degree in journalism, Fields has completed 40 hours toward a master's degree in religious education at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City.

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