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June 21, 1977

77-110

**New Church Established
In War-Scarred Beirut**

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--Baptists who began meeting because they could not reach their regular churches during last year's civil war have formed a new church.

"As a church born in war, the fellowship is living proof that all things work together for good to those who love God," said Finlay M. Graham, Southern Baptist missionary field representative for the Middle East, as he addressed the new church.

The Evangelical Baptist Church of Monsouriyeh was constituted on a Sunday afternoon before a crowd of witnesses from all the churches of Lebanon in the new church's regular meeting place, the chapel of the Arab Baptist Seminary. The church covenant was read in unison by the 15 charter members and six teenagers awaiting baptism.

Main speakers for the occasion were J. D. Hughey, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Europe, the Middle East and South Asia, and Ghassan Khalaf, president of the Lebanon Baptist Convention.

When the Baptists began to meet in the Monsouriyeh group because of the inability to attend their usual churches, other local people began to join them for worship and Bible study. The Sunday School has an enrollment of 70, including 30 boys from a nearby orphanage.

"In an atmosphere of joy and celebration a new church has been established in war-scarred Lebanon," said Francis (Mrs. J. Wayne) Fuller, Southern Baptist missionary press representative.

The new church has no pastor, but will use missionary and national lay leadership.

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Americans United Lashes
EEOC For Seminary Suit

Baptist Press
6/21/77

SILVER SPRING, Md. (BP)--In a letter to President Jimmy Carter, Americans United for Separation of Church and State executive director Andrew Leigh Gunn sharply criticized the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for "unwarranted intervention in the internal affairs of a church."

Americans United protested the court action recently filed by the EEOC to compel Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Tex., to provide the Commission with data on the race, sex, and salaries of its employees.

The text of Gunn's letter follows:

"The effort by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to compel Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to provide the Commission with data on the race, sex and salaries of its employees is an instance of unwarranted government intervention in the internal affairs of a church. Southwestern is not a liberal arts college competing with other public and private colleges, but a seminary devoted to preparing clergy and religious education professionals. As an integral part of the religious mission of a church, Southwestern Seminary is protected by the First Amendment and thus is 'off limits' to EEOC jurisdiction.

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"We urge you to instruct the EEOC to terminate its efforts to intrude into the internal affairs of this religious institution.

"The EEOC action follows rather closely upon the National Labor Relations Board's assertion of jurisdiction over Roman Catholic parochial schools in several states, apparently on the ground that the parochial schools are not integral parts of the religious mission of their sponsoring church, a supposition at variance with recent findings of the Supreme Court.

"The American people look to you as a champion of religious liberty and a defender of the First Amendment. We hope that your concern for religious liberty and church-state separation will be communicated to the proper officials of the EEOC and the NLRB."

Gunn, a minister of the United Methodist Church, offered his organization's legal services to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary president Robert E. Naylor.

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17 Baptist Churches
Reported in Moscow

Baptist Press
6/21/77

By C. E. Bryant

WASHINGTON, D. C. (BP)-- Three new congregations in the suburbs will bring to 17 the number of Baptist churches in the Moscow area, Carl W. Tiller, associate secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), said here.

Most visitors to Moscow are familiar only with the large central congregation known as the Moscow Baptist Church. It was highly publicized when President and Mrs. Richard Nixon attended services there in 1972.

In an interview to be published in the July issue of Baptist World, the BWA publication, Tiller noted signs of Baptist growth in several cities he and Mrs. Tiller visited in May and said also that "there are many encouraging signs of relaxation of the state's relations to the Baptists."

He observed that the Soviet Union falls short of human rights in such areas as freedom of expression, freedom of movement, and freedom of association. He said, however, that "except for the portions of the Soviet Union annexed in the period 1940-45, the people cannot remember a time when they had such rights. Therefore, many of them do not perceive the human rights situation in the same way as North Americans."

Tiller was excited by youth activities in the churches. "The youth work is tremendous," he said. "I attended a meeting of about 100 youth in one church following an evening service. The singing and the testimonies were thrilling. At another church, nearly 400 youth assembled for a meeting while our team was in another room for an after-service dinner."

Reports of the existence of 13 Baptist congregations in the Moscow suburbs reached the BWA offices in Washington more than a year ago, and critics asked for verification of the figure. The BWA was able, through its European office, to furnish the names and addresses of these churches.

Dr. and Mrs. Tiller visited one of them on Sunday morning, May 15, and found an exterior sign plainly identifying the meeting place as a church building. The church has 79 members.

He was told that in addition to the 13, three other congregations have been organized and are awaiting registration, a requirement of Soviet law.

Tiller reported that church buildings he had previously visited in various parts of the USSR have been enlarged. The Dornitza church near Kiev has been more than doubled in size. The building at Leningrad is scheduled for similar enlargement.

He said that 6,000 baptisms were reported by the 5,060 Baptist churches in the USSR in 1976. About 70 percent of these were persons from believers' families, but 30 percent represent conversions from atheistic, agnostic, Orthodox or other non-evangelical backgrounds, he said.

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He also reported "good news concerning the situation of religious leaders held in Soviet prisons." He was told that two Baptists in the Crimea were released the week of his visit, and there are "high hopes" that 39 other Baptists still imprisoned will be released by the end of 1977.

A 1960 split between churches of the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and a group of separated churches seems to be healing, Tiller said. Forty three of the separated congregations have registered with the government, and this requirement for registration had been one of the points of division.

Tiller spoke also of the spiritual dedication of the people he met. "Baptists of the Soviet Union continue to be faithful, dedicated, persevering disciples of Jesus Christ," he said. He noted "a strong and genuine desire for permanent world peace," and observed that "the average man and woman in a Baptist pew ardently desire the peaceful settlement of international disputes."

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Court Rules States May
Deny Funds For Abortion

Baptist Press
6/21/77

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court dealt a stunning blow to the ability of women on welfare to obtain abortions in a series of decisions announced here.

The high court ruled, 6-3, that:

--States participating in the federal Medicaid program are not obligated to fund medically "unnecessary" abortions;

--A woman's constitutional right to an abortion is not infringed if states refuse to pay for the procedure; and

--City hospitals may refuse to perform abortions that are not medically necessary.

All three cases involved poor women who sought welfare benefits to finance their abortions. They had argued that their "equal protection under the law" had been denied by the refusal of Pennsylvania and Connecticut to provide public assistance for abortion procedures and by the refusal of a publicly-operated hospital in St. Louis, Mo., to allow so-called "nontherapeutic" abortions to be performed there.

Justice Lewis F. Powell, who wrote the two main decisions for the court, held that the federally-funded Medicaid program does not require the states to fund "every medical procedure that falls within the delineated categories of medical care."

Powell argued further that the states have "broad discretion" in adopting standards to determine the extent of medical assistance, burdened only by the requirements that such standards be "reasonable" and "consistent with the objectives" of the Medicaid program.

A key point in the majority's decision was the view that the states have a "valid and important interest in encouraging childbirth" as over against encouraging abortion.

Powell wrote that the 1973 court decisions striking down strict anti-abortion laws in several states "did not declare an unqualified "constitutional right to an abortion." In fact, Powell continued, "it implies no limitation on the authority of a state to make a value judgment favoring childbirth over abortion, and to implement that judgment by the allocation of public funds."

He insisted, however, that the court's new position "signals no retreat" from the 1973 finding that a woman has a fundamental right of privacy in deciding whether to obtain an abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy.

And, while declaring that "we certainly are not unsympathetic to the plight" of poor women, Powell quoted an earlier decision that "the Constitution does not provide judicial remedies for every social and economic ill."

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Although the new decisions did not deal with the "Hyde Amendment" recently passed by the U. S. House of Representatives forbidding the use of federal funds in the performance of any abortion, the high court's reasoning left most observers believing that it may well uphold that stance. The Hyde Amendment is awaiting judgment by the court.

Powell stated in a footnote that because "the issues present policy decisions of the widest concern," they should "be resolved by the representatives of the people, not by this court."

Three of the justices dissented bitterly from the new decisions. The strongest objections were raised by Justice Thurgood Marshall, the only black on the high court.

Marshall accused anti-abortionists of attempting "every imaginable means to circumvent the commands of the Constitution and impose their moral choices upon the rest of society."

He accused the majority of deliberately arriving at a decision which "inevitably will have the practical effect of preventing nearly all poor women from obtaining safe and legal abortions."

"I am appalled at the ethical bankruptcy of those who preach a 'right to life' that means, under present social policies, a bare existence in utter misery for so many poor women and their children," he concluded.

Justice Harry A. Blackmun, who wrote the 1973 decisions, also dissented, saying that the majority's position enables states and municipalities wishing to forbid abortion "to accomplish indirectly" what the high court in 1973 "said they could not do directly."

Blackmun continued: "For the individual woman concerned, indigent and financially helpless . . . the result is punitive and tragic."

He also attacked the majority's reasoning in saying that Congress and the states are free, despite the new decisions, to authorize public funding of non therapeutic abortions.

"Why should any politician," Blackmun asked, "incur the demonstrated wrath and noise of the abortion opponents when mere silence and nonactivity accomplish the results the opponents want?"

The high court's senior member, Justice William J. Brennan Jr., also dissented, saying that the majority's position "makes a mockery" of federal Medicaid legislation calling for provision of medical care in "the best interest of the recipients."

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CORRECTION

In Baptist Press story mailed 6-16-77, entitled "All Baptist Missionaries Currently Out of Ethiopia," the word "not" was dropped from the third paragraph. That should read as follows:

"....at the present time the missionaries are not discounting the possibility of returning."

Thanks,
Baptist Press