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Seminole Baptists Concerned
Over Mennonites' Plight

By Orville Scott

SEMINOLE, Tex. (BP)--For more than a half century members of First Baptist Church, Seminole, in far West Texas, have helped to send missionaries to other countries. Suddenly the foreign mission field has come to them.

The people "from a far country" are about 500 Mennonites who left Mexico and Canada to buy 12 sections (7,680 acres) of the flat West Texas plains near Seminole. A section is 640 acres.

As the new settlers began moving in last spring, Pastor Gerald Tidwell and other First Church leaders began to study the best ways of ministering to them.

"In doctrine and church ordinances, the Mennonites are as much like Southern Baptists as any denomination you could find," said Tidwell. "Their roots go back to the early 16th Century Anabaptists. They, like Baptists, suffered severe persecution in Europe and Colonial America for insisting on separation of church and state and for refusing to accept infant baptism. Unlike most Southern Baptists, however, some of the Mennonites are still enduring persecution in Mexico," said Tidwell.

And for a time it appeared that ill treatment had followed them into the Lone Star State. Their rosy future suddenly turned bleak on discovering they had been misinformed about the land and their visas. Then Seminole Baptists and other concerned people stepped into the breach.

Since most of the newcomers spoke only German and Spanish, it was obvious to Seminole Baptists that their most immediate need was to learn English. Citizenship training would be the next logical ministry.

Vivacious Pam Mills, who teaches 7th grade English in the Seminole schools, was asked to coordinate the church's language ministry. She heads a team of 10 people from the church in a language ministry which enrolls 15 men, 10 women and about 20 children.

One of the instructors, a retired school teacher, said, "The Lord hasn't told me to sit down and shut up."

Mills, who grew up in a community where German was "a second language," says the Mennonites' gratitude and enthusiasm is reward enough for the late hours. Since the people have to work late, the classes can't begin until 9 p.m., but they do their homework and are learning rapidly.

"More than any other time in my life I've seen God's presence," Mills said during Texas Baptists' first ministry evangelism conference in Dallas recently. "For the first time in my life I've known I was called," she said.

The families being taught by Seminole Baptists are affiliated with the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church, while the larger group farther from town is called the Old Colony Mennonite Church. The Evangelical Mennonites live in mobile homes clustered around a rectangular tin-covered building which they converted into a school and church.

On a recent week night, a round harvest moon smiled on the little community and the vast prairie lands beyond. Inside the little building, smiling blonde Barbara Moore led an intent group of 10 wives and mothers in conversational English. All of them wore scarves on their hair but otherwise their attire might have been that of any group of American women.

Still smiling energetically after teaching all day in the public schools, the young teacher explained, "I can come in feeling really down, and their enthusiasm really picks me up."

Several handsome children of various ages--unnoticed by the women--peeked through the door and an open window in round eyed curiosity. The teacher held up a picture and her students recited after her, "This is a dress shop." They broke into laughter on the next picture when their slim instructor said with slow precision, "I am very fat."

Nearby, silhouetted in the moonlight, a tall friendly German named Herman Dyck held his 3-year-old blonde daughter in his arms and explained to a visitor in broken English how he had farmed in Chihuahua, Mexi, where his father had migrated from Canada about 1920.

But religious persecution and expropriations of the Mennonites' lands in the waning days of President Luis Echeverria led them to see in Gaines County, Tex., a 20th Century promised land. With deep irrigation wells, they could turn the usually dry but fertile soil into a garden of Eden.

"We wanted to come, to live as our parents did," said one, "to farm and to live in the country and teach our children as our parents taught us. To have our own schools and our own churches."

"They said it was easy as long as we bought an acre of land. They said everything would be OK, that we could get our permanent status."

So the Mennonites sold everything and moved to Texas. Some dreamed of a self-sustaining colony of 30,000 Mennonites living on 50,000 acres.

But their troubles had just begun. They learned that they held the water rights for only 3½ sections of the land for which they paid about \$2.6 million.

Worse yet, they had entered the country on temporary visas which expired in 60 days. The U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) had to inform them that they must leave or face deportation proceedings.

Then their new neighbors, including members of First Church, came to their aid and sought relief for them all the way up the ladder to President Jimmy Carter, who expressed concern for their plight.

Sympathetic INS officials extended the Mennonites' visas to Jan. 31, so they could harvest their crops and said they were "victims of schemes" and were apparently misinformed about the immigration laws by the persons who sold them the land. An FBI agent said his agency planned to conduct an investigation into the matter.

Meanwhile, 15 Seminole area businessmen purchased a manufacturing plant and negotiated a contract for assembling a new type of non-directional windmill developed by a Lewisville businessman, Lewis Figley. He claims a single windmill can provide electrical power for several houses as well as irrigating a section of land.

A Seminole attorney said the Mennonites are the areas' only source of labor for the project, and he is confident all of the heads of households can qualify for permanent labor certificates through the U. S. Department of Labor.

Meanwhile a permanent bond of Christian love has been welded between people of different cultures but a common faith and heritage: "We're brothers and sisters in Christ," said a Mennonite... "This is the most rewarding and fruitful thing we've ever done," said Pastor Tidwell.

High Court Reconvenes;
Acts on Church-State Cases

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--Returning for its new term, the U. S. Supreme Court took numerous actions relating to church-state and human rights questions during its first full week of work after the summer recess.

The high court heard oral arguments in two church-state cases, including a challenge by the Calvary Baptist Church of Washington, D. C., to the century-old "mortmain" law in the District of Columbia which makes any bequest to a clergyman or religious organization invalid if made within 30 days of the testator's death.

The other church-state case heard by the justices involves a challenge by a New York parochial school to the state's refusal to reimburse the institution for the cost of services rendered during the second half of school year 1972-73, after a federal court struck down the law permitting such aid. That decision was later affirmed by the Supreme Court.

In another major church-state action, the high court affirmed without comment two lower court decisions upholding college tuition grant programs in North Carolina and Tennessee. Both the U. S. District Court for western North Carolina and a similar tribunal for middle Tennessee ruled earlier that tuition grant programs to students attending sectarian colleges does not violate the First Amendment.

The actions come as no real surprise, in view of the high court's decision last year upholding a similar plan in Maryland. Three justices, William J. Brennan Jr., Thurgood Marshall and John Paul Stevens, indicated they voted to accept the cases for oral argument and a new decision. Four justices must agree to hear a case, however, before it comes to the court.

In other church-state cases, the justices declined to hear: a Eugene, Ore., case challenging the constitutionality of that city's erecting a large cross on public land as part of a war memorial; an appeal from a church organist in Illinois who claimed she was dismissed from her job at a Methodist church for joining a congregation of another faith; a California church property dispute on grounds that the civil courts of that state have no jurisdiction to decide whether a local congregation has departed from the religious tenets of the parent church; a challenge to Washington, D. C., housing authorities' designating a piece of condemned land under public domain to be used as an extension of a downtown church's parking lot; an appeal by two Louisiana men convicted of violating Sunday closing laws; and a challenge by students at Huntington Beach, Calif., high school who were denied permission to conduct meetings of a Bible study club on school premises during school hours or publicize their activities in the school newspaper or on bulletin boards on grounds that such activities violate the "no establishment" clause of the First Amendment.

In a pair of cases involving the rights of homosexuals, the justices also declined to hear appeals of lower court decisions which ruled against them. The court refused to review an order by a local school board in New Jersey that a teacher, who became president of a statewide gay organization and openly promoted the group, submit to psychiatric examination. In addition, the justices declined to review the dismissal of a Washington state public school teacher who is also a practicing homosexual. Justices Brennan and Marshall indicated they voted to hear the appeals.

In a sex discrimination action, the high court agreed to hear arguments in a California case involving alleged bias in a company pension plan. A federal court of appeals ruled earlier that the company's requirement that women pay larger monthly premiums to the pension fund because their life expectancy is longer than that of males violates both the Equal Pay Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

The court let stand a pair of lower court decisions involving race discrimination. In one, the justices declined to hear a challenge to a federal district court order imposing mandatory quotas on the Chicago Police Department designed to remedy past race discrimination.

In the other, the court likewise declined to set aside an Illinois law which requires that police department promotions be made from a roster of candidates ranked by civil service standards. A federal district court had ruled earlier that the roster must be set aside in order to increase the number of black and Hispanic police sergeants on Chicago's force. No explanation was offered by the high court for its refusal to resolve the conflict in the two cases.

Hedquist Succeeds Malesovas
In Exec. Committee Post

NASHVILLE (BP)--Timothy A. Hedquist of Nashville will join the staff of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) here, Nov. 1, as director of financial planning and assistant to the treasurer.

Hedquist, 35, succeeds Billy D. Malesovas, who will become chief accountant and assistant business manager for Baylor College of Dentistry, Dallas, Tex. Malesovas joined the Executive Committee in January, 1976, succeeding John H. Williams, who retired after 24 years in the post.

A native of Oakland, Calif., Hedquist has served since December 1974 as minister of education at First Baptist Church, Nashville, where he has directed the church's staff in operating its educational program and business affairs.

Before joining First Baptist Church, Hedquist served on the staffs of four churches-- First Baptist Church, Lenoir City, Tenn., assistant pastor in charge of programs, administering the church's educational and business affairs; Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Tex., youth director and then business administrator; Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Tex., youth director and business administration; and Stadium Drive Baptist Church, Fort Worth, youth director.

Hedquist, a magna cum laude graduate of California State College, earned a bachelor of arts degree in social and behavioral sciences and did extensive study in statistics, business, and accounting. He also earned a master's degree in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

As director of financial planning and assistant to the treasurer, Hedquist will serve as the principal financial planning and budget assistant to Porter Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee.

He will provide staff liaison with committees, such as the Executive Committee's finance subcommittee, and review and appraise the financial policies and practices of SBC agencies to the extent with which the Executive Committee is concerned with them.

Other duties include serving as chief accountant, providing staff assistance in the formulation of over-all financial policies and procedures appropriate to the responsibility of the Executive Committee, providing long-range planning and financial analyses, and coordinating physical arrangements and exhibits at annual sessions of the SBC.

Besides supervision of the financial planning staff, he will also oversee mailroom and maintenance personnel at the SBC Building, 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville.

Hedquist, who was ordained to the ministry in 1967, has served as a guest professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, and has officiated high school and college basketball games. In 1965, he received the John G. Price Award as the top male religious education graduate of Southwestern Seminary and, in 1969, was listed as an Outstanding Young American by the Chamber of Commerce.

He is a member of the National Association of Church Business Administrators and the Southwestern Religious Education Association.

In 1962, he married Rita Marie Peterson of Oakland, Calif., and has two children, Melinda Marie, 11, and Jamye Michelle, 10.

Interfaith Witness**Pioneer Dies in Pennsylvania**

ATLANTA (BP)--William E. Burke, retired Southern Baptist Home Mission Board staff member and former Roman Catholic priest, died Oct. 5 in Olyphant, Pa. He was 73.

Services were held at Sherwood Gardens Cemetery near Griffin, Ga.

Burke served the board's department of work related to nonevangelicals (now interfaith witness) from 1954 until his retirement in 1969, first as a field worker and then in Atlanta as assistant department secretary.

Prior to that he directed the Evangelical Information Center in Covington, Ky., and served in several Catholic churches. He was a graduate of St. Bonaventures College and Seminary in New York.

Burke parted with the Roman Catholic Church after deciding his beliefs no longer coincided with Catholicism. After study of the New Testament and prayer, he wrote down a list of things he believed and decided that if he ever found a religious group which believed as he did he would join it.

One day he found a pamphlet explaining what Baptists believe and discovered it was almost identical with the list he had made. He was baptized into the membership of a nearby Baptist church and, on Oct. 25, 1953, was ordained to the ministry by the Madison Avenue Baptist Church, Covington, Ky.

Billy Mitchell of the board's interfaith witness department, who worked alongside Burke for several years, called him "an early pioneer in opening doors with Roman Catholics and in our understanding of their beliefs."

Burke's wife Margaret died in 1969. They had no children.

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Fletcher Named President
Of Hardin-Simmons University

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ABILENE, (BP)--Jesse Fletcher, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn., has been elected president of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Tex., effective Nov. 1.

Fletcher, 46, will succeed Elwin L. Skiles who retired June 15. Skiles was named chancellor for the school, owned and operated by the 2-million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Before going to the 3,900-member Knoxville church in 1975, Fletcher served 15 years with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. During the last seven years of that period he directed the board's mission support division, coordinating the work of the departments of missionary personnel, missionary education and promotion and furlough ministries. He also gave general supervision to public relations and press personnel and served as chief of the Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

Before joining the Foreign Mission Board, he directed Baptist student activities and served as Bible teacher at the University of Texas, Austin. During seminary study he was pastor of Baptist churches in Wellborn and Kopperl, Tex., and executive secretary of Northside YWCA, Fort Worth, Tex.

A graduate of Texas A & M University, with a bachelor of business degree, Fletcher also holds the bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth. He is a native of San Antonio.

Fletcher is a former vice president of the Baptist Public Relations Association, past president of the Southwestern Seminary Alumni Association, and author of many articles and books, including "Bill Wallace of China."

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(BP) Photo will be mailed to Baptist state papers

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Educators Review Values
In McGrath Study Followup

By Darrell W. Wood

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 75 Southern Baptist educators participated in the first followup phase of the most comprehensive self-study ever undertaken by Southern Baptist colleges and schools with a two-day national workshop here.

The study, conducted by the program in liberal (arts) studies at the University of Arizona, headed by Earl J. McGrath, a former U. S. commissioner of education, grew out of National Colloquium on Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools in June, 1976. Some 900 participants in the colloquium examined theological and Biblical presuppositions of Christian higher education and unanimously adopted reaffirmations of those presuppositions.

During the workshop, Landrum Bolling, president of Lilly Endowment, which provided the program in liberal studies a \$100,000 grant to make the McGrath Study possible, emphasized the importance of Christian values on the college campus.

"The basic issues are those issues about human destiny, about the nature of God, the nature of the universe, the nature of man, and about our responsibility to that universe, to God, and to one another," he told the Baptist educators.

The workshop provided an opportunity for the Baptist school administrators to hear interpretations of the various findings by McGrath and by John Minter, who conducted the financial section of the study.

The McGrath Study, sponsored jointly by the Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools, reviewed church-college relationship, institutional functioning and goals, and financial trends.

Major goals of the study included examination of the purposes and programs of Baptist schools, identification of strengths and weaknesses, analysis of how faculties and administrators perceive the ordering of goals, and assessment of financial condition.

The study contains many positive statements about the work of Baptist colleges and schools. On the other hand, the report indicates some weaknesses which the college presidents, deans, and faculties are concerned about correcting.

The report reveals that student enrollment increased 31 percent during the 10 year period, 1965-75, considerably better than higher education in general. The financial study shows Southern Baptist colleges and universities are considerably stronger than the average private institution, and receive better support from private gifts and grants, including church sources, than many other church-related colleges.

Baptist colleges ranked high in their link with the church and the denomination. About half the schools were given high marks for a clear and explicit statement of religious purpose and service to the denomination, while most of the others have relatively definite but implied statements of such purpose.

According to Bolling, "The (non-Southern Baptist) church colleges that have become weakest are those that have cut their ties with the church. There is something very vital about maintaining that linkage both ways--both for the maintenance of vitality in the church and for maintaining vitality in the college."

Speaking to the importance of maintaining strong church-college ties for preserving Christian values in an increasingly secular society, McGrath told the Baptist educators that "the best hope I have yet discovered, when you consider a corporate group of institutions, is in this group (Southern Baptist colleges and universities)."

In assessing the impact of the McGrath Study and the followup program among participating Baptist schools, Ben Fisher, executive director-treasurer of the SBC's Education Commission, said: "This is the most extensive study undertaken by Baptist colleges and universities. The ultimate value of the study will be determined by the vigor with which each institution is willing to engage in corrective self-examination during the followup."

**Baptists, Lutherans Join
Hands in Church Project**

CORNELIUS, Ore. (BP)--Southern Baptists and Lutherans have joined hands in this community of about 2,000 to provide a church building at a bargain rate.

Cornelius Baptist Church, a 75-member church organized in 1973, has been meeting in a school building for about four years, but behind the leadership of their pastor, Earl Fort they had decided to build a new church.

Then Emanuel Lutheran Church entered the picture. They were using a 69-year-old building which had to be moved to clear the way for a new church they planned to build on the site.

The Baptists and the Lutherans got together and made a deal. The Southern Baptist church would pay \$500 for the heating system and pay for moving the structure. It was a bargain both ways. Cornelius Baptists got a building at a much cheaper price than constructing it from scratch. The Lutherans were saved the cost of tearing it down.

"This is really encouraging," said Fort. "The fellowship of the people in the church and the community here is better than any of the places I pastored in Texas. We figured it would cost \$100,000 for a new building, one that would have seated 150. This seats 100, but we're going to get into it for less than \$50,000."

"We knew they were interested in a building and there was a feeling here that we wanted to continue the use of the old church because of its historic value," adds William Bash, the Lutheran pastor.

Apparently the move made an impact on the community.

As the 75-ton church building was being towed down the street to its new location, a bystander suggested that Fort, a rangy Texan, should ride ahead on a horse crying, "The Baptists are coming!"

-30-

Sloan Foundation To Study
Government-Education Conflict

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NEW YORK (BP)--The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has launched a two-year broad-based effort to find paths "to a more productive and less conflict-plagued relationship" between government and higher education.

To accomplish this task, the foundation has formed a 19-member commission from the fields of business, labor, government and education.

Louis W. Cabot, chairman of the Cabot Corporation, member of the M.I.T. Corporation and former Harvard Overseer, will chair the commission. Vice chairman and director of research will be Carl Kaysen, on leave as David W. Skinner professor of political economy at M.I.T. He was director of the Institute for Advanced Study for a decade after serving in the White House under President Kennedy.

"We have asked the commission to make a thorough analysis of the changing relationships between government and higher education," Nils Y. Wessell, president of the Sloan Foundation, said. "It will then pinpoint the areas of major conflict, find out why these mutually dependent institutions are having so much difficulty adjusting to each other's needs and priorities and attempt to work out practical ways to resolve these differences."

"The commission's goal will be one of creative reconciliation, not just another collection of facts and figures for the bookshelves of the cognoscenti."

Wessell said that the Foundation had allocated \$2.5 million to the project and that a small staff is already at work in Cambridge under the Kaysen's direction. To assist the commission in the early phases of its work, 22 colleges and universities, representing a wide diversity of public and private institutions across the country, are now conducting studies on the ways they are affected by government. They include Campbell College, a Southern Baptist school in Buies Creek, N.C., and Bishop College, a black Baptist school in Dallas.