



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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October 19, 1977

77-186

Oklahoma Baptists Ban Sex
Operations, Study Hospitals

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--With only two dissenting votes, the board of directors of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma decided to ban "gender dysphoria procedures" (sex change operations) at Baptist Medical Center here.

At the same meeting the board voted to authorize its committee on hospitals and retirement centers to study the feasibility of the state convention divesting itself of ownership and operation of its four hospitals at Enid, Grove, Miami and Oklahoma City.

The vote on sex change operations followed an earlier request by Joe L. Ingram, the state convention's executive director-treasurer, that a moratorium be placed on the operation until a decision could be made. About three months earlier, it had become known that more than 50 such operations had been performed by a six-member team of physicians at the hospital.

Ingram read to directors from the policies and procedures manual for convention-owned hospitals and said, "It seems inconsistent with the stated purpose of the hospitals to allow such operations within the walls of a Baptist hospital." He said the board's action would not prevent doctors from performing the operations at other Oklahoma medical centers.

As for the study on hospital divestiture, which drew three dissenting votes, Ingram said: "Although the transexual operation controversy has perhaps focused my attention on the idea of divestiture, for several years I have become increasingly convinced that the time was fast approaching when convention ownership and operation of hospitals would become unwise. I believe that time has arrived."

He cited several supporting factors, including increasing state and federal government control, increasing domination by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission which seeks to prevent employers from considering religious factors, burdens and liabilities to the convention without effective controls, and precedent for divestiture set by some other Baptist entities.

A spokesman for the team of surgeons, which had urged the board not to prevent sex change operations, said the board's vote will cause Baptists to be "viewed as bigoted buffoons" and that physicians "will be unable to utilize their skills and the patients suffering from gender dysphoria will be denied help."

The same surgeon had earlier appealed for compassion from the directors, but he said if the vote went against the operations he and his team would probably look for another hospital where they could continue the surgery.

During the board meeting, one member, Warren Terry, an Oklahoma City pastor, said he did not favor the operations but felt that more information should be obtained before they were stopped.

Another pastor, Curtis Nigh of Midwest City, Okla., said that after hearing a presentation from members of the medical team which performs the operations he was convinced that the ethical issue was on the side of the wholeness of life and helping the people who feel trapped in a body with sex organs of the opposite sex.

"When I asked the question, 'What would Christ do?', my decision was that he would cast a vote on the side of wholeness, health, healing and compassion and love for people," Nigh declared.

O. S. Hawkins, a pastor from Ada, Okla., said he had polled his people and that they overwhelmingly opposed the operation. Other reports indicated that many associations of Baptist churches in Oklahoma had passed resolutions in their annual meetings against the operation.

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Mercer Gets Federal Funds For Planned Medical School

MACON, Ga. (BP)--Mercer University's developing medical school has received approval of a crucial \$250,000 federal grant that will trigger release of \$12 million in local and state funds.

Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Joseph Califano informed Georgia Senators Herman Talmadge and Sam Nunn and Rep. Billy Evans that he was releasing the controversial grant.

Earlier, the National Advisory Council on Health Professions had recommended against the grant to the Baptist school out of fear that it would lead to a massive infusion of federal aid with no guarantee that the school would succeed.

The council questioned the school's financial package, the need for a fourth medical school in Georgia and planning for the Mercer school, which has been developing since the early 1970s.

Califano reversed the independent health council's decision because the council underrated the school's support and purpose, an HEW spokesman said following announcement of release of the funds.

The grant was approved by Califano, the spokesman said, because:

1. The school has an adequate financial base with \$12 million in state and local money committed; 2. Congress intended that the \$250,000 be spent on Mercer; and 3. The school will serve minorities who need doctors.

The intent of Congress in earmarking the money was to put Mercer in position to achieve the first step toward having an accredited medical school, Nunn said.

Approval of the \$250,000 grant will mean that Mercer can now receive \$5 million which has been in the state budget for several years and \$7 million from a local bond issue.

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High Court Declines Review Of Two State Liquor Laws

Baptist Press
10/19/77

WASHINGTON (BP)--In a pair of actions announced here, the U. S. Supreme Court refused to consider overturning an Illinois local option law or reversing the revocation of a California go-go lounge's liquor license.

The Illinois case involved a direct challenge to that state's provision for referenda to decide if liquor may be sold in local communities. The law states specifically that in cities with more than 200,000 population, a local referendum may be held in each voting precinct. In all other municipalities, the entire city or town may vote in referenda to decide if liquor may be sold.

The challenge to the Illinois law was made on grounds that precincts represent a "limited, narrow segment of the community that can be gerrymandered to reflect only a specific point of view."

Two lower tribunals, including the Illinois Supreme Court, had earlier upheld the law.

In the California case, Paul Richter, owner and operator of a San Diego establishment called "The Body Shop," had his liquor license revoked by state officials for offering nude entertainment in violation of a recent state law.

Richter contended in a legal brief submitted to the justices of the high court that his dancers' performances were "utterly lacking any elements of 'gross sexuality'" forbidden by the California statute.

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He also maintained that the law violated the free speech guarantee of the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. The high court has ruled on numerous previous occasions that some forms of "symbolic speech" are constitutionally protected.

Nude dancing, Richter argued, constitutes "communicative expression" rather than "gross sexuality" or "hardcore pornography."

The justices were apparently unimpressed, however, and declined without comment to review Richter's allegations.

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Goal Set To Start
1,200 Sunday Schools

Baptist Press
10/19/77

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Sunday School department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board here is sponsoring an emphasis to start 1,200 new Sunday Schools during the next church year to reach millions of persons--including seven million Southern Baptists--not involved in Bible study.

During the past church year, which ended in September, 567 new Sunday Schools were started in the effort to provide places of Bible study near people's homes. In the previous year, 350 new Sunday Schools were started.

Statistics show that seven million Southern Baptist church members are among an estimated 180 million persons in the United States not involved in Bible study, a board spokesman said. Some 600 counties in the United States have no form of Southern Baptist witness.

The primary reason for concentrating on new Sunday Schools, instead of enrolling people in existing churches, is that the present number of Sunday Schools could not possibly handle all the people not enrolled in Sunday School, said James Lackey, consultant in the Sunday School department. Many of the new Sunday Schools are expected to develop into churches or missions.

The effort to establish new Sunday Schools, Lackey said, hopefully will reach people best by providing a Bible teaching ministry that best meets their needs. He believes people are more likely to join a Sunday School in a similar ethnic and economic group than to drive across town to another Sunday School.

Most states are searching for personnel who will work full-time for the state convention or fellowship with the primary responsibility of starting new Sunday Schools. Nine persons are working in this capacity now, and 15 other states have requested help in locating and financing this additional worker.

Lackey said most of the new Sunday Schools are started from Mission Vacation Bible Schools, Backyard Bible Clubs and revival-type meetings. Many established churches are reporting wide use of the Sunday School Board's ACTION Sunday School enrollment plan to start new Sunday Schools.

New Sunday Schools are divided into three categories: First, the neighborhood start, a new Sunday School near the sponsoring church to draw from people not attending the existing church. Second, the satellite Sunday School, generally located over one mile from the sponsoring church, such as in a new subdivision. Third, "far away starts," appl. to churches sponsoring a new Sunday School in another town or state.

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Israel Baptist Building
Slightly Damaged By Blast

By Elizabeth F. Smith

Baptist Press
10/19/77

JERUSALEM (BP)--Baptist House, the Baptist headquarters building in West Jerusalem, was slightly damaged when a bomb exploded near the kitchen entrance.

Three persons sleeping in various parts of the house were unharmed and quickly called the police and Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board representatives in the city, John Anthony and Thomas Nabors.

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Police believe the explosive charge was a grenade which apparently had been placed in a plastic pail in the corner of a partially enclosed porch outside the kitchen. The force of the explosion blew out the glass in the door and 10 windows on that side of the house, tore a hole in the concrete floor of the porch, damaged the ceiling of the porch and broke a large water pipe.

Police are continuing to investigate. The motive for the incident has not been established and no arrests have been made.

The large limestone building houses the headquarters of the Israel Baptist Mission (organization of Southern Baptist representatives), a library, and a bookstore and information center. It is used by the congregation of the West Jerusalem Baptist Church for Sabbath School rooms and as a fellowship hall. Nearby on the property are the chapel building and a small day-care kindergarten building.

Baptist House had been in use throughout Saturday beginning with Sabbath School in the morning and including the worship services of the congregation at mid-day. The last group, a Bible study and prayer group in Hebrew, left the building at 11 p.m. The explosion occurred at 12:30 a.m., Oct. 9.

Several times in the past, Baptist House has been the target of protest by individuals and groups who oppose the ministry of Baptists and other Christian groups in Jerusalem. Usually the attackers have hurled stones through windows.

The most extensive damage occurred Feb. 11, 1974, when the bookshop and office were partially burned by a fire bomb thrown through the glass front. On that same day, arsonists also attacked two other Christian institutions in Jerusalem. Later, four young people, ages 16-19, were arrested and brought to trial. They were sentenced to terms ranging from 9 to 18 months.

Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek telephoned Nabors to express his deep regret over the bombing incident at Baptist House.

Mayor Kollek told Nabors that the Jerusalem municipality will finance the repairs to the damaged building. The municipality has a fund for repairing damage to private property by bombings or terrorists and has aided Baptists several times in the past. Repairs to windows, porch floor and ceiling and water pipes are already under way.

"We have no idea who is responsible for the incident," Nabors said. "The police are investigating. We feel that they are handling the case properly, and we are cooperating with them."

Earlier, Nabors told newspaper reporters that the Baptist convention in Israel (the local name for the Israel Baptist Mission) deplores this type of action towards any group--religious or non-religious. "We do not condone violence in any form," he said.

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Elizabeth F. (Mrs. James W.) Smith is press representative for Southern Baptists in Israel.

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Sponsors Needed For New
Wave of Asian Refugees

Baptist Press
10/19/77

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist sponsors are needed to help care for a new wave of Indochinese refugees, now waiting at refugee camps in Malaysia and Thailand.

Since 1975, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Foreign Mission Board has been ministering to the thousands of refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, who fled to Thailand after the Communist takeover of their lands.

Now, many of the refugees are joining the 150,000 Asians who found homes in the United States in the aftermath of the collapse of Vietnam.

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According to Irvin Dawson, director of the SBC Home Mission Board's office of immigration and refugee service, some 15,000 refugees are expected to immigrate to the United States in the newest wave.

More than half of the refugees are what Dawson referred to as "boat cases...people who escaped in small boats...drifting until they were picked up."

The impact of the newest refugees already is being felt by Church World Service, the resettlement and relief agency with which Southern Baptists cooperate.

"Some resettlement already has been done," Dawson said, adding Southern Baptists have only aided in one resettlement case. "First Baptist Church of Geyer Spring, Ark., helped in one resettlement," Dawson added.

Several other churches have "expressed willingness to be sponsors," Dawson said. He expects resettlement of the new refugees to take more time than was needed for the initial refugees.

"For one thing, there will be no big camps as there were then," he elaborated. "All of the refugees will come directly from camps in Thailand and Malaysia to the home city of the sponsor.

"Another is that all denominations--including Southern Baptists--are finding churches very hesitant to commit themselves to sponsorship of the new wave of refugees."

Dawson said he believes this reluctance on the part of Southern Baptists is caused by "a lack of information. I think Southern Baptists have not known the need. When they do, they will come through this time like they have in the past."

The Home Mission Board staffer also noted sponsorship will be facilitated "because for the first time we have in every state convention persons who will serve as immigration and refugee coordinators." Churches, associations or individuals interested in sponsorship may contact the state coordinators or the office of immigration and refugee service at the Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

William Wakefield, secretary for Southeast Asia at the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, urged Baptists in the United States to participate in sponsorship because many of the refugees already have had extensive Southern Baptist ministry contacts.

Some of the refugees are expected to be Christians. Foreign Mission Board records indicate some 1,800 made professions of faith and were baptized while in the Thai camps.

Southern Baptists have channeled more than \$63,000 to aid the refugees in Thailand. Wakefield said several missionaries--Dan Cobb, Ron Hill, Doug Kellum and Linda Pegram--have worked closely with the people.

Food, clothing, medicine, toiletries, mosquito nets, building materials, garden supplies and animals have been purchased and distributed by foreign missionaries, some driving as far as 40 miles to deliver weekly supplies and then returning several times during the week to minister in other ways.

Intensive Bible study--as much as four hours daily--has been offered to those interested in learning about Christ, says Maxine (Mrs. Robert R.) Stewart, Southern Baptist missionary press representative.

Regular worship services were established in each camp and missionaries minister to spiritual needs of the refugees through the services as well as on an individual basis, Mrs. Stewart said.

"Because many of these refugees have had this contact with Baptists in the camps, I hope Southern Baptists in the States will follow up this contact and take advantage of the ministry in which Baptists already have been involved," Wakefield said. "Since so many of the refugees know who Baptists are, this is a marvelous opportunity to further witness."

Crawley Says 'Bold Mission'
Means Baptists Must 'Give, Go'

By Ruth Fowler

RICHMOND (BP)--Many more Southern Baptists must be willing to "give and to go" if plans for the denomination's Bold Mission Thrust are to be carried out, according to Winston Crawley, director of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Foreign Mission Board's overseas division.

In a report to board members meeting at the home office here, Crawley reviewed progress made toward accomplishment of Bold Mission Thrust during the 21 months since the board originally adopted objectives to meet its part of the denomination-wide effort.

The Foreign Mission Board objectives, originally called Total Missions Thrust, are now termed Bold Mission Thrust in keeping with recent SBC Executive Committee action to give that name to the denomination's plan to proclaim the message of Christ to the entire world by the year 2000.

Among other things, Foreign Mission Board plans call for a 100 percent increase in the number of missionaries, increased volunteer involvement overseas, tenfold multiplication of overseas churches, and expanded efforts in urban evangelism, youth ministries, leadership training, and programs to meet human need.

While citing continued growth in each phase of work, Crawley pointed out that in some categories the present rate of growth is not enough to reach the goals set for A. D. 2000.

One matter of major concern, according to Crawley, is the need for personnel, especially career missionaries, to work in evangelism, student work, theological education and leadership training.

In the past 21 months, the total missionary force has grown by 4.2 percent, but the number of career missionaries has increased only 2.4 percent. Many more people will have to come forward giving their lives to foreign missions, Crawley said, if every person in the world is to have opportunity to hear the gospel by the turn of the century.

"Our special need is for preacher missionaries," Crawley elaborated. With missionaries now serving in 89 countries, the board hopes to appoint at least 89 new preacher missionaries a year," he said. "To help accomplish this, I would like to see 10 percent of the new seminary graduates volunteering to preach the gospel on foreign soil and each association here at home encouraging one preacher from that association to go overseas."

Crawley sees the objective of tenfold multiplication of churches as basic to the entire Bold Mission program. He said reports from Southern Baptist mission fields show an increase in churches and preaching stations from 18,489 to 20,616 in one year, with preaching stations growing more rapidly than the number of churches.

Related to this growth is the need for missionaries who can assist in the training of church leaders, either in a seminary or in programs of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) which seek to offer training without uprooting potential leaders from their home areas.

Crawley called this leadership training an "urgent matter." Mission fields this year are making requests for more new missionaries to do theological education than in any previous year, he said.

All of the Bold Mission programs point up the need for increased giving by Southern Baptists, Crawley noted after his talk. "We are encouraged by the plans of Southern Baptists for doubling of the Cooperative Program (unified budget for world missions) by 1982," he said.

In summary, Crawley told board members that "we do not yet see here in Richmond the great upsurge of volunteers for the planting of lives overseas or of funds inherently needed in Bold Mission Thrust.

"But," he said, "we have the faith to believe that Southern Baptists are serious in their desire to take the gospel to all the world, so we are continuing to move ahead as rapidly as possible."

Seminary Trustees Dedicate Housing, Approve Special Centers

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's trustee executive committee, meeting here during Founders' Day activities at the seminary, participated in the dedication of a new student housing development and approved three specialized training programs.

The trustees also heard a report from the seminary's new president, William Pinson Jr., set his inauguration date for April 4, 1978, announced a public signing by the faculty, Nov. 8, of a document subscribing to the Southern Baptist Convention's Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, and named the school's first women trustees.

The new student housing development is Tichenor Village, named for Isaac Taylor Tichenor, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, 1822-1899. Trustees also approved development plans for student housing as originally projected in the master plan for the campus and made a study of programs for faculty housing.

As a result of Pinson's challenge to launch innovative and aggressive programs to accelerate and give new emphasis to the mission-evangelism thrust of Southern Baptists in the west and throughout the world, trustees approved programs for a World Mission Center, a Christian Conference and Continuing Education Center, and a Life Enrichment Center.

The World Mission Center will be designed to take advantage of the strategic location of Golden Gate Seminary, a spokesman said. He said the multi-national population of the San Francisco Bay area gives opportunities for students in training for foreign missions to serve in language churches and learn about cultural activities associated with various national groups.

The Christian Conference and Continuing Education Center would not only serve students in specialized ministries but would also offer training opportunities to constituent churches and serve as a channel for Southern Baptist agencies which need to project their work and services to western states.

The Life Enrichment Center will be designed primarily to assist students and their families in a number of areas, such as family relationships, personal growth, career guidance and spiritual growth. It would offer a wide range of counseling services.

The trustees also discussed ways to meet the growing need for theological education and training in ministry for the large number of pastors and lay ministers in the west who desire such training.

Pinson projected the possibility of several boards of consultants which would work with the varying centers in cooperation with Southern Baptist agencies, commissions, and state conventions.

Preceding the signing of the Faith and Message document, Herschel H. Hobbs, former Southern Baptist Convention president and chairman of the committee which drew up the statement before its adoption by the convention in 1963, will deliver a major address.

The two women trustees--Mrs. Doyle (Mildred) Carlton Jr. of Wauchula, Fla., and Mrs. Grady C. (Bettye) Cothen of Nashville, Tenn., will fill unexpired terms of trustees, Blake Woolbright of Maitland, Fla., and Jesse C. Fletcher of Knoxville, Tenn., who have moved out of their geographical areas.

In other developments, the trustees authorized the addition of three lay persons to the advisory council for the seminary's Southern California Center in Garden Grove, Calif., and heard a report from E. Glen Paden, chairman of the seminary's long range planning committee.

Paden gave a progress report indicating that many of the committee's initial recommendations have been implemented, as revealed in increased student enrollment, additions to the faculty and curriculum, and the strengthening of conference and workshop programs. He said the committee will make a complete report at the April, 1978 meeting of the trustees.