



August 3, 1979

Graffiti Center: Writing  
Love on Lower East Side

79-132

By Norman Jameson

NEW YORK (BP)--A wishful breeze from the small black fan presses hard against the sultry, dusty air in the second floor walk-up, trying to push it past the heat and smells back into the street.

But noise from the cars, the yelling and the jackhammer keeps rising with the flies like dust off a barren plain, seeping through half open windows, sucked in by vacant buildings full of empty people.

For Kip Childress and Norman Daugherty, it's the afternoon of another day at Graffiti Center, a Southern Baptist mission outreach on New York's lower east side. Childress, a large, bearded Sam Houston State University senior, and Daugherty, a senior at Salisbury State College, Salisbury, Md., were summer missionaries "on the block."

It was Childress' second summer. He came back to see if he'd had any effect among the Puerto Ricans and blacks that crowd into the peeling six-story walk-ups along East 7th Street. Everyone remembered the big, pleasant guy, but if effect is measured in changed lives, Childress admits there was little.

He and Daugherty worked in a federally funded lunch program that gave two free meals a day to handicapped and children under 18. Graffiti Center was the distribution point since the block association didn't have access to a building large enough that would meet health codes.

Childress, Daugherty and two girl summer missionaries--Patti McGlothlin, a Baylor University junior and Sharon Easterlin, a sophomore at the University of Maryland--spent their days on the street or in "vest pocket" parks around a mobile recreation unit self-contained in a shopping cart. The cart is a stage for puppet shows, and with tables strapped to its sides, is a games, arts and crafts center.

The girls held girls' club on Tuesdays. Scout night was Thursday. Twice a week Norman hauled a weight set down to a store front where guys wandered in to show off and test themselves. Patti and Sharon helped several little girls in reading skills and everyone strived for lots of "contact time," an essential ingredient to establish trust relationships.

"They don't think you can relate to them because you come from a better situation and are returning to it," Daugherty says. "They think because you have money you have everything. We tell them the basic needs of everybody are the same, that Christ came realizing money wasn't enough."

Those who inhabit New York's lower east side have the same problems as people everywhere, the summer missionaries found out. But the press of people and the constant closeness and crowded living conditions make them more intense. The verbal exchanges between pedestrians and taxi drivers as they both fight for the same space between stoplights;

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the stereotypes of rude waitresses and an unseeing mass of dimwitted zombies flowing down the sidewalks like rivers of mud are all responses of people trying to carve a niche through the frustration of high density living.

The tension is great. Bruce Schoonmaker, Southern Baptist home missionary who heads Graffiti Center, tries to escape the asphalt and brick with a trip to the beach of country at least once a month with his wife, Nancy. If they don't, the tension of heat, long lines, poor services, noise and crowds builds up.

It's hard on marriages, Bruce says. When the inner city burns them out, they'll have to leave the ministry to a fresh couple.

People spend a lot of time on the streets in the evening, to mingle and escape the heat of stuffy apartments. Building stoops become congregating places and Schoonmaker picked a favorite as a pulpit for his weekly Bible study.

"What we're doing is getting to know them and letting them know us, showing the fullness of life Christ offers," says Schoonmaker, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York. "This is not a short term, high return investment. We're here to stay a good long time.

"More and more, this is the kind of ministry the church must get into. A much easier thing is to stand on the corner and proclaim and then go somewhere else to live. It's harder to be here to provide services, both physical and spiritual, that people have to have."

Lillian, a mother who wandered into Kip and Norman's open door--"we're all one big family"--said she trusts her children with Schoonmaker. "When you trust a person with your kids, hey, that's trust," she says. "And that's hard to get around here."

"God suffers when his people suffer," Schoonmaker says, revealing the philosophy behind his ministry. "When buildings are without heat in winter, He's cold too. It all goes together, though our history has been to emphasize the spiritual and neglect the physical, saying 'God will provide that.'"

Schoonmaker occasionally feels isolated. "I don't see the church being the vital center of people's lives in the city," he says. "That makes our work very important. People aren't involved enough in other people's lives. They need to be in there struggling more."

Although his efforts fall under the "Christian Social Ministries" section of the Home Mission Board, Schoonmaker doesn't like the fragmentation of the Christian life represented by a "section" for social action. It's all one. All Christians are called to social action he feels. Being a Christian by its very meaning requires involvement in other lives.

"This kind of thing needs to be happening everywhere," Schoonmaker explains. "There's all these people around who have needs both social and spiritual. Sometimes you need to meet the social needs before you can meet the spiritual needs."

The people at Graffiti Center are doing it. "Give them an 'A', they deserve it," says Lillian.



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### Wrapup and Analysis

**Court Steers Middle Course  
In Church-State Decisions**

By Stan L. Hasty

**WASHINGTON (BP)**--The U.S. Supreme Court steered a middle course in actions dealing with church-state relations in its most recent term.

Although no discernible trend affecting the broad scope of church-state relations could be detected, the justices were forced to consider numerous cases involving actual or alleged interference by government in religion.

Numerous church-state observers are convinced that the increasing tendency of executive branch agencies to issue regulations encompassing churches and church institutions constitutes the dominant trend in current church-state relations. Church opponents of such intrusion had reason for both cheer and concern in decisions and other actions of the Supreme Court last term.

**IN CHURCH PROPERTY:** The high court ruled by the barest 5-4 margin that civil courts are not always obligated to defer to the decisions of church courts in settling local church property disputes.

The five-man majority concluded that state courts may decide which faction of a divided congregation may lay claim to the disputed property rights in hierarchical denominations. The court has never taken on a case involving the settling of a property dispute in a congregational-type denomination.

Despite the ruling, the court fell short of awarding the property of the Vineville Presbyterian Church in Macon, Ga., to the majority faction of the congregation, which voted six years ago to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Instead, it sent the case back to Georgia courts, which must now determine if Presbyterian church polity mandates that the property go instead to the congregation's "loyal" minority which voted to stay in the denomination.

In a dissenting opinion for the court minority, Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. argued that the high court was in effect reversing its position on such disputes in cases dating to 1871, when the court ruled that civil courts must give way to church tribunals.

Only days earlier the court refused once again to permit civil courts to settle a long-standing dispute in the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church and sent it back to the Illinois Supreme Court. The case was rooted in the defrocking of Bishop Dionisiye Milivojevic 16 years ago by the parent church body in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and a subsequent dispute over who owns church property in this country and Canada, the area over which Dionisiye ruled.

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The actions remanding to lower courts questions of law it could have decided itself, in both the Vineville and Serbian Orthodox cases, exemplify one of the most frequent criticisms of the present high court. Although Chief Justice Warren E. Burger complains frequently about the overload of cases in the federal judiciary and despite his unprecedented actions in lobbying Congress for more federal judgeships and a streamlined judiciary, the court headed by Burger continues to remand case after case which it could have settled finally. As it is, the Vineville case is virtually certain to be back on the court docket after the Georgia courts make rulings based on the Supreme Court ruling.

**IN LABOR RELATIONS:** A 5-4 ruling by the court in the term's other major church-state case, National Labor Relations Board vs. Catholic Bishop of Chicago, represented a victory of sorts for proponents of separation of church and state.

The slim majority held that the National Labor Relations Board may not force administrators of nonpublic school systems to allow their lay teachers to unionize. Surprisingly, the majority was headed by the chief justice, who wrote the opinion. Justice William J. Brennan Jr. dissented, joined among others by Justice Thurgood Marshall, both liberal stalwarts on the court who can almost always be counted on to support church-state separation.

Brennan's dissent may be explained at least in part by his criticism of the majority for avoiding the underlying First Amendment question that NLRB jurisdiction over union activities in parochial schools violates the no-establishment clause. "While the resolution of the constitutional question is not without difficulty," he wrote, "it is irresponsible to avoid it by a cavalier exercise in statutory interpretation which succeeds only in defying congressional intent."

In a unanimous ruling involving the rights of workers in hospitals operated by religious denominations, the court held that such workers may be solicited for union membership in public areas of the hospital but not in patient rooms and in corridors and sitting rooms on floors with patient rooms or operating and therapy rooms. Baptist Hospital of Nashville, Tenn., was ordered to revoke its absolute ban on all union solicitation within the hospital.

**IN LIABILITY:** In a little-publicized action last October which may have widespread implications on the liability of church-related homes for children and the aging, the high court declined to hear arguments that an agency of the United Methodist Church should not be included in a California suit against a group of Methodist-related homes for the aged.

The court's refusal to schedule the case for argument left in place the decision of a California state court that an agency of a denomination must stand trial in a liability suit for the actions of an institution bearing its name but over which it has no control.

The problem was precipitated last year when some 150 residents of Pacific Homes filed suit against the corporation, the general council on finance and administration of the United Methodist Church, and the United Methodist Church itself. Both the general council and the denomination sought release from the \$400 million suits, arguing that the denomination has no financial liability for corporations such as Pacific Homes.

**IN STATE HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS:** The justices twice upheld the right of states to impose certain health and safety regulations upon church groups and to allow church agencies to assist states in placing young children.

In a highly-publicized Texas case, the court denied a petition by Lester L. Roloff, an evangelist who argued that several child care facilities he operates should not be subject to state laws regulating such homes.

The court rejected the contention of a Colorado man that the state violated the First Amendment by contracting a Roman Catholic social agency to make the recommendation as to the custody of his two children.

IN RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE: Atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair failed to convince the justices to hear her challenge to the use of the motto "In God We Trust" on U.S. coins and currency.

The court likewise refused to hear a case challenging Florida's law requiring school teachers "to inculcate...the practice of every Christian virtue." Also at issue in the case was a challenge to the distribution of Bibles on school premises by the Gideons.

IN STATE AID TO NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS: In a clear victory for separationists, the court summarily affirmed two lower federal courts in outlawing New Jersey's tax deduction provision for parents of students enrolled in nonpublic schools.

On the question of states' providing transportation for parochial school students, the high court twice refused, in cases from Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, to reverse field in an area first decided in 1947, when in *Everson*, the court upheld busing nonpublic pupils.

IN SECTS: In another area of church-state relations which promises considerable litigation in the foreseeable future, the court affirmed a lower federal court ruling that U.S. customs officials did not violate the rights of members of the Church of Scientology by opening and inspecting boxes of church materials flown from London to this country.

The court also declined another Scientology case, this one from Missouri, in which the church contested a decision by the state supreme court that the church is not exempt from property taxes because its properties are not used exclusively for religious worship. The state court also held that Scientology is really nothing more than an applied philosophy rather than a religion involving the worship of a supreme being.

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Executive's Chair  
Only Empty Overnight

Baptist Press  
8/3/79

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Harold C. Bennett is no longer the elect.

In a brief, informal picture taking session July 31, Bennett occupied the chair held for 28 years by Porter W. Routh and the next day he dropped the "elect" from his title as executive secretary-treasurer-elect of the SBC Executive Committee.

Bennett, 55, will lead his first meeting of the Executive Committee, which conducts the business of the Southern Baptist Convention between annual sessions, at its fall meeting Sept. 17-19. He was elected by that body in February from his position as executive secretary-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention. He has been working with Routh in Nashville since early April, preparing for the long-time denominational leader's retirement.

Routh begins two years of teaching assignments in August at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where he will lead courses in crises and controversy, administration and denominational heritage. He will follow the semester at Southern with semesters in Midwestern, Golden Gate and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminaries.

Routh's wife, Ruth, will attend classes at the seminaries.

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