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-- FEATURES

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Neglect, Age Almost Kill
Church Revived By Love

By Marv Knox

CHELSEA, Mass. (BP) — Neglect and old age almost killed First Baptist Church of Chelsea. But thanks to a generous dose of concern for others, it's been resuscitated.

Founded as an American Baptist congregation in the mid-1800s, First Baptist Church eventually swelled to 1,200 members in the bustling enclave just across the Mystic River from downtown Boston.

Then urban blight attacked, shoving Chelsea to the lowest per capita income of any city in Massachusetts. Potential members moved to more pleasant surroundings; "old faithfuls" died off.

Less than 10 members remained by 1969, and they did the unusual. They sold their church building and parsonage to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and became a mission of Metro Baptist Church, a SBC congregation in nearby Cambridge.

That union officially bore fruit this summer when the Chelsea congregation reconstituted as First Baptist Church, with about 40 active members.

"Our goal in '69 was to minister to the people of this area, using whatever means possible," recalls John Hughston, recently retired as pastor of Metro Baptist and as director of HMB ministries in greater Boston.

The remnant of the original church remained to worship, but Southern Baptists in Boston also used the building as a base for further outreach through Christian social ministries. They opened the building as a day-care center and began a teen club for neighborhood youths. A prayer group for mothers which developed into a ceramics class followed, as did a luncheon program for senior citizens, afternoon Bible clubs for children and even a scouting program with Christian emphasis.

Yet the wounds of urban decay didn't heal merely because these Baptists had both a pastor and a Christian social ministries director.

"Sometimes, we were a flame on a mountain; at times, only a flickering candle," says member Lee Atlas, noting there were periods "when only two or three remained."

Still, the link of concern for community remained strong and Christian social ministries gives Baptists a formula for touching hard-to-reach people, adds Wendell Belew, director of the HMB mission ministries division.

"This is the kind of evangelism which we probably should have been doing all along," Belew says. "We can't just stand in the pulpit and scream at people who aren't there. We've got to cultivate the communities by developing ministries that meet needs."

Close observers say much of that cultivation in Chelsea has come in the two years home missionaries Joe and Debbie Bagwell have been there leading the Chelsea church and attending to CSM work in the community. Just in their mid-20s, they feel they are in the right ministry.

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"Christian social ministry is a frame of mind. We would do it wherever God placed us," Debbie explains. "It's so compatible with what the church is all about. Every time we can, we try to link activities of the church and CSM programs."

Yet while the social programs have not provided the entire growth of the rejuvenated congregation, they have given the church visibility in the community and helped members reach out to others, Joe claims.

"CSM has made people here aware that we are alive," he explains. "Much of what the community knows about us, it knows because of our programs."

"But our growth primarily has come because our members witness to people. CSM has provided them with the vision of reaching others and allowed them to minister. We couldn't provide the programs we do if they didn't support them and volunteer their time."

"Still, the church wouldn't be growing if the members didn't do more than volunteer time, if they didn't tell others about Christ."

Belew feels the wedding of the Chelsea congregation to CSM programs provides an omen for future work in urban areas.

"This is a classic illustration of planting churches through ministry. Any church needs to be started through cultural ministries," he says. "It's a strategy we'll need to use in the future, particularly in our inner cities."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Churches, Religious Groups
Affected By Tax Changes

By Larry Chesser

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Three sections of the large tax cut package Congress recently sent to President Reagan for his signature contain tax changes of special interest to U.S. religious groups.

The comprehensive tax measure, which will reduce individual and business taxes approximately \$750 billion over the next five years, cleared the Senate on a 67-8 vote and passed the House, 282-95.

The final version of the tax cut liberalizes both the amount and scope of the Foreign Earned Income Tax Exclusion--a move urged during Senate hearings earlier this year by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. It also reduces the so-called "marriage penalty tax" and allows a tax deduction for charitable contributions made by persons who elect not to itemize deductions when filing federal income tax forms.

For Americans who are "bona fide" residents of foreign countries, Congress agreed to exclude the first \$75,000 income in 1982 and to boost that by \$5,000 annually over the next four years to \$95,000. It also provides for the exclusion of excess housing costs.

The new law will replace a variety of deductions and exclusions for Americans working abroad. In the case of the Foreign Mission Board, some overseas personnel are currently covered by a \$20,000 tax exclusion for charitable workers in certain developing nations

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which was reinstated in the closing days of the 96th Congress.

The liberalized tax policy which takes effect Jan. 1, 1982, applies to all Americans who meet residency requirements in any foreign country.

In written testimony to a Senate subcommittee earlier this year, the Foreign Mission Board said the \$20,000 exemption provided a great deal of relief for religious and charitable organizations, but called an expansion of the exclusion "highly desirable" in the light of worldwide inflation.

Congress also changed the current law under which a married couple with two incomes is taxed at a higher rate than two single persons with identical incomes. To correct this "marriage penalty," the new law allows a couple filing a joint return to deduct five percent of the first \$30,000 in earnings of the spouse with the lower income in 1982. The deduction increases to 10 percent of the first \$30,000 in 1983 and the following years, meaning a maximum deduction of \$3,000.

A 1980 Southern Baptist Convention resolution called on the president and Congress to correct the "inequity" of the marriage penalty tax.

In another section, Congress agreed to allow taxpayers who use the "short form" standard deduction in filing federal tax returns to deduct charitable contributions. The change will have limited impact in 1982 and 1983, permitting a 25 percent deduction on the first \$100 in allowable charitable contributions. The allowable deduction climbs to 25 percent of the first \$300 in 1984; 50 percent with no limit on contributions in 1985; and 100 percent with no limit in 1986.

The provision expires in 1987 unless extended by Congress.

Noticeably absent from the tax cut package was any provision for tuition tax credits. President Reagan, who expressed support for the controversial proposal during the 1980 campaign, opted not to include tuition tax credits in his first tax cut proposal to Congress.

Despite assurances from a Treasury Department spokesman to a Senate panel this summer that the administration will work with Congress on tuition tax credits "at the appropriate time," it remains to be seen how hard the president will push on this issue.

Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., one of the primary sponsors of tuition tax credit legislation in the Senate, considers the pending proposals "not entirely dead, but certainly ailing," according to his press representative. The spokeswoman indicated the Oregon senator will push the legislation if Congress considers another tax cut bill this year or in 1982.

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Home Mission Board
Names 5 to Missions

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ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board approved five persons for mission service during the August meeting of the board's personnel committee.

The procedure for appointment varied from the traditional method of naming mission workers because neither the board nor its executive committee met during the month. Acting under bylaws passed a year ago, however, the personnel committee approved the candidates for mission service.

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Named missionaries were Milton Kliesch of New Orleans, La., and Tom and Lou Sherrill of Bismarck, N.D. Appointed missionary associates were Steve and Janice Hoekstra of New Castle, Colo.

Kliesch will remain in New Orleans, where he will become a day care worker at Friendship House, a Christian social ministries center. He has been a youth director in Louisiana and Texas and an interim pastor in Louisiana. He is a graduate of Mississippi College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Sherrills will stay in Bismarck, and he will direct missions for the Western North Dakota Baptist Association. Sherrill has been a student missionary in the Bahama Islands and a pastor in North Carolina, Wyoming and North Dakota. He is a graduate of Guilford College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Hoekstras will move to Vail, Colo., where he will be a state consultant and community minister with assignments in special mission ministries and Christian social ministries. A graduate of Grand Canyon College, he has been a pastor of churches in Colorado.

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Sunday School Board
Names Six To Posts

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Leaders of three divisions and three departments were elected by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's trustees at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

Named to head the church and staff support division was Gary W. Cook of Oklahoma City. Two current board staffers, J. Ralph McIntyre and David P. Turner, were elected to head the Bible teaching division and the management services division respectively.

Joe R. Stacker of Concord, Tenn., was elected secretary of the church administration department. In the book store division, two employees were promoted to manage departments. Harvey M. Brown was named manager of the operations department and Charles B. Munns, manager of the east central region.

Cook, 38, has been pastor of Trinity Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, since 1977. A trustee of the board since 1974, Cook will succeed McIntyre as director of the church and staff support division which includes five departments—church administration, music, recreation, media library and architecture.

McIntyre, 53, held pastorates in Tennessee and Texas before joining the board in 1977 as director of the church and staff support division. As Bible teaching division director, he will coordinate the work of the Sunday School department, art department, Bible correspondence section and the church programs and services language unit.

Turner, 45, is a 22-year veteran of the board who has managed the materials services department since 1977. As director of the management services division, he will oversee the work of five departments—accounting and control, administrative services, procurement, property management and systems.

Stacker, 47, elected secretary of the church administration department, has been pastor of First Baptist Church, Concord, Tenn., for 13 years. He has held leadership posts with the Knox County Association and the Tennessee Baptist Convention as well as serving as a trustee for Harrison-Chilhowee Academy, East Tennessee Baptist Hospital and the Sunday School Board.

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Brown, 48, becomes head of the operations department after supervising the inventory selection and control section in the department since 1977. Earlier, he managed the Baptist Book Store at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Munns, 30, named the manager of the east central region of Baptist Book Stores, has been in book store management since 1974. He has managed the Tulsa Baptist Book Store since 1979.

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(BP) photo mailed to Baptist state newspapers by Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

'Getting Ready' Motto
Mirrors Expectations

By Jim Lowry

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP) — Tom Carter decided to become a preacher during Bible preaching week at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center last year. He has been preparing ever since because "he wants to be ready" when the opportunity arrives.

Carter, 43, a 17-year employee of the U.S. Postal Service in Cheyenne, Wyo., has received no call from a church. But he returned to the 1981 Bible Preaching Conference to continue preparations. He also has taken some seminary extension courses and done additional Bible study.

His formal education ended with eighth grade but Carter later obtained a high school diploma and earned 18 college credits. He has no doubts that God will open a door of ministry to him.

"I think the Lord will supply me with a job in a small town and he will take care of me," Carter said. "Wyoming is a big state with not very many people, so it is not a lucrative place for some preachers.

"I don't have a big vocabulary, but I'll improve what I've got. I want to give quality preaching to a church with 24 members so they can try to have 30 the next Sunday."

When questioned about his step of faith to prepare for the ministry, Carter said: "I don't see what is so unique about obeying the Lord. People should give themselves to their calling."

After Carter returned to Wyoming last year, his 16-year-old son, Jeff, also surrendered to preach. They are members of North Cheyenne Southern Baptist Church where the elder Carter is a deacon and Sunday School teacher.

Next year, Carter hopes to spend two weeks at Glorieta continuing his study for the ministry.

"I'm sure it is the Lord's will that I preach," Carter said with conviction. "I'm not sure how to do it, but I plan to be ready."

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