



-- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996

MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300

RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Stan L. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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**Paralyzed Volunteer, Friends ,
Attack FMB Disability Program**

By Dan Martin

WASHINGTON (BP)--Friends of a paralyzed mission volunteer have launched a letter-writing campaign criticizing the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board for its "inadequate" disability programs.

The group, calling itself "Friends of Bob Sorrels," and made up of some members of Capitol Hill Metropolitan Baptist Church of Washington, has circulated letters, charging "inadequacies" and "shortcomings" in the disability program, and urging "remedial action to prevent the suffering" of disabled volunteers such as Robert Sorrels.

Sorrels, 30, who now lives in Norman, Okla., was paralyzed from the shoulders down when his fourth vertebra was crushed in a traffic accident April 15, 1980, less than a week after he arrived in Nigeria for a year as a Mission Service Corps volunteer.

A veteran Southern Baptist missionary, William D. Bender, and a Nigerian seminary professor, Titus Oluwafemi, were killed in the accident.

Sorrels, a member of Capitol Hill Metro church prior to leaving for Africa, was not covered by disability insurance, although he had signed up for hospitalization and life insurance made available for volunteers to purchase through the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

The letters--sent to state convention presidents, editors and executive secretaries, all members of the Foreign Mission Board, and "about 150 pastors in the SBC"--say because the FMB "does not have any disability program for short-term missionaries... Sorrels will be left to fend for himself."

According to Bill Vickers, one of the "Friends," and Sorrels' former roommate, the letters are an "awareness campaign" and ask that Baptists write letters to the FMB and that churches sign and send in petitions.

"It is the responsibility of every Baptist to take immediate action and see to it that the Foreign Mission Board be held accountable for this oversight and the situation be corrected," the letter says.

The campaign was set off after the October meeting of the FMB, in which directors agreed to continue paying Sorrels a stipend of \$603.50 per month--the same as he would have received from his sponsoring church as a volunteer in Nigeria--through October, 1982, at which time board officials say Sorrels will become eligible for government disability benefits.

FMB officials have declined to accept long-term responsibility because Sorrels went

to Nigeria as an MSC volunteer, and not as an employed missionary.

Mission Service Corps was established by messengers to the 1977 Southern Baptist Convention, and is designed to augment the career missionary force by putting volunteers on home and foreign mission fields. The concept is that the volunteers will provide all necessary resources, including travel, expenses and insurance, and that the sending agencies provide a place of service, supervision and other limited support.

"From the very beginning, the support base for these volunteers has been separate and apart from the resources of the Foreign Mission Board," said R. Keith Parks, president of the FMB. "The (1977) convention voted a new concept of voluntarism, in which it was clearly understood that the mission boards would provide no additional funds."

Sorrels and other volunteers are required to sign a waiver absolving the FMB of responsibility in case of "loss of property, damage to same, personal harm or injury that may come." FMB records indicate Sorrels signed the waiver Dec. 5, 1979, and then countersigned a letter in February saying he understood what he was signing.

Sorrels, however, told Baptist Press he did not recall having signed such a waiver, and that even if he signed it, he was not told what it was.

FMB officials say they have earmarked \$28,412.84, to help Sorrels, an amount one leader says is "\$28,000-plus more than we were responsible for or were required to pay." This amount included sending an additional physician and two nurses to the Eku, Nigeria, hospital to provide around-the-clock care for Sorrels, board leaders said.

Parks says the money was provided in an effort to help Sorrels. He called the decision to continue the stipend until October of 1982, "a compassionate act...to provide a bridge until he has some other options."

He added that some board members questioned "whether our aid implied legal responsibility," but said he "felt we had to do it to tide him over."

"We felt we did more than we had to and about as much as we could," Parks said.

Sorrels says he does not know if the FMB has "legal responsibility but I do feel they have a Christian responsibility to help one of their own."

He added that if "you are working for a business, making a business-related trip--which I was (in Nigeria)--and are injured through no fault of your own, you would think they would have some responsibility."

Sorrels says he feels "abandoned" and "betrayed" by the Foreign Mission Board and its leaders, whom he describes as "very cold businessmen...who lack Christian compassion."

He added he was "shocked" by the board action. "I had gotten indications that they were going to do as little as possible for me, but I expected more than that. After October they are going to wash their hands of me."

Sorrels and his friends hope their letters will pressure the Foreign Mission Board to change its action when it meets in December and make provision for him.

However, Parks and other board officials say they have gone above and beyond their responsibilities. They suggest that individuals, if they are truly interested, establish a special fund for Sorrels.

Orlando First Enjoys
Million Dollar Sunday

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Members of First Baptist Church, Orlando, gave \$1 million in a single day as part of a drive to raise \$2.6 million for land in southwest Orlando.

The 5,500-member Southern Baptist congregation has raised \$2.3 million since its fund drive began in September and they plan to have it all by Thanksgiving.

"The financial miracle we are witnessing is beyond human achievement," pastor Jim Henry wrote in his newsletter. "The 'Seventy Day Miracle'. . . will be something we will tell our children."

The \$2.6 million is just for the land, nearly 150 acres in southwest Orlando. It will take more fund-raising to finance a new 5,000-seat sanctuary, parking for 3,000 cars, a school and a high-rise retirement apartment building.

The church will retain its downtown 1,800-seat building as a satellite for those members who wish to worship there when the primary location is moved, probably within three years.

First Baptist has been baptizing 500 to 600 persons a year for three years and adding by all means about 1,200 members per year, according to Bob New, minister of stewardship and planned giving. Its Sunday School growth rate has led Florida or been near the top for several years.

More than \$1.75 million of the total has been cash, and the rest was in the form of gifts, including an antique car, wedding rings and a registered Hereford bull. Several personal checks were for more than \$100,000.

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Charges Changed
For Accused Killer

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LOVELAND, Colo. (BP)--Charges against the accused killer of Wendy Watts have been changed from manslaughter to second degree murder.

Steven Hiatt, 26, was "surprised" at the change in charges against him resulting from the shooting death of Watts, 9, who wandered into Hiatt's apartment at 3:30 p.m., Nov. 7, while her parents attended a Bible study nearby.

Watts' pastor, Dale Witt of Trinity Baptist Church, Loveland, said Watts' funeral was the largest ever held in Loveland. An estimated 700 persons attended.

Both Watts' parents are deaf, though she was not. The Master's Hands Choir from Silent Crusaders Chapel performed "Amazing Grace," one of her favorite songs.

Her former pastor, Chuck Woody of Silent Crusaders Chapel, described Watts as a vibrant person who loved people, play, fellowship and the Scriptures. Woody baptized her two years ago.

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High Court Will Review
Child Pornography Law

By Stan Hastey

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court will decide if states may forbid sexual performances by children in legally non-obscene films and magazines.

Without comment the justices agreed to review the constitutionality of a 1977 New York law making it a felony to promote any sexual performance by a child under age 16. A separate section of the law prohibits the promotion of sexually obscene performances by children.

Paul Ferber, operator of a Manhattan book shop selling sexual materials, was convicted under the law three years ago after an undercover police officer purchased two films featuring children in sexual roles. Ferber's conviction came under the portion of the New York statute banning the promotion of any sexual performance by children.

Although one state court later affirmed the conviction, the New York Court of Appeals overturned it on grounds that the law is too broad and should be limited to legally defined obscene materials.

In appealing the case to the Supreme Court, New York County District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau said the lower decision "has crippled the ability of law enforcement and the judicial system to deal with the substantial and ever-increasing commercial sexual exploitation of children who are made to engage in sexual conduct for the profit of the producers and purveyors of child pornography."

The New York law, Morgenthau argued, was designed to prevent sexual abuse of children even in legally non-obscene films and magazines.

Ferber's attorneys argued in legal papers filed with the high court that the portion of the law applying to non-obscene performances is "patently unconstitutional." The controversy over the case has been complicated, they continued, "by the hysteria surrounding the public's concern over the exploitation of children."

The case will be scheduled for oral argument sometime after Jan. 1.

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Hinkle Resigns Board
To Accept Pastorate

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Joseph W. Hinkle, secretary of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department, has resigned effective Dec. 31 to become pastor of Eastland Heights Baptist Church in Springfield, Tenn.

Hinkle, 46, has been interim pastor of the church since June and held interims there on two previous occasions.

"Both the church and my family have sought to know God's will in this matter," said Hinkle. "I feel I've got some skills in working with people that I'm anxious to use in working more closely with the congregation."

Hinkle came to the board in 1967 as a consultant in the church administration department from a pastorate in Lawrenceburg, Ky. He became supervisor of the family ministry section in 1972 before it was given department status in 1974.

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"Right now we're fully staffed, completely organized and adequately funded," said Hinkle, who has led the department to grow from five employees to 24. Periodicals produced by the department sell more than 17 million copies per year.

"The focus of the ministry of the church will be on families of all shapes, varieties and types," Hinkle said.

"Joe Hinkle is a person-centered leader who has sought innovative ways to educate and minister to the family through the local church," said Howard Foshee, director of the Christian development division.

Morton Rose, vice president for church programs and services, said, "The board will suffer the loss of Joe's leadership, but we have to respect God's leadership in the lives of other people and accept it."

Hinkle, a Goodlettsville, Tenn., native, is a graduate of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He has been pastor of churches in Kentucky and Tennessee.

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School Prayer Rider
Approved By Senate

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WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Senate has overwhelmingly approved an amendment which would restrict the Justice Department from using its funds to interfere with "voluntary school prayer and meditation."

But the practical impact of the action appears insignificant since the Justice Department does not use its funds to do what the amendment forbids.

By a 70-12 vote, the Senate restored a House rider which the Senate's appropriations committee earlier had struck from the \$8.6 billion funding bill for the Departments of Commerce, Justice and State.

After the vote, U.S. Sen. Lowell P. Weicker Jr., R-Conn., presented an amendment which would prevent Justice Department action only against "constitutional" programs of school prayer and meditation.

The subject produced heated debate over what the First Amendment religion clauses allow and what they forbid, as well as over what constitutes "voluntary" school prayer.

Weicker's amendment was rejected 51-34.

After the votes, Weicker said he will filibuster the entire appropriations bill, adding he believes the inclusion is unconstitutional. "This bill will not get off the floor of the U.S. Senate," Weicker said.

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