



# BAPTIST PRESS

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May 21, 1982

82-78

## Church Pension Plans Get Boost In Senate Hearing

By Larry Chesser

WB

WASHINGTON (BP)--Legislation providing more equitable treatment for denominational pension plans received a boost during consideration by a Senate panel.

Backed by virtually every U.S. denomination—including the Southern Baptist Convention's Annuity Board--S. 1910 drew favorable comments from a treasury department spokesman as well as Sen. John H. Chafee, R-R.I., chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Savings, Pensions and Investment.

Chafee, who said he is attracted to any piece of legislation which had such uniform support from the nation's church groups, signed on as a co-sponsor of the measure following the hearing.

"Ministers and denominational employees will be greatly benefited by the increased economic security which S. 1910's enactment will make available," Annuity Board general counsel Gary S. Nash told the panel.

Among other things, the bill would permit participants in denominational retirement programs who traditionally have been poorly compensated during their early working years to make greater-than-normal tax deferred annuity payments in later years. This would be partly accomplished by allowing church plan participants the same options for overriding the normal annual contribution limits that current law provides for teachers, hospital workers and employees of home health service agencies.

The bill also would treat a person's service to any Baptist congregation, agency or institution as service to a single employer. This change is important because the years of service in the present job is one factor in determining the annual limit on payments to a pension plan.

The bill also would clarify--in the face of a recent Internal Revenue Service ruling that only insurance companies can issue tax sheltered annuities--that church pension boards are authorized to do so under federal tax law.

Despite reservations of the Treasury department's David G. Glickman about some of the bill's provisions, Nash was pleased to have an endorsement of most of the legislation.

"It's nice to have Treasury's support," said Nash, who is secretary of a 27 denomination-coalition to secure fair treatment of church pension programs.

Nash added that with the support of the two initial Senate sponsors, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas, and Sen. Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., as well as Chafee, he expects "quick passage."

A spokesman for Bentsen said he expects remaining differences between Senate sponsors and the treasury "to be ironed out easily."

Bentsen, who said enactment of the legislation "is urgent," explained that passage of the bill is essential to correct some oversights in Congress' passage of the Employee Retirement Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

When ERISA was enacted, Congress was not aware that "overly harsh limitations" were imposed on church pension plans, Bentsen said.

An identical bill, H.R. 5067, has been introduced in the House by Rep. James C. Wright, D-Texas, and Rep. Barber B. Conable, R-N.Y., where it is pending in the Ways and Means Committee.

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Wyoming Fellowship Elects  
First Executive Director

CO

Baptist Press  
5/21/82

RAPID CITY, S.D. (BP) -- John W. Thomason, director of the teaching and training division of the Northern Plains Baptist Convention, has been elected executive director of the Wyoming Southern Baptist Area Fellowship by the Northern Plains executive committee, effective July 1.

Thomason, 45, a graduate of Samford University and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Billings, Mont., before joining the convention staff in 1976.

"There is tremendous growth taking place in Wyoming," Thomason said. "The people are very excited about their development. They have a sense of destiny."

Roy Owen, Northern Plains Baptist Convention executive director, called Thomason's election a major step toward organizing the Wyoming Fellowship as a state convention.

The Wyoming churches voted last year to organize as a fellowship, a pre-requisite to gaining state convention status. In addition, the fellowship must attain a total of 50 churches with combined membership of 12,500 or 70 churches with 10,000 members; a record of two years of cooperation with an existing convention, and giving of at least 10 percent of total receipts through the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program.

Noting the fellowship now has 53 churches, 29 church-type missions and nearly 12,500 members, Thomason says it will vote to organize as a state convention during the October 1983 Northern Plains Baptist Convention annual meeting.

That meeting will be in First Southern Baptist Church, Casper, Wyo., the first constituted Southern Baptist church in the state, having organized in 1951.

When that vote occurs, Wyoming will be the 35th Baptist state convention in the national Southern Baptist Convention, which has work in all 50 states. Two other fellowships, Minnesota-Wisconsin, and New England, also are considering such a move.

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

Christians' Same God  
Not for Opposite Ideas

RB

Baptist Press  
5/21/82

MOSCOW (BP)--Christians cannot pray "My Father" and then divide the world into areas of opposition, Baptist World Alliance President Duke K. McCall told almost 600 world religious leaders who gathered for a conference on peace.

"The one prayer prayed by all Christians is, 'Our Father who art in heaven,'" McCall said. "It is not God's will for some to die in violence and others to live in peace."

The meeting, World Conference: Religious Workers for Saving the Sacred Gift of Life From Nuclear Catastrophe, was called by Patriarch Pimean, leader of the Orthodox church in Moscow and Russia. It drew 588 participants, representing Buddhists, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Moslems and others.

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McCall told them that Baptists in 122 countries share "a commitment to seek the limination of nuclear weapons by mutually verifiabl program of reduction of all instruments of war."

He also cautioned against the assumption that a focus on elimination of nuclear weapons implies that religious persons "condone or accept as inevitable the death and destruction of our brothers and sisters by so-called conventional weapons."

"The horror of nuclear war justifies our attention on the worst of all weapons, but arms negotiation by governments should include all weapons," he insisted.

He urged his colleagues to demonstrate their commitment by applying religious insight to the issue of nuclear weapons. "As religious workers, we must appeal to all persons of good will to secure their involvement to save the sacred gift of life from all forms of violence," he said.

McCall reported his perspective was one that many conference participants have never heard from a Westerner.

Conference participants have related to the issue of nuclear arms and peace according to the information they receive in their newspapers, and most of them are from areas where Soviet news services dominate, he reported.

Consequently, many Easterners are under the impression that the East is pursuing peace while the West is not, he added, noting that most of them have not read or heard statements from Western leaders regarding peace.

Yet despite the differences in background, McCall termed the conference "friendly in spirit."

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RTVC To Broadcast During SBC  
To Boost New Orleans Witness

*CE*

Baptist Press  
5/21/82

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)— Two broadcasting efforts before and during the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans will support messengers' evangelistic activities there.

The Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission has produced TV spot announcements to be aired on all three network affiliate stations in New Orleans during the week prior to the June 15-17 convention. The 30-second spots describe the meeting and promote the June 13 evangelistic rally in the Louisiana Superdome.

The commission also will be broadcasting for one hour during three convention nights on the New Orleans CBS station WWL-TV. The agency will use the 11-12 p.m. time slot June 14-16 to preview several pilot programs for the American Christian Television System. Time will cost just under \$3,000 per hour and will be paid for by the Radio-Television Commission.

The two efforts are to assist the evangelistic campaign planned by the Bold Mission New Orleans committee and to acquaint convention messengers with programming under development for ACTS, the proposed national Baptist TV network.

"Invitation to Life," the RTVC's new prime time preaching program will be shown June 14. "Sunshine Factory," a children's show, and "Our World," a news magazine, both are scheduled for June 15. The final hour will be a musical special, "Jerry Clower and the Centurymen."

When "Invitation to Life" is aired, New Orleans churches will provide telephone counseling to people making spiritual decisions in response to the broadcast. The counselors, trained by the RTVC, will use the same counseling method employed in the test marketing of the "Invitation to Lif" pilot.

Three different TV spots have been produced by the RTVC at the request of the Bold Mission New Orleans Committee. They will air 74 times June 6-12, mostly during prime time and local newscasts. The spots feature people from the New Orleans area and will cost approximately \$30,000, paid for through the budget of the Bold Mission New Orleans Committee.

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National, Southern Baptists Call  
For More Cooperative Ministries

By Michael Tutterow

AB

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) -- "There is more kingdom work than Southern Baptists can do alone, and there is more kingdom work than National Baptists can do alone," said Chan Garrett, associate director of the black church relations department of the SBC Home Mission Board.

"It is time for meaningful cooperation to take place between our conventions," he said.

Garrett, whose department sponsored the meeting, addressed scores of National and Southern Baptists attending the 1982 Victor T. Glass Conference on Cooperative Ministries. He told them that little "meaningful cooperation" exists between the three National Baptist conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention because "we either feel we can go it alone and don't need each other, or we mistrust one another."

"Either attitude is tragic, and the trend must be reversed," he said.

Garrett suggested presidents of the four conventions meet together to "develop plans that will move our conventions together as a mighty force for Jesus Christ." He cautioned that such efforts must proceed "with the realization that each convention has something of value to contribute to and learn from the other."

Three Baptists received Victor T. Glass awards for "distinguished service in racial reconciliation" during the conference.

They are: O. L. Sherrill, retired executive secretary of the General Baptist Convention of North Carolina; Edward L. Wheeler, executive director of Morehouse School of Religion in Atlanta, Ga.; and Joe Priest Williams, pastor of Baptist Tabernacle in Louisville.

Sherrill was executive secretary of the General Baptist Convention of North Carolina from 1947 until his retirement in 1977. During his tenure, North Carolina Baptist Student Union Ministries, seminary extension and summer missions work became largely integrated and unified.

Wheeler, former associate director of the Home Mission Board black church relations department, became executive director of Morehouse School of Religion Jan. 1.

Pastor of Baptist Tabernacle for the past 21 years, Williams was recognized for the "tremendous contribution he has made as an agent of reconciliation in the city of Louisville."

In the conference, Mac Jones, pastor of First Baptist Church of LaGrange, Ga., pointed out that relationships between National and Southern Baptists are hampered by past histories of racial discrimination. Until racism has been confronted and dealt with honestly, asserted Jones, "revivals and cooperative programs will not bring us together."

He also called for Baptist groups to take stands on current issues, saying agreement in areas of social justice would help unite the four conventions.

"The church cannot be the church until there is struggle and witness together about life issues," he said.

Echoing Jones' sentiments, Anne Davis, associate professor of social work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, maintained Baptists' theology must incorporate social action with evangelism. She also said church efforts must go beyond individual assistance by tackling "the structures that oppress, and the world systems that foster injustice."

George Weaver, pastor of New Mount Olive Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., stated relationships between National and Southern Baptists need not remain strained, and called on the "Baptist family" to go out and "shock America." He said, "We can't do it with rhetoric, but we can do it with action."

Emmanuel McCall, director of HMB black church relations department, said, "I am convinced that if any sizable number of the 13.5-million Southern Baptists and the 10.5-million National Baptists can discover each other in mutual ministry, we could move this nation toward God."

Southern Baptist Leaders  
Differ on Prayer Amendment

By Stan Hastey

WB

WASHINGTON (BP) -- President Reagan's call for a constitutional amendment on public school prayer brought mixed reactions from some Southern Baptist pastors and executives.

Reagan announced May 6--the National Day of Prayer--that he intended to keep a campaign pledge to support such an amendment. On May 17, he sent his proposal to Capitol Hill.

His proposed amendment reads: "Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any state to participate in prayer."

Among those opposing the president's call in a narrow Baptist Press sampling, were Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, and Grady C. Cothen, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Bennett said he is happy with resolutions on school prayer passed at annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention during the past 20 years since the Supreme Court struck down state-required prayer and Bible reading.

In 1980, the last time messengers addressed the issue, they "rightly resolved to support truly voluntary prayer while opposing 'attempts, either by law or other means, to circumvent the Supreme Court's decisions forbidding government authored or sponsored religious exercises in public schools,'" Bennett said.

Cothen, who heads the world's largest religious publishing house, said the proposed amendment is unnecessary because it "makes no provision for anything not now possible."

"As desirable as prayer in public schools may be, mandatory or supervised prayer is antithetical to our Baptist free faith," he added. "To make public prayer a political football is to deny the meaning of real prayer. To give this issue to each local community is to guarantee political confusion over a sacred, personal, religious act.

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said of Reagan's proposal: "Nothing in the Bill of Rights is more fundamental than freedom from any coercion, manipulation or pressure regarding religion. Little children in public schools should not be required to defend their particular spiritual heritage.

"Compulsory school attendance laws make group prayer unfair and impractical. The proposed constitutional amendment would itself be a reversal of the First Amendment, impossible to implement, contradictory in content and contrary to our Baptist input into the Bill of Rights."

Jimmy Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, favors passage. "I would not be unhappy with the wording of the president's amendment," he told Baptist Press.

Said Draper, a likely nominee for Southern Baptist Convention president in June, "I do not agree with those who suddenly say we cannot acknowledge God in the classroom. We acknowledge him in the Constitution itself and in other national documents."

Saying he favors time for silent prayer and meditation, Draper emphasized he does not favor mandatory, recited prayer. "A student should not be compelled to pray," he said, "but under the President's proposal, he would at least have the opportunity."

Ron Herrod, pastor of First Baptist Church, Kenner, La., appreciates Reagan's "courage for taking a stand."

"I think it's positive and I agree with it completely," said Herrod, chairman of the Bold Mission New Orleans Committee that is planning evangelistic vents for messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting June 15-17. "I think there has been a decline in public moral stance since the Supreme Court rulings on prayer. I agree that no one should be forced to pray, but they should be allowed to pray."