

**(BP)****- - 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

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

July 30, 1982

82-108

**Southern Baptists Collide  
At School Prayer Hearing**

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP)—Four Southern Baptists, including two U.S. senators, collided over the school prayer issue at a Senate hearing.

As the Senate Judiciary Committee opened a series of hearings likely to extend into September on President Reagan's proposed constitutional amendment on public school prayer, Sen. Mark O. Hatfield, R-Ore., told the panel he opposed the measure, while his colleague, Sen. Jess Helms, D-N.C., reiterated his long-standing support for such legislation.

Appearing on a panel of religious leaders, former Southern Baptist Convention president Jimmy R. Allen said the proposal would be "a mistake rather than a solution" for resolving disputes over free exercise of religion rights.

On a separate panel Edward E. McAteer, president of the Religious Roundtable and a member of Memphis Bellevue Baptist Church, urged the panel to pass the amendment "with all possible speed to nullify the infamous decision of the highest court of ours which virtually stopped prayer in our nation's classrooms."

Hatfield contended that assuring free exercise rights can best be accomplished by considering realistic alternatives to the President's proposed amendment.

"Instead of concentrating our attention on initiatives like a school prayer amendment, which I oppose," Hatfield said, "I would urge my colleagues to devote their energies to rooting out ridiculous barriers that have been erected to forbid voluntary meetings of students who seek to meet and pray in non-disruptive ways."

Helms told the panel he supports the President's proposal but will continue to push his own school prayer bill which removes Supreme Court and lower federal court jurisdiction in school prayer cases.

Helms also leveled a blast at the media in general for failing to report his contention that "Marxists and out-and-out Communists" have been involved in opposing state-mandated prayer in public schools.

Allen, president of the SBC Radio and Television Commission, emphasized he was speaking for himself as a "theologically conservative evangelical Christian" since it "is a cardinal principle among Baptists that no Baptist speaks for another."

The former pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas, urged the committee to let the "confusion about what can and cannot be done in the free exercise of our faith within in the context of public education" be resolved by the courts. He emphasized that courts are just now beginning to define the meaning of the free exercise clause of the First Amendment after years of "hammering out the meaning of the no establishment of religion clause."

"To attempt to solve the issue of free exercise of religion in public education as suggested in this amendment to the whole Constitution is to use a sledgehammer and pickaxe for an operation which demands a laser beam and scalpel," Allen said. He insisted the amendment is unnecessary "because the right to prayer is already safe in our nation."

-more-

McAteer acknowledged that individual voluntary prayer is available, just as it is to prisoners in Siberian labor camps, and penitentiary inmates on death row.

"This is not what we have in mind when we say our little children should be allowed to practice voluntary prayer," McAteer explained.

McAteer also said in response to a question from Sen. Jeremiah Denton, R-Ala., who chaired the hearing in the absence of Judiciary Committee chairman J. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., that he opposed use of state-written prayer in classrooms. However, in his statement he indicated that under the prayer amendment, local prayer leaders would be free to compose their own prayers. "If groups of people are permitted to pray, someone must have the power to determine the content of such prayer," he said.

The Memphis layman also pointed to the 1982 Southern Baptist Convention resolution supporting the prayer amendment which reversed long-standing SBC opposition to state-sponsored religious exercises.

Explaining the change in the SBC position, McAteer said, "Because of the way the question had been framed and how the agenda had been set for debate, Southern Baptists had been prevented from having an opportunity to say to the nation what they really thought about prayer in school."

Asked by Denton about the 1982 SBC school prayer resolution, Allen offered a different analysis.

He pointed to his written testimony which explained that Baptist churches elect messengers and not delegates to annual denominational meetings and while the resolutions reflect the judgment of a majority of messengers at a particular session, they have "no impact of authority." Acknowledging that messengers to the 1982 session went on record in support of the prayer amendment, he stated that messengers to conventions in 1964, 1971 and 1980 had adopted resolutions opposing such legislation.

The differing resolutions, Allen told Denton, should be accepted "as part of our Baptist pluralism."

The prayer amendment's chances in this Congress remain unclear but with this session rapidly approaching an expected early October adjournment time is working against it.

In the House of Representatives where Judiciary Committee leaders are opposed to the prayer amendment, sponsor Thomas N. Kindness, R-Ohio, has introduced a discharge petition to bypass the Judiciary Committee and bring the measure to the floor for a vote. Such a move requires 218 House members to sign the petition.

-30-

Oxford Church Restores  
CP Giving After 12 Years

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press  
7/30/82

OXFORD, Ala. (BP)—Twelve years ago, Antioch Baptist Church near Oxford, Ala., voted to "temporarily" discontinue budget support of the association and the Cooperative Program and to use the money instead to build a new auditorium.

Even though the building was completed and paid for in about five years, it has taken the church seven additional years to resume financial support of Southern Baptist mission efforts at every level--local, state, national and worldwide.

In July the 400-member church voted to give 10 percent of its \$60,000 annual budget to missions, seven percent through the Cooperative Program and three percent to the Coosa River Baptist Association.

James Drummond, pastor of the church, had words of warning to other churches considering cutting mission giving to build a building, based on Antioch's experience.

-more-

"It took 12 years to get our people back in the will of the Lord concerning our mission giving," Drummond said. "Once undesignated missions giving was dropped, it was a case of 'out sight, out of mind,'" Drummond added.

It took a long-range re-education program, plus the personal involvement of several key church members, to restore the Cooperative Program to the church budget, Drummond observed.

Several factors led to the church's decision to restore the Cooperative Program to the church budget, he said.

The church was organized in 1840, even before the Southern Baptist Convention, and has a long history of missions support. Drummond credited the Brotherhood, Woman's Missionary Union, and church deacons with paving the way for restoring missions giving in the budget.

The church has always had a very active WMU, and a few years ago the men became enthusiastic about missions after participating in two projects (constructing a church building in Oklahoma and repairing the home of a needy black woman in Alabama) through Carpenters for Christ, an organization started by men from a nearby Anniston church.

In June the church's pastor, one of the deacons, and several WMU members attended the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans and returned with a renewed commitment to Bold Mission Thrust, the Southern Baptist Convention's effort to proclaim the gospel to every person in the world by the year 2000. Shortly afterwards the deacons recommended the church reinstate the Cooperative Program and associational missions to the budget.

In July the church's Girls in Action (GA) director and her family went to Vermont as short-term Christian Service Corps volunteers through the SBC Home Mission Board.

Jane Hill had participated in a WMU mission study and had contacted Bill Wilson at the SBC Home Mission Board, Atlanta, after reading in Royal Service, WMU publication for Baptist Women, about the need for volunteers. Larry Hill had recently been laid off from his position as district sales manager for Massey Ferguson and was looking for something to do until he qualified for retirement in October.

The Hills made a family decision to spend a month in Vermont as mission volunteers taking \$1,000 from their savings to pay expenses. Daughters Deborah, 15, and Kelly, 10, active in GAS and Acteens mission organizations at the church, were as enthusiastic as their parents about the decision.

They worked at Old Stone Baptist Church, Bennington, Vt., doing general church work, visitation, teaching, working in Vacation Bible School and renovating the church's rundown parsonage where Al Brodbent, the pastor, and his family live.

Participating personally in missions as volunteers changed their perspectives on mission needs, said Jane Hill. "We're sitting on top of a gold mine back home and they're struggling up here with almost nothing," she said in a telephone interview from Vermont. "I feel if all our churches back in the South would pull together and look to the needs in the North, we could do so much more for missions. The needs up here are just so great and we have so many resources in the South if we would just wake up to the needs," she said.

Both Larry and Jane Hill said they felt their church had the wrong priorities in the past, saving \$21,000 in a building fund for a wing planned for the future, but giving nothing to missions through the church budget except designated gifts to specific causes such as the children's home, world hunger and a nearby deaf mission.

"I wish every church that does not give anything to missions through the Cooperative Program would send a few volunteers to mission areas and see the crying needs," Jane Hill said. "It would revolutionize our support of missions."

Senate Passes Act  
To Benefit Ministers

WASHINGTON (BP)—Legislation to remove Internal Revenue Service obstacles hindering churches from providing ministers and lay employees with adequate retirement incomes has been passed by the U.S. Senate.

According to the legislation's sponsor, U.S. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas, the legislation amends "several provisions of the IRS code that unfairly obstruct the acceptable accumulations of retirement benefits for the majority of clergymen and lay employees of denominations."

The Bentsen-introduced legislation, S.1910, was incorporated into the large tax bill which passed the Senate 50-47 on July 23, and currently is awaiting action by the House Ways and Means Committee.

The legislation is supported by the Church Alliance for Clarification of ERISA (Employee Retirement Income Security Act), an organization of 27 U.S. church denominations. It would permit participants in denominational retirement programs, who typically have a pattern of poor compensation in the early stages of their careers, to make catchup contributions to their annuity plans in later years.

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

The bill also would clarify that church pension boards are authorized to issue tax-sheltered annuities, reversing a recent IRS ruling that only insurance companies could do so.

"The typical Southern Baptist minister receives only \$125 per month in retirement income. This bill will allow churches to increase their contributions to their ministers and lay employees retirement accounts so they will have enough income to live their retirement with dignity," said Darold H. Morgan, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Annuity Board and chairman of the steering committee of the Church Alliance for Clarification of ERISA.

-30-

TV Program Prepares  
Sam For Conversion

By Greg Warner

Baptist Press  
7/30/82

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)— "His first name was Sam but I don't remember his last name," Joe Hester, minister of media at Cottage Hills Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., admits. But Hester can't forget their conversation.

The men met while parking their cars outside the New Orleans Hyatt Regency Hotel in June. Sam was from Pittsburgh—in his fifties, tall, with greying hair groomed with the neatness typical of a person applying for a middle class job. But he was alone in the city and very willing to talk.

Hester was attending the Southern Baptist Convention in the Superdome and was very willing to listen.

The discussion centered on a Baptist television program, "Our World," Sam had seen the night before. A portion of the program about Scott Appleton, a former All-American football player and a recovered alcoholic who had become a Christian, had gotten Sam to thinking.

"I've been putting off Christ too long," he told Hester. "I want to start over again."

Leading Sam the rest of the way to faith in Christ was simple, Hester says, "like picking an apple off a tree," once Sam had been cultivated by the "Our World" program. "He had been thinking about God and spiritual things but the program led him to a deeper awareness," Hester reasons. "There is no question that it (the television broadcast) made him hungry."

-more-

Sam and Hester eventually knelt to pray on the sidewalk beside the cars and Sam asked Christ into his life. "It was a beautiful decision," Hester says.

"Our World," part of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission's preview of pilot programs for the American Christian Television System, was one of four RTVC programs aired on New Orleans station WWL-TV during convention week.

There are indications the other programs also produced spiritual fruit. During and after the broadcast of "Invitation to Life" (a preaching program) telephone decision counseling was offered to viewers via a local phone number on the screen. A total of 119 calls were received with approximately 70 of the callers making professions of faith.

The broadcasts of the pilots were part of the evangelistic effort in New Orleans during the SBC. There were also televised spot announcements prior to the convention that described Southern Baptists and the SBC meeting. Finally the June 13 Billy Graham evangelistic rally in the Superdome was videotaped, edited by the RTVC into a one-hour program and shown in New Orleans during prime time four days later. After that broadcast 116 people responded by phone for spiritual counseling. The number of professions of faith was not available.

The telephone counseling for "Invitation to Life" and the Billy Graham special was provided by members of churches in the New Orleans area using a strategy developed by the Radio and Television Commission.

The RTVC is offering the Billy Graham special, "From New Orleans With Love," to Southern Baptist churches willing to sponsor the broadcast in their areas.

The idea is to "find more Sams."

-30-

CORRECTION: In BP dated 7/27/82, "EWA Faces Opportunity, Financial Difficulties" please correct two dates. In graph 13, the General Council voted to hold its meeting in Buenos Aires in 1983 not 1982 and in graph 16, the Baptist World Congress will be held in 1985 not 1984.

CORRECTION: In BP dated 7/27/82, "Chinese Baptist Form Fellowship, second graph, please correct location of church hosting conference--First Chinese Southern Baptist Church of San Francisco, not Fresno.

CORRECTION: In BP dated 7/28/82, "Campers On Mission Rally Focuses on 'People Energy'," graph eight, correct W.A. Gaylon's title to director of missions for the Sevier County Baptist Association in Tennessee, not pastor of First Baptist Church, Gatlinburg.

CORRECTION: In BP dated 7/28/82, "Three Churches Can't Forget New Orleans Plane Disaster," graph six, please correct the name of the survivor. It is Melissa not Bridgette.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press