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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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City Council Rules Threaten
Baptist Church in Las Vegas

By Craig Bird

NORTH LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Community College Baptist Chapel, a Southern Baptist mission that averages 25 in Sunday School, will be shut down by the city of North Las Vegas by Nov. 1 if the church does not complete major improvements on the property or gain another extension.

"I'm afraid we may have run out of extensions since this has been going on since last November," Cal Collins, pastor of the mission said in a telephone interview Sept. 1. "But we have raised enough money to buy the concrete and hope to get volunteer labor to pour the sidewalks so maybe the city will give us more time since we are making progress."

Community Chapel was caught in a city building code crackdown on all businesses within the city limits which required upgraded facilities and safety features. In the case of Community College the work necessary to be in compliance included the pouring of sidewalks; paving the parking lot; installation of three exit sign lights, three emergency lights, a panic bar on the rear exit door, a commercial door closer on the front door and some lock work in the sanctuary; and similar interior improvements on a second building the church uses for Sunday School classes and for the day care center the church operates.

Most of the money the church has raised so far has been self-generated. "We appreciate the prayers and sympathy we've gotten from other Christians but that doesn't help us pay for the improvements we have to make," Collins said. "Of course everybody in Las Vegas has (economic) problems so we understand other people are in tight spots too."

Community Chapel is sponsored by Sunrise Baptist Church, a nearby congregation which averages around 300 in Sunday School, but financial support is limited because Sunrise has recently purchased property for its other mission.

The day care center, in addition to being an opportunity for outreach in the community (25-30 children are cared for each day) also generates a major portion of the operating budget of the mission and a recent spurt in enrollment has provided much of the money to buy the concrete for the sidewalks.

And despite the financial pressure the church is growing. "Last Sunday was a really great day," Collins said. "We had 35 in Sunday School, 40 in worship and in the Sunday night service we had three professions of faith--a man and his two teen-age sons."

The preacher said the services left him feeling like the man in the Mennen's aftershave commercial who says, "Thanks, I needed that." But while Collins hopes for an outside contribution that would solve the church's problems with city hall, he and his congregation continue to work as hard as they can. "And pretty soon we'll have to go back to the city and see if they will give us more time."

Collins knows of only one other church that is still having difficulty meeting the city's requirement that churches follow the same laws as businesses.

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The two buildings of the church and day care center formerly housed a Home Mission Board sponsored mission that failed. The HMB gave the property to the Nevada Baptist Convention for mission work and in May 1981, Collins and his wife Liz arrived to reopen the church. Collins, a Florida native, attended Golden Gate Seminary and was pastor of several California churches. He had been pastor of Battle Mountain Baptist Church in northern Nevada for more than 10 years when he agreed to come to Community Chapel.

Eight people attended that first Sunday morning service at the mission. Three months later, Sunday evening and Wednesday evening services were added. The church now has more than 80 enrolled in Sunday School and Collins and his wife have rebuilt the parsonage themselves with financing by personal friends.

Carole Flatt, a member of Parkdale Baptist Church in Las Vegas, wrote a story on the plight of Community Chapel for the Nevada Baptist (the state convention newspaper) and asked, "How many small missions live and die in anonymity? How many of the churched people in larger metropolitan areas know of their plight? How many know of the need which, if met, could have saved them?"

Collins noted that "out here our large churches are the size of Baptist missions back in other states." What he doesn't dwell on is the fact that unless his church comes up with another \$5,000 in the next two months it may not be any size at all. It will be closed down.

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Detained Haitians' Freedom
Awaiting Baptist Sponsors

Atlanta
By Patti Stephenson

Baptist Press
9/2/82

ATLANTA (BP)--A judge's ruling requiring the United States government to parole near 2,000 Haitian refugees held in detention centers has created an urgent need for Southern Baptist sponsors, according to Donoso Escobar, director of refugee resettlement for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The refugees' release was recently ordered by U.S. District Court Judge Eugene Spellman who ruled the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service policy of detaining undocumented Haitian immigrants was illegal. Spellman ordered the refugees be released to the custody of sponsors and provided with legal counsel pending hearings on their eligibility for asylum.

Peter Golinski, HMB national consultant on Haitians, praised Spellman's decision as "humane," but added, "This is just a temporary reprieve for these refugees. Many think once they're out of detention they're free, not realizing they may still be deported."

Once paroled the Haitians must each prove sufficient political persecution in Haiti to warrant receiving legal refugee status. The government's position is that most Haitians are economic, rather than political, refugees and are therefore not eligible to remain in the U.S., Golinski explained.

Escobar said Southern Baptists have already sponsored 70 Haitians, primarily reuniting family members. Cases are assigned to the Home Mission Board by Church World Service which is now seeking immediate "interim placement" for approximately 250 of the detained Haitians, according to Michael Pszyk Jr., director of Church World Service in Miami.

Mel Lehman, information director for Church World Service, called the Southern Baptists resettlement record "pretty good" while Pszyk stressed there is "room for improvement in Southern Baptists response."

In Miami the Southern Baptist refugee center has been "a great lighthouse that shows Southern Baptists care" about Haitians, according to John Pistone, language missions director for Miami Baptist Association. The center offers food, clothing and help in meeting needs such as for medical care and job training and serves three meals a week to those who attend English classes, Pistone said. The center also distributes food and clothing among Haitian Baptist churches where 60 percent of members are without jobs.

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Pistone noted the "expression of care" has reaped rapid spiritual growth among Miami's Haitian Baptists, who also hold regular worship services at the Camp Khrome detention center.

More than 500 Bibles have been distributed among refugees at both the New York and Florida detention centers, Golinski said. Haitian pastor Tony Joseph is leading Bible study at the Brooklyn detention center where an estimated 45 percent of the detained Haitians are evangelicals, he added.

Golinski reported "some of the Haitians are panicking now" as they realize release depends on the availability of sponsors. The government's decision to appeal the Spellman ruling also threatens their release, he explained.

Before Haitians can be released into temporary custody, according to Escobar, their sponsors must agree to report on the refugees' whereabouts weekly and to assist them in finding legal counsel. Sponsors must also assume financial responsibility for the refugees, as they are not eligible for public aid for 120 days after their release, he explained. Efforts are being made to place the Haitians in areas where there are already established Haitian communities and adequate immigration attorneys, he added.

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Vice President Bush To Visit
Southwest Baptist University


By Kim Bracken

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Bolivar, Mo. (BP)--Vice President George Bush will visit Southwest Baptist University Sept. 28 for the dedication of the Gene Taylor National Free Enterprise Center. The ceremony will include remarks by Vice President Bush and Congressman Gene Taylor.

The National Free Enterprise Center was established by Southwest Baptist University five years ago to promote the importance of economic education and community leadership. The \$1.2 million facility which houses the national center opened earlier this year.

Taylor, a United States congressman, has been instrumental in the development of the center and was named honorary co-chairman along with President Ronald Reagan. Bush is coming to the Bolivar campus to recognize Taylor for his support and Southwest Baptist University for its emphasis of community leadership and free enterprise education.

The facility has seven classrooms, 36 faculty staff offices, a display area and the 100 seat, multi-media Woody Auditorium. Alvin Rohrs, director of the National Free Enterprise Center, summarized the program as a three pronged emphasis in (1) economic education, (2) volunteerism, and (3) productivity improvement.

This year the center will offer an honor certificate program which allows students to take extra free enterprise courses and put their learning into practice working with area retailers, bankers, utility companies and local charities.

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(Bracken is director of public relations at Southwest Baptist University)

Laymen Going To Prison
Because Of Convictions


By Raymond Higgins II

Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Tim Reynolds and Buford Winfrey have been going to prison on Friday nights for three years because of their faith.

But Reynolds, a warehouse manager for a food bank, and Winfrey, an artist for an advertising agency, aren't being persecuted for their religious beliefs. Rather they go into "the world behind the walls" to lead a Bible study for inmates at the Tennessee State Prison in Nashville. Both are members of Nashville's Immanuel Baptist Church.

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The two began their ministry out of a conviction that was stronger than their misgivings. "Overcoming my own anxiety about going in the first time was the most difficult situation I have had to deal with in the last three years," Reynolds confessed. "I was thoroughly frightened at first," admitted Winfrey, who became involved when Reynolds shared a prayer request for a prisoner at the church's Wednesday night supper.

Their involvement in prison ministry is based, according to Reynolds, on "the need to support and uphold the humanity of inmates in ways that will give them a realistic chance to succeed after their release."

Reynolds designed the ministry as an alternative to other religious approaches at the prison. Since most of the religious classes at the prison are "more emotional and more confessional, our class is oriented toward the strict study of the Scriptures."

The 10 to 20 inmates who participate regularly seem to see it that way too. They come prepared to share their viewpoints, argue their convictions and learn.

Not long after the Bible study began, Reynolds recalls, a young man continued to ask questions one night in order to understand what was being said. After the class he apologized for asking so many questions. He said he was a slow learner but he also wanted very much to understand what he was reading.

Reynolds and Winfrey are convinced their efforts are meeting needs. Winfrey feels inmates need opportunity "to express themselves on the deepest level that they can reach." Reynolds believes the Bible study helps meet the inmates' needs for Christian growth. He has observed that while in prison many of the inmates either have their first religious experience or return to their earlier faith.

At the beginning of the two-hour Bible study the inmates, who have gathered around a table in one of the chapel's rooms, voice their prayer requests. Their concerns range from prayer "for the men on the compound to know Christ," to prayer "for my wife and kids," to prayer "about a cell change."

The leaders take these requests seriously as they present them to God. "Just as we are ministering to these men," Reynolds said, "these men are ministering to us." Winfrey agreed. Leading the Bible study "is one of the most meaningful things I do," he said. "To hear the inmates respond, think, talk, grow and learn is rewarding."

The inmates notice their leaders' commitment to Bible study and appreciate the depth of their care and concern. "I don't see people beating a path to come out here," one inmate said. He sees it as a rare kind of Christian ministry.

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(Higgins is special project coordinator with the Christian Life Commission)

Johnson Calls Campus Ministry
Extension Of Baptist Churches

BSSB
By Gail Rothwell

Baptist Press
9/2/82

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The conviction that Southern Baptist campus ministries should be an extension of churches has been at the heart of Charles Johnson's 25-year career.

Johnson, who assumed the helm of the Sunday School Board's National Student Ministries Sept. 1 emphasizes, "Student ministry and Baptist Student Union (BSU) work are an arm of the church on campus. Involvement in a Baptist campus organization and in a local church are indispensable to the educational experience of a student. We need to communicate to students that they need to be well balanced individuals spiritually as well as intellectually."

Johnson's career has included positions on the staffs of First Baptist Church, Kennedale, Texas, and Immanuel Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, Ark., and of student director at the University of Tennessee at Martin and Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield. In 1974 he became director of the student ministries department of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

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His active participation in BSU began as a freshman at Vanderbilt University in his hometown of Nashville, Tenn., even though, because of his allegiance to the local church, "I was afraid BSU would compete with the church but I found out this was not so."

Acknowledging such misunderstandings do arise, Johnson attributed the problem largely to inadequate communication. He favors structured dialogue between church and campus leaders.

"If it is true that the church and BSU are involved in God's ministry, then an integrated and coordinated work is needed," he explained. "It is inconceivable for a student director to proceed in his ministry without sufficient consideration of the local church. It is also unfortunate when the church proceeds in its ministry with high school and college students without consulting the local BSU."

He stressed that the church and BSU can help each other in numerous ways. "Students should not be perceived as objects of ministry but as resources for ministry by the church," he said. "I think our churches need to discover students make some of the best musicians, teachers, responsible committee members and tithers in the community." On the other hand, he thinks the church can help BSU by being open to the mission of the local campus.

Johnson, who begins his position on the 60th anniversary of the formal beginnings of student work among Southern Baptists, believes the most strategic ministry area open to the denomination is with international students. "We must realize the international students studying in our country are the cream of the crop," he said. "After they finish their studies and return home they will be leaders and decision makers. It becomes incumbent upon us to develop an integrated and constructive approach to evangelize and disciple these students."

Noting his belief that the next 20 years will be the greatest days of student ministry, Johnson outlined several long-range goals for National Student Ministries. "I would like to see NSM lead Southern Baptists in introducing students to Jesus Christ, discipling students, continuing involvement in Bold Mission Thrust and developing stronger student ministries in newer convention areas," he said.

Johnson turned down the first job in student work he was offered in 1957 by Tom Logue, director of student work for the Arkansas Baptist Convention. But as a friend Logue encouraged him instead "to go to seminary and prepare for what God would do in 25 years."

Johnson took Logue's advice and went to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where his sense of call became a definite conviction he should minister with young adults.

With amazement in his voice, Johnson noted, "It has now been almost 25 years since Logue told me to plan for my future in student work."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Baptist Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Pr ss
