



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 20, 1983

83-61

CONFERENCE OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST EVANGELISTS June 13-15, 1983 William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, June 13-15, 1983

10 p.m.--Afterglow meeting, Pittsburgh Room, William Penn Hotel

Tuesday, June 14, 1983

7 a.m.--Business meeting and breakfast, Urban Room, William Penn Hotel

Wednesday, June 15, 1983

12:30-1:15 p.m.--Mini concert featuring SBC music evangelists

1:30 p.m.--Music--R.O. and Angie Stone, music evangelists, Rome, GA

--Message--Michael Gott, evangelist, Jacksonville, FL

--Music--Jerry Swinner, music evangelist, Iuka, MS

--Message--Charles Stanley, pastor, First Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA

--Music--Lee Castro, music evangelist, Nashville, TN

--Music--Alan Celoria, music evangelist, Jackson, MS

--Message--Arthur Blessitt, evangelist, Hollywood, CA

5:30 p.m.--Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelist Annual Banquet, main ballroom, William Penn Hotel

--Music--Lonnie Parsons, music evangelist, San Antonio, TX

--Message--Rick Scarborough, evangelist, Houston, TX

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Southern Baptist Evangelists
To Hear Four Sermons In One Day

83-61

PITTSBURGH, Pa. (BP)--A steady diet of preaching and special music dominate the planned program of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists in Pittsburgh June 13-15.

There is a fellowship time planned for 10 p.m. June 13-15 following the evening sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention and a breakfast business meeting June 14.

But the focus will be on June 15 beginning at 12:30 p.m. After a 45-minute concert featuring various SBC music evangelists, the conference will hear messages from Michael Gott, evangelist from Jacksonville, Fla.; Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church in Atlanta, and Arthur Blessitt, evangelist from Hollywood, Calif.

Between the preaching will be special music by R.O. and Angie Stone from Rome, Ga.; Jerry Swinner from Iuka, Miss.; Lee Castro, Nashville, Tenn., and Alan Celoria, Jackson, Miss.

Following a break for the annual banquet at 5:30 p.m., Rick Scarborough, conference president from Houston, will preach and Lonnie Parsons, music evangelist from San Antonio, will present special music.

All sessions will be at the William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh.

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Allen Named Maryland
Editor; Kirkland Promoted

LUTHERSVILLE, Md. (BP)--W. Fletcher Allen, associate editor of the South Carolina Baptist Courier for the past 16 years, has been named editor of the Maryland Baptist.

He was elected April 19 by the State Board of Missions of Maryland Baptist Convention, and the announcement was made jointly by John E. Roberts, editor of the Baptist Courier and Kenneth Lyle, executive director of the Maryland Convention. Allen, 51, will move to Maryland in June.

The Baptist Courier is the official newsmagazine of the South Carolina Baptist Convention. It is published in Greenville and has a circulation of 122,000. Roberts moved immediately to fill the associate editor's position vacated by Allen, promoting assistant editor Donald M. Kirkland.

Roberts reported the anticipated changes to the board of trustees of the Courier in their regular meeting April 8, and was given endorsement for his plans.

Allen, a native of Hartsville, S.C., joined the Baptist Courier staff as associate editor Aug. 1, 1966. Previously, he was a public affairs officer for Sonoco Products in Hartsville. Earlier, he spent six years as news director for Furman University and 1956 to 1958 was sports editor of the Florence Morning News.

He graduated from Furman in 1954. Allen is married to the former Betty Fink of Hartsville. They have four daughters, Amy Burns of Travelers Rest; Jennifer Howard of Louisville; Monica, a Furman University junior, and Melody, 15.

The Maryland newspaper is published weekly in tabloid format and has 18,000 subscribers. The state reports 304 Southern Baptist churches with 106,000 members.

Kirkland, 39, joined the Courier staff in August 1974. He came from Anderson College where he was director of public relations. Prior to that he was news director for Furman University.

A native of Columbia, he grew up in Lancaster. He is a graduate of Anderson College and the University of South Carolina. He taught school for a year, and was sports editor for the Lancaster News before joining the Furman staff in 1970.

Kirkland is married to the former Linda Vincent of Lancaster. Their children are Jeff, 15, and Angela, 13. Mrs. Kirkland teaches English at Greenville High School.

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(Photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Baptist Press)

House Votes To Protect
Grandparents' Rights

By Gerri Ratliff

Baptist Press
4/20/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--The House of Representatives has passed a resolution expressing "the sense of Congress" that grandparents' rights to visit their grandchildren following the dissolution of the marriage of the children's parents should be protected.

H.Con.Res. 45 calls on the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws to develop a model state act granting grandparents adequate rights to petition courts for visitation privileges when the marriage of the grandchildren's parents has ended in divorce, separation or death.

The legislation, sponsored by Rep. Mario Biaggi, D-N.Y., also requests that the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect provide technical assistance to the Conference of Commissioners in developing guidelines to be used in determining the "best interest of the child" standard. The resolution acknowledges the child's "best interest" is often served by maintaining relations with grandparents.

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Currently 42 states have statutes which provide grandparents, in some circumstances, the right to petition a court for visitation privileges. Many grandparents find their visitation privileges in one state are not recognized by a sister state because the laws vary from state to state, said Biaggi. By encouraging all states to adopt a uniform visitation law, interstate recognition of awarded visitation rights would be ensured, he said.

"Grandparents become the other victims of divorce and marital dissolution," said Biaggi. "The unwarranted denial of visitation between grandparents and grandchildren represents intergenerational abuse. Congress cannot legislate love, but we can protect it where it exists."

Biaggi also urged more free and low cost legal services be made available to grandparents who cannot afford the litigation necessary to gain visitation rights.

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Midwestern Trustees
Adopt 10-Year Plan

Baptist Press
4/20/83

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary elected two new faculty members, approved a ten-year campus master development plan and adopted a 1983-84 budget of \$3,100,000 during their annual meeting April 11-12.

Donald E. Hammer was elected director of theological field education and associate professor of ministry studies. W. Hulitt Gloer was elected assistant professor of New Testament. Both men will join the faculty this summer.

Hammer, 46, a native of Oklahoma, is director of the metropolitan missions department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. He is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University and holds B.D. and Th.D. degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Prior to joining the HMB staff in 1975, Hammer was coordinator of the urban strategy council for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Previously, he was on staff of University Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

Gloer, 32, is assistant professor of New Testament at North America Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls, S.D. A native of Georgia, he is a graduate of Baylor University, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where he received his doctorate. From 1979-1981, Gloer was an instructor in New Testament at Southern Seminary. He has done additional doctoral study at the Hebrew Union College and School of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Trustees advanced Thomas G. Smothers to professor of Old Testament literature and Hebrew, effective Aug. 1, 1983. Smothers was elected to the faculty in 1979.

The board also granted study leaves for 1983-1984 to faculty members K. David Weekes, Kenneth Wolfe, William Ratliff and Maynard Campbell Jr.

The trustees approved a ten-year campus development plan for the youngest of six Southern Baptist seminaries. The plan is designed to provide energy efficient facilities and tie the inner campus together by adding a central traffic circle and enclosing several walkways, according to seminary President Milton Ferguson.

A new teaching/learning resource center will be constructed, providing twice the space of the existing library. The center will house written and multi-media resources, labs, curriculum materials and world missions and urban evangelism information centers.

The present library building will be converted into a student center, to include food services, a student activity area, post office, medical clinic, book store and meeting rooms.

Also projected for the seminary are 12,000 square feet of new classroom space, a family life and physical health center, additional student housing, a new chapel and a visitors' center. The total construction cost for the inner campus development is estimated at \$10,662,000. Projected completion date is 1993.

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During a luncheon for trustees, faculty, staff and student leadership, Ferguson recognized the completion of terms of service by trustees Charles Betts, Ohio (9 years); Dean Newberry, Arkansas (10 years); Rodney Moore, New Mexico (12 years) and James Tharp, Missouri (10 years). Also recognized was Frank Park, Missouri (10 years) who was unable to attend.

N. Larry Baker, academic dean, presented recognition plaques to the following faculty members for their years of service: K. David Weekes, librarian, 17 years; Kenneth R. Wolfe, professor of New Testament interpretation and Greek, 15 years and G. Temp Sparkman, professor of religious education and church administration, 10 years.

At a recognition dinner, trustees also honored Milton Ferguson for a decade of service as the seminary's president. K. David Stone, chairman of the board, expressed the board's appreciation to Ferguson and his wife, Bettie, for "their splendid leadership, their inspiring example, and their devoted commitment to advancing the cause of Christ through Midwestern Seminary."

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Baptist Foundation Executives
Select Marvin Hall As President

Baptist Press
4/20/83

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Marvin H. Hall, vice president of the Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma, was elected president of the Association of Baptist Foundation Executives during its annual meeting. Also elected were Harold T. Kitchings, executive secretary, Mississippi Baptist Foundation, as vice president, and Christine M. Bess, administrative assistant, Southern Baptist Foundation, as secretary-treasurer.

The meeting, which combined education in the various technical aspects of foundation work with a sharing of experiences in these areas, was highlighted by an address from Wall Street Week panelist Robert H. Stovall. Stovall, vice president and director of investment policy, Dean Witter Reynolds, Inc., forecast an improving economy for 1983 followed by a better year in 1984. He said he believed that environment would be good for bonds and stocks.

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Lay Convocation Set
For New Orleans

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press
4/20/83

NEW ORLEANS, La. (BP)--A Lay Convocation has been called Dec. 8-10, in New Orleans, jointly sponsored by an ad hoc committee and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary "to consider the need for and the process of developing a theology for the non-ordained," according to Owen Cooper of Yazoo City, Miss., spokesman for the ad hoc committee.

Cooper proposed the development of a theology of non-ordained at the Louisiana Baptist Evangelism Conference earlier this year. He told pastors, "we have divided the people of God into two groups: the pastors, the teachers, the missionaries and others in Christian work being one; another group of lay persons. I find no basis in scripture for this division...."

Cooper, the only living, non-ordained former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, told the Mississippi Baptist Record qualified theologians in their respective fields have been assigned to develop the basic theme in six segments.

Fisher Humphreys, professor of theology at New Orleans Seminary, will speak on "Salvation." Herschel Hobbs, former SBC president and chairman of the committee which drew up the Baptist Faith and Message statement, will speak on "Laos--the People of God."

Lewis Drummond, Billy Graham professor of evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., will speak on "Gifts;" Richard Broholm, director of the Center for the Ministry of the Laity, Andover-Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Mass., will speak on "The Call." William Clemmons, associate professor of Christian education at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., Seminary, will speak on "The Christian Lifestyle," and William Pinson, executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, will speak on "Lay Ministry."

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Cooper said the speakers will attempt to answer questions such as "Are there classes or categories among God's people?" and, "Is there a distinction between the ordained and the unordained?"

The ad hoc committee, in addition to Cooper, consists of Doyle Carlton, former SBC Executive Committee member from Florida; Porter Routh, retired executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee; Rodney Landes of Arkansas, member of the SBC Executive Committee; Lamar Plunkett, chairman of the Georgia Baptist Convention Board; Fred Roach, president of Texas Baptist Men; G.O. McGuffey Sr., former president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and Lambert Mims, former president of the Alabama Baptist Convention.

Cooper will be the speaker at the kickoff banquet discussing "The Need" for such a convocation. Landrum Leavell, president New Orleans Seminary, will be the closing speaker with the topic "Challenge for the Future."

Cooper said five lay speakers will discuss their involvement in their individual field of Christian ministry. Two of the speakers have been confirmed; Fred Roach of Dallas, Tex., and Dorothy Sample, practicing psychologist in Flint, Mich. and president of the Woman's Missionary Union, SBC.

A series of four messages are also scheduled during the convocation concerning the need for lay ministers in the local church, the state convention, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Baptist World Alliance. Also, the six plenary speakers will hold workshops on their individual topics for feedback and discussion.

Tom Kinchen, director of continuing education at New Orleans Seminary, said invitations are being sent to Baptist leadership, but anyone interested in attending may contact him. A registration fee of \$25 is due with each reservation with the final \$50 due on Sept. 1. Kinchen may be reached at the seminary at 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, La., 70126.

Cooper reports that proceedings of the convocation are scheduled to be published following the meeting.

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Supreme Court To Decide
On Christmas Nativity Scenes

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
4/20/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court announced April 19 it will decide if local governments may erect Christmas nativity scenes without violating the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

Two lower federal tribunals, the First Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. District Court for Rhode Island, held earlier that the city of Pawtucket, R.I., violated the constitution's ban on an establishment of religion by erecting a nativity scene as part of its traditional Christmas displays.

But over the past several years, state and federal courts elsewhere have handled similar challenges by ruling in every case because Christmas is a cultural as well as religious holiday, no violation of the constitution is present in the practice.

Asking the high court not to review the lower decisions in the Pawtucket case, attorneys representing the local affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union accused city officials of seeking "to bury the religious nature of the creche (nativity scene) behind the facade of secular Christmas symbols."

But city officials countered in a written brief asking the high court to take up the case, that to uphold the lower courts would endorse the view the First Amendment "prohibits government from acknowledging the birth of Christ is part of the historical evolution of the Christmas holiday."

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Further, the lower rulings that the establishment clause requires government officials to separate the religious and secular elements of Christmas "infuses the First Amendment with a hostility to religion which this Court has long eschewed."

Because the high court has already filled its calendar for the current term, oral arguments in the Pawtucket case will be held over for the 1983-84 court term which convenes in October. A final decision in the case could come before next Christmas.

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Bailey Smith Says Church
Construction Snags Over

Baptist Press
4/20/83

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Construction of the "largest Southern Baptist auditorium in the world" has begun at First Southern Baptist Church of Del City.

Bailey Smith, pastor of the 15,539-member congregation and immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, has told church members that a new site for a proposed 7,000-seat auditorium has been secured and construction is underway.

The church has been involved in a controversy for seven months concerning a previously announced site. The U.S. Air Force objected to that site, saying the church would be built 6,700 feet from the end of the Tinker Air Force Base alternate runway. Others, including the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, joined in objecting to the church locating on the site.

Smith told Baptist Press the matter was resolved when "13 area financial institutions went together and made arrangements" for the church to recover part of its loss on the original site and provided an alternate 83 acre parcel of land as a construction site.

The pastor admitted the arrangement "is complicated" and said the church's chairman of deacons and attorney, Jim Lee, had worked it out with the assistance of Oklahoma City Chamber President Edward H. Cook.

Cook told Baptist Press: "We really worked kind of a miracle. The Air Force came down hard against the church building there. The church had to go somewhere else. The financial institutions found a means whereby the loss could be made up. Some are actually donating money; others are working different methods. They found an individual who would donate the new site.

"It was a good deal for him and good deal for us."

Smith told Baptist Press the church "had been given initial approval" to build on the 63-acre site but could not obtain the necessary building permits from Oklahoma City and Midwest City because of the objections of the military base, which is the area's largest employer with a payroll of \$500,000,000 year.

The biggest problem was that the property in question was not covered by ACUZ (air control use zone) ordinances, which normally would have been in place, Cook said. "They have a danger zone around runways and it would have run right through Dr. Smith's church. The Air Force had some problems with a 7,000 seat sanctuary right under the alternate runway."

Smith said the church considered filing a federal lawsuit "but decided for the community spirit and for the sake of our witness we would see if we would work out some deal satisfactory to both of us."

In his pastor's column of April 13 he told the church members: "We now have a beautiful location. We have 80 acres paid for, \$2 million to be paid to us over a period of years plus our property here (current church building) and the (disputed) property to sell.

"It is in the providence of God that he has brought us to this moment. There is a good possibility for us to walk into a \$15 million complex debt free. The property is located right in the middle of a great building explosion of lovely homes. Most importantly, I believe this is God's choice for us."

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Smith said the church will continue to be First Southern Baptist Church, even though the new building site is wholly within the Oklahoma City limits. "We will be only a mile and 400 yards outside Del City," he commented.

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Minister Fired By Sect
To Receive Severance Pay

By Stan Hasteay

Baptist Press
4/20/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--A defrocked and fired minister of a California-based religious sect will collect severance pay from the church following U.S. Supreme Court refusal to hear the church's appeal that civil courts have no jurisdiction in such disputes.

The high court action leaves in place rulings by California state courts that Richard A. Gipe, dismissed from the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God for "preaching heresy, disloyalty, and 'causing confusion in the Church,'" is entitled to \$3,269 in severance pay.

After his 1979 firing, Gipe filed a complaint against the sabbatarian church with California's department of labor, asking for severance pay and other financial benefits under state law. Although the court denied all other claims, it ruled the church was obligated under an agreement it had reached earlier with Gipe to pay the severance.

In legal papers filed with the Supreme Court, an attorney for the church argued that in the church's eyes, Gipe was guilty of committing "the highest act of infidelity--spiritual treason, if you will--the commencing of his own church and the pirating of members that were entrusted to his spiritual and physical care."

By ordering the church to make a severance payment, the church argued further lower courts committed an "absolute transgression" of the church's right to exercise its religion freely.

California officials argued that the high court should not hear the case because the church presented no federal question in its challenge and because church officials did not exhaust legal remedies in California courts before appealing to the nation's highest tribunal.

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HMB's Prayerline May Remain
After 'Pentecost Sunday'

By Charlene Shucker

Baptist Press
4/20/83

ATLANTA (BP)--The Home Mission Board Intercessory Prayerline has filled such an obvious need that it will probably continue after the scheduled May 31 disconnection date, William G. Tanner, HMB president has announced.

The toll-free phone number allows volunteers to receive and dispense prayer requests related to starting new Southern Baptist churches. The upcoming effort to begin 3,000 new works on May 22, Pentecost Sunday, requires massive prayer support, Tanner noted.

Southern Baptists must keep praying if the SBC is to reach its Bold Mission Thrust goal of 15,000 new churches by the year 2000, he added. More than 70 volunteers in the Atlanta area have staffed the line since March 1. Recently, Tanner and church extension director Jack Redford staffed the prayerline phones from 4 to 9 p.m.

"This is a real winner. There has never been anything like it and I think we are going to see about keeping the line open," Tanner said.

Call rs talked at length to Tanner about the need for the prayerline and the upcoming celebration of Pentecost Sunday May 22.

A seventh grader from South Carolina and her friends asked for five prayer requests. When Tanner asked her if she had heard of Pentecost Sunday her reply was, "Who hasn't?" Tanner was jubilant. "Good to talk to you," he said, as he answered another call.

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This time Tanner spoke to a woman from Wichita, Kan., who has missed only two days of telephoning and praying for new works. Redford said some churches call every day to receive requests for prayer.

During a five-hour period requests may range from praying for the start of a handicap ministry, to support for a fledgling senior citizen ministry, to land and a building for a congregation meeting in a converted barn.

So far the prayerline has received nearly 10,000 calls, coordinator Gene Dorsey said. At least 5,000 callers were given churches, groups or individuals to pray for in 48 states and the District of Columbia. "We received the most calls during Week of Prayer for Home Missions March 6-13, a total of 2,710 live calls and recorded requests," she said.

For those living outside of Georgia and wishing to make a prayer request or wanting to pray for new works, the number is 1-800-554-PRAY. For those in Georgia call 1-800-262-SEEK.

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Abortion Amendment Cleared
For Senate Floor Action

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
4/20/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Senate Judiciary Committee has cleared the way for floor debate on a constitutional amendment aimed at overturning the controversial 1973 Supreme Court ruling that the constitution protects a woman's right to privacy in abortion decisions.

But the closeness of the panel's action raised serious questions about the measure's chances of getting the two-thirds vote necessary for Senate approval. The committee's initial vote on the amendment sponsored by Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, ended in a 9-9 tie. Then, by a voice vote, the panel elected to send the measure to the Senate floor without recommendation.

Hatch's one-sentence proposal (S.J. Res. 3) declares that "the right to abortion is not secured by this Constitution." It is designed to restore the law to its pre-1973 status when states could pass either restrictive or permissive abortion statutes.

Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., one of the Senate's leading opponents of anti-abortion legislation, was amazed by the inability of the committee to report the amendment out favorably. A Packwood aide said the tight vote "did not bode well for supporters of the amendment."

During the 97th Congress, the same Judiciary Committee voted 10-7 in favor of more restrictive amendment authored by Hatch. That amendment was withdrawn from floor consideration when majority leader Howard H. Baker Jr., R-Tenn., promised Hatch floor consideration of a constitutional amendment on abortion this spring.

Despite the committee's failure to report his amendment favorably, Hatch declared the measure will get a full airing in the Senate.

"For the first time in the history of this country, we'll have a debate on the merits of abortion," Hatch said. "We can now look at all aspects of this issue and hopefully resolve it in a way that's compatible with the wishes of the vast majority of the people of this country."

A Hatch spokesman said he expects full Senate consideration the first of June.

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North Coast Association
Surpasses Growth Goals

Baptist Press
4/20/83

EUREKA, Calif. (BP)--The North Coast Baptist Association exceeded its Sunday school growth goal of 15 percent to attain an 18 percent increase during a six-week project.

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The association's 19 churches began the growth project in late February with a three-day Bible conference led by Baptist Sunday School Board personnel. Simultaneous revivals in many of the churches began on Easter to conclude the emphasis.

With a combined membership of fewer than 2,000 persons, the churches are spread over an area 50 miles wide and almost 200 miles long. More than half of the churches' pastors are bi-vocational.

Paul Smith, director of missions for the two-county association, said an association-wide increase of 297 persons has brought Sunday school enrollment to 1,956 persons. While every church had an increase in Sunday school enrollment, not every one had a 15 percent or better gain. "Those who worked hardest were the ones who benefited the most," Smith said.

Pastors and Sunday school directors in churches that did not experience a 15 percent gain are "sorry they didn't make it but they don't see this as a discouragement," he added.

Sunny Brae Baptist Church of Arcata had the highest numerical increase with 43 new Sunday school members, bringing the total to 169, followed by Ridgewood Heights of Eureka with 35 additions, increasing its total to 100.

Smith said the project "has pointed out the needs. We will continue to emphasize growth. We're going to provide some special teacher training," he said, "and we want to supplement our Sunday school with church training for Sunday school workers.

"I do think it was well worth it," he continued. "The checkups along the way point out to us what needs to be done."

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Heirs Who Battled Tulane
Over Chapel Lose Appeal

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
4/20/83

WASHINGTON (BP)--Heirs to a Louisiana man who left money to Tulane University for construction on its campus of a nonsectarian chapel lost their final legal battle when the Supreme Court refused to disturb lower rulings that the bequest does not violate separation of church and state.

James M. Rogers, who died in 1959, left his entire estate to Tulane, a private university in New Orleans, for construction of a chapel memorializing his late sister. Lower courts ruled earlier that construction of the Myra Clare Rogers Memorial Chapel satisfied terms in the will and did not violate the First Amendment's ban on an establishment of religion.

Rogers' heirs have been in court for years, arguing in part that because the chapel houses a chair of Judeo-Christian studies, university officials violated the establishment clause by showing preference for Judaism and Christianity over all other religions.

University officials have countered throughout the long dispute that the objective study of religion in the chapel does not violate the First Amendment.

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Bi-Vocational Role Helps
Inner-City New Orleans Church

By Cathy Rogers

Baptist Press
4/20/83

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The oldest Baptist church in downtown New Orleans weathers societal transition with the help of bi-vocational pastor Bill Rogers.

Grace Baptist Church has been standing on North Rampart Street for almost 80 years. Since the days when Grace was the only Baptist church on the north side of Canal Street, the neighborhood has shifted from white middle class to bi-racial and finally to a black inner-city community.

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Rogers, who came to Grace Baptist Church six years ago, said 70 to 80 churches in the area have closed or moved to the suburbs because of the transitions in the neighborhood. "Instead of moving our church, we changed the ministry to meet the needs of the community and established membership," he explained.

The 1951 Louisiana College graduate quoted apostle Paul's words, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

"Members of our church are from different socio-economic backgrounds, races, cultures, nationalities and varied levels of understanding of the Bible," Rogers said. One-third of the inner-city church attendance on Sunday is black, Latin or Oriental. Half the membership is comprised of neighborhood folk, including choir members and outreach ministry directors.

Rogers, who came to New Orleans from upstate New York to help the struggling church, admits, "If I'd come here from any place except New York, I wouldn't have known what to do." Churches there were going down because of neighborhood residency changes. "The Southern Baptist Convention was buying churches other congregations were leaving," Rogers said.

When he and his wife were in Louisiana visiting relatives, Rogers preached at the inner-city church where his father-in-law had been pastor for 36 years. Church members asked, "Why don't you come down here and show us how they are handling similar problems?"

He accepted the challenge even though it meant he'd be a bi-vocational pastor for the first time in his 30 years of pastoral experience.

Now Rogers is on call 24 hours as pastor and as a full-time probation and parole officer.

Still, job satisfaction is high, Rogers said. Each of his social service jobs complements the other. Requirements of his secular job give him three field days out of the office which allow him to schedule hospital visits or funeral services for his church families around probationer and parole visitation.

Church members may call Rogers during office hours on Monday and Thursday, and they do. At least one of his probationers and parolees calls every night, frequently at odd hours. "I get to be personal friends with these people," he said. "You have to love them and let them know. A lot don't, but I do.

"Relating to people in a crisis situation is the best way to win people to Christ."

A man came to his office crying about family problems resulting from a son's criminal record. "You know what you need?" Rogers asked him. "You need Jesus. Would you like to ask Christ to come into your heart and give you a new life?" The man said yes. Rogers eventually led his son, one of his probationers, to Christ and both men now attend church regularly.

He's thankful for the outreach opportunity and enjoys having a secular job like the lay members. "That's what I like. All week I do just what everybody else does."

He doesn't have as much time as he'd like to devote to the church or studying for sermons, so he keeps a book in the car to read when stopped by a train or traffic light.

He praised his congregation for their cooperation and understanding the need for a secular job. "They guard my time. They don't require as much as many congregations do. Nobody is going to put their lip out if I don't go see them once a month. They know if they need me, they can call and they do."

If the church continues to grow, Rogers could again become a full-time pastor. But in the last deacon's meeting when discussion focused on the increased offerings, Rogers said he preferred to maintain his secular job.

"I'd rather use the money to pay some bi-vocational staff members to diversify our ministry," Rogers said.

Chicago Street Life Provides
Ministry Opportunities

By Gail Rothwell

CHICAGO (BP)--The job description read, "Wanted: One tough Christian to work in Uptown Chicago."

At first glance, Diane O'Connell, 32, knew she wanted no part of a work where 144,000 persons crowd a ten-square-block area that has the highest crime rate in Chicago.

"But God had other plans for my life," said O'Connell, who began working with students in the Uptown area last September. O'Connell's work is sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist Convention's Third Century Campaign and their student ministry alliance with the Illinois Baptist State Association.

O'Connell said her reluctance to take the position was not of fear, "but because I grew up on the streets in St. Louis and I was afraid of all those painful memories."

The Uptown situation presented a ministry challenge unlike other inner-city areas. "When Chicago cleaned up skid row a few years ago, they sent all the 'undesirables' to Uptown," O'Connell explained. "More than 80 percent of the population live below poverty level. Nearly 13,000 mentally retarded persons live in more than 25 halfway houses and now international refugees comprise a large portion of the population."

O'Connell's student work at Truman Community College campus got off to a slow start (in December her first group of five students was attacked by a local street gang and disbanded) but now she averages 35 students during weekly Baptist Student Union meetings.

Despite negative responses from school officials reluctant to have a Southern Baptist ministry on a campus of 6,000 international students, O'Connell was determined. "God sent me here to begin a ministry. I found boldness in Christ to start again," she said.

Located in the midst of Uptown O'Connell lives just three houses from the headquarters of one of the area's many street gangs. Since her arrival in early September, her car has been burglarized five times.

"Looking on the bright side, there's hardly anything left for them to take," she quipped.

Although O'Connell can still see humor in much of what has happened to her, she admitted, "Sometimes the poverty and violence get me down. Once, after my car was broken into, I just sat down on the curb and cried. I didn't cry out of fear, I cried out of love. I have been where these people are and I can look into their faces and see the pain and hopelessness."

She explained that before she became a Christian eight years ago, "I didn't trust anyone because I was afraid of getting hurt. I discovered God came to offer us options for our lives and that is why I am here."

O'Connell said sometimes the work gets emotionally painful. "But I know God is helping me to grow. Sometimes I get homesick for the people I love, but God protects me and fulfills all my needs."

In June O'Connell will return to Arkansas before moving to Fort Worth, Texas, and entering Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Even though I am leaving in June, I know God is preparing someone to continue the work he has started here," O'Connell said. "I don't know what God has in store for my life, but he has always been there, helping me to take one step at a time and whatever I do I know God won't open the door until I am ready."

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