



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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84-12

SBC Hunger Gifts Set Record
For Sixth Consecutive Year

By David Wilkinson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists continued their record-setting pace in gifts to worldwide hunger relief last year, surpassing the previous year's total for the sixth consecutive time.

More than \$5,996,000 was given in 1983 to hunger funds administered by the Southern Baptist Foreign and Home Mission Boards.

The Foreign Mission Board reported receipts of \$5,406,036 for world hunger, while the Home Mission Board received \$590,675 for domestic hunger. Additionally, the Foreign Mission Board received \$687,714 for general relief ministries.

The figures do not reflect monies given for hunger that were utilized in local churches, associations and state conventions.

The hunger contributions represent an overall increase of \$462,927 over the previous record of \$5.53 million set in 1982. FMB gifts increased \$122,252; HMB giving was up \$340,675.

Officials at both mission boards, along with the Christian Life Commission, which coordinates Southern Baptist awareness and action on hunger issues, praised the record giving.

John Cheyne, human needs ministries consultant at the FMB, said the hunger funds contributed to the "holistic ministry" of churches on the mission fields. "Thousands have come to know Christ as Savior because they first saw that Southern Baptists cared," he said.

W. David Lockard, CLC director of organization, said the hunger funds represent "the honest response of concerned Christians who are mindful of our responsibilities as the people of God."

Cheyne and Lockard also pointed out gifts to world hunger represent only partially the total investment in hunger ministries through the ongoing service of Southern Baptist supported missionaries at home and abroad.

"Through our two mission boards, Baptists have the best possible avenue for meeting the needs of hungry people," said Lockard. "Every cent of hunger money is used directly in hunger ministries."

Cheyne said more than 220 hunger-related projects were undertaken by missionaries and national workers in 45 countries. "In addition," he said, "the work of hundreds of lay volunteers multiplied the total benefit of the funds committed."

Even with the record giving, needs still surpassed contributions. More than \$7.2 million --which included a \$1 million-plus balance on hand at the end of 1982--was disbursed last year through the FMB's human needs ministries office, according to Cheyne. Yet, he added, \$8.27 million in requests remained unmet. He indicated some of the most urgent needs will be met with the record \$1.85 million in hunger gifts in December.

Nathan Porter, national consultant for domestic hunger at the HMB, said the 1983 figures indicate "when Southern Baptists become aware of hunger needs, they do respond."

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"Thousands who have received emergency food relief also say 'thanks for caring,'" he added.

Porter urged Baptists to add to their giving "prayer support for missionaries who are touching the lives of thousands who suffer in poverty and hunger."

Lockard pointed out the contributions also indicate the depth of Southern Baptist resources.

"Most of us live in luxury when compared to millions who struggle desperately for daily bread," he explained. "At the same time, this generous response reflects sacrificial giving on the part of many people. We can make a difference. And we have the opportunity and resources to do even more."

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

Unpaid Taxes Cost
Church Its Property

By Gigi Schrader

Baptist Press
1/24/84

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Allenton Heights Baptist Church once owned 2.98 acres in St. Louis County and the church building sitting on that property--a combined value of over \$85,000. Now they don't.

In 1978, the property was auctioned off on the steps of the county courthouse for \$100.

Members of the church didn't find out about it until five years later.

They also didn't know St. Louis County officials were assessing them close to \$15 in annual taxes. And they didn't know the county collector had threatened to sell their land if they didn't pay \$55.89 in overdue taxes.

Julia McGuire treasurer of Allenton Heights Church since 1972, said she got the first tax slip (bill) in 1973 and paid the taxes for the years 1972, 1973 and 1974.

"In 1975 one of the church members came up to me and said, 'Why are you paying taxes? churches aren't supposed to pay taxes,'" the treasurer recalled. Members decided to make arrangements to be tax-exempt.

As Mrs. McGuire remembers, then pastor of the church, H.W. Abbott Sr., obtained four Petitions for Exemption from Real Property Tax from county offices. McGuire filled out one of the forms and kept the other three.

Because Abbott passed near the St. Louis County offices on his way home, he offered to take the form. "He told me he took the papers down there," recalled the treasurer. "And that's the last we heard of it. We received no more bills and no more receipts."

But Phyllis Dorman, acting secretary of the county board of equalization, said the board never received such a form from the church. "I have kept file cards on everything since I came here in 1959," she said. "Evidently he (Abbott) never brought that form in. I have no record of them ever being tax-exempt."

Abbott, who was asked to resign as pastor of the church in 1975, was unable to shed light on the situation. His whereabouts are unknown.

Church members felt sure Abbott had delivered the forms to the board of equalization because from that time on they received no notices from the county collector.

But the church received no such notices because its address had changed. Although McGuire said she did not change the address, she said mail began coming to her home, 625 N. Virginia Street in Eureka. Apparently, whoever changed the church address failed to inform the county offices. The post office forwarded mail the required time--one year--and then returned the tax notices to the county.

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All bills, the notice of delinquent taxes and the warning the property was to be offered for sale were returned unopened to the county collector's office.

"They made attempts to have the church removed from the tax roles and thought they were removed," recounted current pastor Archie Guenzler. "Nobody told me anything about this when I came here to be pastor in 1976. I didn't know the church had ever been taxed. It is unreal to me to have a church taxed."

Ironically, Guenzler first learned the property had been sold for taxes from an inmate of the Eastern Missouri Correction Center, located adjacent to the church property.

"I was over there visiting inmates last year when one of them said, 'Hey I hear they sold your church for taxes.' I just ignored that because we had never received any tax bills in the seven years I had been there."

But when Guenzler received a letter from an attorney last October he didn't ignore it. The owners of the property had offered to sell the land back to the church at the going rate, about \$3,750 per acre--\$11,000 more than they had paid for the land in 1978.

Hoping to settle the matter out of court, Guenzler said the 70-member church offered to buy the property for \$2,000 in a letter dated Nov. 22, 1983.

When the church's attorney, Clyde C. Farris Jr., had received no word by January, he sent another letter.

"If this matter is not amicably settled, one of us will have to file a suit in the near future," he wrote. "One of the issues I intend to raise is the unconstitutionality of this procedure against church-owned property. There should have been no tax sale since the property should have been tax-exempt because it was used solely for religious purposes."

A counter-offer reportedly has been made on the property. Neither attorney nor Guenzler, however, would comment on that offer. The pastor said the congregation would have to discuss the offer before negotiating further.

Despite the situation, Guenzler said he and the church members are optimistic. "We are not really that upset about this thing because we turned it over to the Lord," he said. "We know he is going to work it out."

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Baptist Pastor Receives
National Home Study Award

Baptist Press
1/24/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--Thirty years after dropping out of high school, a Tennessee pastor has been named a "graduate of the year" among correspondence students.

Jack H. Dewees, Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church in Westmoreland, Tenn., has been selected by the National Home Study Council as one of America's outstanding home study graduates for 1982.

Dewees earned a diploma in pastoral ministries from the Seminary Extension Independent Study Institute in 1982. Royce A. Rose, director of the Institute, then nominated him for the NHSC's "Graduate of the Year" competition. Judges met in late December 1983, and selected Dewees as one of the twelve finalists. Judging was based on the students' academic record and the level and quality of their contributions to their chosen fields.

A high school dropout when he entered the U.S. Air Force in 1954, Dewees passed the high school equivalency exam (GED). Also during his years in the military he felt called to the ministry. He assumed his first pastorate in 1975 upon his retirement from military service.

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Service in two churches convinced him of his need for training in this new field. He enrolled for correspondence study through Seminary Extension partly because he did not think he could succeed in college. Positive experiences with the Institute, however, persuaded him to enter a degree program at Belmont College in Nashville, Tenn. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Religion from Belmont in December 1983.

Seminary Extension is a ministry education system of the six Southern Baptist seminaries, operated through their Seminary External Education Division in Nashville. The NHSC is an association of accredited home study programs with a combined enrollment of more than one million students.

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Kitty Gives Testament,
Witness To Walter Cronkite

By Ina King

Baptist Press
1/24/84

MIAMI (BP)-- Walter Cronkite is one of the most trusted men in America, according to public opinion surveys.

But an 11-year-old Miami girl recently introduced him to someone she trusts even more.

Kitty, who lives on the Miami campus of the Florida Baptist Children's Homes, was shopping with some other children and her childcare worker when they saw a crowd gathered and cameras flashing. The childcare worker, Susan Gasparrino, recognized Cronkite who was autographing copies of his new book, South By Southeast.

She got permission for the children to speak to the well-known television newsman, even though none had bought a copy of the \$50 book. As they waited, Kitty wondered aloud, "I wonder if he (Cronkite) is a Christian?" The store manager asked her not to pose that question since "that's a personal question."

When it was Kitty's turn to greet Cronkite, she shook his hand then handed him a New Testament and said, "this is for you." Cronkite asked Kitty to sign the testament for him. "Thank you," he said. "I will read this."

Gasparrino said Kitty has a great talent for witnessing. "Kitty speaks of her friend, Jesus, so naturally--He is just so much a part of her life."

Florida Baptist Children's Homes are affiliated with the Florida Baptist Convention.

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(Editor's note: It is the policy of Florida Baptist Children's Homes not to release the last names of children in their care. Ina King is public relations director for Florida Baptist Children's Homes.)

West Coast Church, TV Station
Again Lose Battle With FCC

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
1/24/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--In the latest round of a longstanding dispute with the Federal Communications Commission, a California church has failed to convince Supreme Court justices to review its charges the powerful federal agency was guilty of fraudulent misconduct in refusing to renew the church's TV license.

The battle between Faith Center, Inc., of San Bernardino, Calif. and the FCC dates to 1977, when the federal regulatory body demanded access to financial records and videotapes from the congregation and its station, KHOF-TV. The FCC demands were made following complaints the church's pastor, W. Eugene Scott, used the airwaves for fraudulent solicitation of funds.

Following three years in which Scott refused to turn over the records, the FCC denied the station's routine application for a license renewal. Scott then took the government to court but lost when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia sustained the denial. The Supreme Court declined last year to review that ruling.

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In the new round of proceedings, Faith Center charged the FCC with concealing the fact that its investigation of the church and TV station was prompted by what it called false allegations by the church's former attorney. The lawyer, who was fired by the church, was subsequently suspended from the California bar for misconduct.

Further, the church charged, the FCC's investigation violated due process of law and the religion clauses of the First Amendment.

But the high court let stand a second ruling by the D.C. Court of Appeals upholding the FCC action. (83-966, Faith Center, Inc., v. Federal Communications Commission)

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N.C. School Attendance Law
Stands High Court Scrutiny

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
1/24/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Pentecostalist North Carolina couple lost a final legal bid to educate their children at home when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review a lower federal court decision upholding the state's compulsory school attendance law.

Peter and Carol Duro moved to Tyrrell County, N.C., in 1981 but refused to enroll their five school-age children in either public or private schools on grounds they did not want them exposed to secular humanism or "unisex" habits. Because of their belief in faith healing, they also objected to the schools' practice of providing medical care for injured or sick children.

Within a month of moving to North Carolina, warrants were issued charging the Duros with violating the compulsory attendance law, but for technical reasons were thrown out of court.

But supported by the North Carolina Civil Liberties Union, the Duros then filed suit in federal district court against the district attorney who had issued the warrants, charging him with infringing on their free exercise of religion. U.S. District Judge F.T. Dupree Jr. ruled a year and a half later for the parents.

But the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, based in Richmond, Va., overruled Judge Dupree, holding North Carolina "has demonstrated an interest in compulsory education which is of sufficient magnitude to override the religious interest" claimed by the Duros. (83-719, Duro v. District Attorney, Second Judicial District of North Carolina)

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Priest, Bishop Win Battle
Over Cemetery Association

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--A long-simmering dispute between an Indiana Roman Catholic priest and his parish's cemetery association was finally settled here when the Supreme Court upheld a state court decision favoring the priest and his bishop.

St. Paul's Parish, Valparaiso, Ind., chartered a cemetery association in 1903 and for 70 years all went well. But in 1974 the association set up a permanent trust for the cemetery's perpetual care under separate incorporation papers. The parish priest, automatically a member of the cemetery association, was excluded from membership on the new board.

After six years of internal disputes in which trustees refused to include the priest, Bishop Andrew G. Grutka of the diocese of Gary, Ind., filed a complaint in federal court, asking the trust be dissolved and the endowment funds accumulated be turned over to the priest.

Although a trial court ruled against the bishop, a state appeals panel overturned that decision, holding in an hierarchical church, property in dispute belongs to the mother church, not to the local congregation.

Under the so-called "neutral principles of law" theory, the court held further, secular courts may settle property disputes without violating the Constitution's ban on an establishment of religion. (83-736, Clifford v. Grutka)

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