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March 21, 1984

84-45

Senate Soundly Rejects  
Reagan Prayer Amendment

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP)--In a solid defeat for proponents of state-sponsored religious exercises in public schools, the Senate rejected President Reagan's proposed constitutional amendment to permit vocal, organized public school prayer.

Climaxing more than two weeks of relatively mild debate, 44 senators voted against S.J. Res. 73, leaving the 56 who favored the proposal, 11 votes short of the two-thirds majority required to pass a constitutional amendment.

Early predictions by both sides in the debate indicated the outcome would be much closer, making the size of the defeat a mild surprise. But as the vote neared, most senators believed to be undecided fell into the opposition column as 18 Republicans and 26 Democrats joined to reject the amendment.

Statements before the final vote underscored positions of senators on both sides.

"I want to emphasize that this amendment does not provide for mandatory prayer," declared Judiciary Committee chairman Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., primary sponsor of the president's proposal. "It is purely voluntary prayers that are provided for."

Thurmond told colleagues "we had prayer in the schools from the time this government was founded until 1962. No one complained."

The veteran lawmaker called the 1962 Supreme Court decision which banned state-prescribed prayer in public schools "ridiculous" and said it "should be reversed."

Majority leader Howard H. Baker Jr., R-Tenn., said proponents of the amendment "do not seek an advantage. We seek to remove a disadvantage to the voluntary observance of religious services in the public life of our nation."

Insisting backers of the prayer amendment sought to restore government "neutrality" toward religion, Baker asked, "But is mandating religious activity worse than prohibiting it, or are these equal offenses before the law and the Constitution?"

Sen. Lowell P. Weicker, leading opponent of the prayer amendment, disputed claims that it would provide for "voluntary" prayer, contending instead it would result in "government" prayer.

"And putting school in front of the word 'prayer' does not make it any less government prayer," he said.

Weicker opened his remarks by citing a Supreme Court dissent by former justice Robert Jackson in a church-state case: "It is possible to hold a faith with enough confidence to believe that what should be rendered to God, does not need to be decided and collected by Caesar."

"The issue really is not prayer in schools for our children," Weicker charged. "They have that right today. No court case, no law, nor Supreme Court ruling prevents any individual child or any adult in this nation from praying wherever or whenever they wish."

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Responding to predictions that senators opposed to the prayer amendment would have their votes used against them at election time, Weicker declared: "This is not a political issue. It should not be a political issue. Indeed if anyone makes it so, I hope it will be the cause of their defeat, Republican or Democrat."

Underscoring this point, Weicker reminded colleagues Article VI of the Constitution "says very specifically that religion shall not be a test for holding public office."

Weicker's view was not shared by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., who warned senators during the debate a week earlier that "the American people will see where the votes are and they can adjust their own votes accordingly."

In addition, further concern was expressed about possible politicizing of the issue by the White House.

Sen. James Exon, D-Neb., who voted for the prayer amendment said afterward he "would be keenly disappointed if the President of the United States sees fit to make this a political football. Because if he does, I think it might prove that the President of the United States might not be as sincere about things religious as he has been accused of being."

While the final vote was decisive, it did not necessarily mean the end of the school prayer debate in the Senate for this Congress.

Helms served notice he intends to pursue his proposal to strip the federal courts and Supreme Court of jurisdiction in school prayer cases.

"We have just begun to fight," Helms said immediately after the vote. "Round one is over, but so long as I am in the U.S. Senate there will be many more rounds to come."

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Jordan Urges Rethinking  
Of Attitudes Toward Singles

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press  
3/21/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Effectively ministry with single adults will require many church leaders to rethink their perspective of singleness which may include outdated stereotypes, Ferris Jordan said.

Jordan, chairman of the division of religious education ministries at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, addressed the opening session of a seminar for 60 single adult ministers sponsored by the family ministry department of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

"Many still relate singleness to the years after high school and before marriage," Jordan said. "To those persons single is almost always temporary while marriage is seen as the answer to the unfortunate plight of the single. Singleness is viewed as a sign of immaturity while marriage is a sign of maturity. Marriage is seen as a sign of God's imprimatur while singleness is thought to be only tolerated by God."

Jordan said almost half of the adult population in the United States today is single but observed "in churches at large, single adult ministry represents still largely unexplored territory. Single adults have been with us a long time, but never have they presented the multi-faceted challenge to our churches which they represent today."

He said leaders must not only accept but actively pursue the involvement of single adults into the power structures of churches. Efforts must be made to integrate singles and marrieds into life and ministry of churches, he added.

Jordan charged many churches still offer only family- or couple-oriented programs. "Sermon illustrations still too often lack references to singles. Off-the-cuff remarks still look down on singleness. Wednesday night suppers are still called family night suppers, with the narrow definition of family," he said.

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Jordan urged churches to minister to divorced and widowed persons with an attitude of compassion and desire to help them rebuild their lives.

"So long as churches hold themselves aloof from divorcees, churches will never be known as a place of beginning again," he observed.

Ministering with some singles will also require the ability to accept differing lifestyles, said Jordan. He urged "an openness and acceptance of persons with whose ideas and ideals we may struggle."

He also called for a rethinking of attitudes toward single persons in the ministry.

"Many congregations are still reluctant to consider for the ministry men who are single and even more reluctant to consider single women," said Jordan. "They are closing the doors on some of the most capable persons whom God has called."

Jordan said single adults in the 1980s represent a large proportion of the population, include many subgroups such as divorced, widowed and never married persons and are concentrated in urban areas.

"Southern Baptists have been a rural people throughout our history. We're just learning how to minister to the cities," said Jordan. "To learn to minister to large numbers of singles in the cities is a double challenge."

He said a church that is serious about ministering with single adults must be willing to minister to a large number of divorced persons and single parents as well, confronting moral issues such as abortion and sex outside of marriage.

Jordan said many single adults are honestly searching for spiritual truth but, at the same time, are rejecting mainline denominations.

"Many perceive churches to be parental institutions. Others have written them off as judgmental and uncaring," Jordan maintained. "Many are responding to church ministries, but many others are not counting our churches as a worthwhile option."

At the same time, Jordan said the greatest need of single adults, as that of all persons, is an ongoing relationship with Christ.

"Pre-eminent among our goals of ministry with singles must be the ministry of evangelism," he said.

Also, he said, singles need to grow spiritually and have opportunities to witness. Churches need to provide community, purpose and love through a ministry.

Jordan said work with singles will never be without challenges and it will never be finished.

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Conference Provides Baptists  
With Models For Urban Ministry

By Michael Tutterow

Baptist Press  
3/21/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Speakers at the Models for Effective Urban Church Ministries Conference painted a picture of hope amid the blight of urban ministry.

More than 60 Southern Baptist pastors, directors of missions and other leaders attended the Urban Training Cooperative event, a joint venture of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Baptist Sunday School Board, Center for Urban Church Studies and six Southern Baptist seminaries.

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Larry Rose, director of the Center for Urban Church Studies, told conference participants 1980 Census data indicate 75 percent of all Americans live in urban areas, and despite trends of people moving back to rural areas, urban population will continue to grow.

Southern Baptist work is weakest in the Northeast, where some of the world's largest metropolitan areas are located, with only .3 percent of Southern Baptist members residing in the Northeast, said Rose. More than 85 percent of Southern Baptists reside in the South, he added.

Southern Baptists face a variety of issues in urban ministry during the next 16 years, Rose said. The U.S. has made a dramatic shift from a predominantly European immigration to Asian and Hispanic, now totaling 80 percent of all immigrants each year. Yet, he said, ethnics comprise only .6 percent of the SBC.

He also said Southern Baptists have geared most programs toward reaching traditional families (husband, wife, and two children) which only made up seven percent of all U.S. households, according to the 1980 Census. Also the senior adult population continues to increase dramatically, said Rose, with predictions of 260 people 65 and older for every 100 teens by the year 2000.

Southern Baptists must tackle the issues of the 1980s if they expect to reach Bold Mission Thrust goals, agreed conference speakers.

Joel Gregory, assistant professor of preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, asserted, "We cannot build inner city churches that are reaching their communities without redemptive suffering." Ministry is costly, he said, adding: "There is no gain without pain."

Gregory said urban ministry requires quality preaching, noting "Christian preaching made its mark in the great urban centers of the world." He cited numerous biblical passages where both Old and New Testament personalities made an impact upon the known world through authoritative, biblical preaching. The key to successful preaching, he added, is bringing together an exposition of the text "with human illustration and practical application."

Gregory was pastor of Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth prior to accepting his current position at the seminary. During his tenure, Sunday school attendance rose from 370 to more than 1,200; the church also started 11 satellite missions under Gregory's leadership.

Ian Chapman, pastor of Third Baptist Church in St. Louis, stressed urban congregations must know their communities and respond to needs with contemporary methods.

Chapman inherited the church at a point when the congregation was floundering without purpose in inner-city St. Louis. Since 1979, Chapman has helped the church recapture a vision of its ministry potential.

As a young seminary graduate, Rick Warren deliberately set out to begin a church in Saddleback Valley, one of the fastest growing areas in the country and one of the most affluent suburbs in Los Angeles.

Warren asked residents what they wanted in a church. Based on their response, Warren organized worship and educational ministries around community needs and mailed 15,000 invitations to Easter services in 1980.

More than 200 people attended Saddleback Valley Community Church's first service. The church, a Southern Baptist congregation, now runs 400-500 people in attendance, 250 of whom Warren baptized, and has started three daughter churches which average about 100 each.

Warren encouraged conference participants to "think like an unbeliever," making services understandable to those without church backgrounds. He also stressed meeting needs as the key to church growth, adding "a church will never grow beyond its capacity to fill needs."

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Don Aderhold, pastor of Columbia Drive Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., found his congregation struggling in a transitional community after almost two decades of steady growth. In a three and a half year period, 1,100 members moved out of the community; for 10 years, offerings declined.

Aderhold, pastor of the church since 1949, brought in a consultant to help "clarify responsibilities, priorities and possibilities" for ministry.

During the past six years, the church has helped settle more than 600 Indochinese refugees, about 300 of whom now attend language services at Columbia Drive church. The church also hired a black church starter who began a black congregation in the community. The church plans to start another black church in 1984.

Jere Allen, director of the HMB's metropolitan missions department, told conference participants effective ministry in any setting will begin with pastors who are committed to stay with a work. A second key, he added, is getting churches to redefine their self-image and vision, stating churches which have definite goals and positive attitudes about themselves tend to grow.

George Bullard, associate in HMB metropolitan missions, echoed Allen's comments on church vision, noting many churches fail because they lack "a reason for being or planning beyond the next Sunday or the next special event." He added churches have "a responsibility to be intentional" about ministry plans and objectives.

Bullard said for Southern Baptists to be effective in the urban setting, the denomination should move toward more multi-congregational models, and encouraged urban congregations to share facilities for both worship and ministry in order to make the most of their setting.

He called for Southern Baptists to temporarily "erase" everything they had done in the cities, build a strategy for reaching the cities, list how current churches fill the strategies and "then fill the gaps."

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Brotherhood Commission Starts  
Trainer Certification Program

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3/21/84

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Two Arizona layman are the first Brotherhood workers to be certified under the Brotherhood Commission's new national Trainer Certification Program.

Mike Heath, of Phoenix, and Robert Stewart, Globe, participated in the inaugural certification conference in Memphis March 16-17 along with 13 Brotherhood Commission staff members. They received indepth training in Brotherhood concepts, learning theories and teaching techniques.

The Trainer Certification Program is part of the Brotherhood Commission's revamped training design which now includes training on several levels. Brotherhood skills training is available for first time workers, leadership development training is available for work rs familiar with the Brotherhood program, and trainer certification and continuing studies conferences are available for more experienced workers.

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