



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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July 31, 1984

*N.C. Paper
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84-107

Roy Smith Nominated
For North Carolina Job

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--Roy J. Smith, acting general secretary of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, has been nominated for the post permanently.

The search committee's unanimous recommendation will be presented to the general board of the convention. If approved, Smith will be voted on a first time at the state's convention this fall.

Smith, currently the associate general secretary for the North Carolina convention, has been acting general secretary since Jan. 1, 1984, following the resignation of Cecil A. Ray. Ray is now heading up Planned Growth In Giving for the Southern Baptist Convention.

Smith said he "never sought the recommendation, nor did I lift a finger to get it. I have been praying along with the committee and feel deeply that all signs indicate this is the right thing in the sight of God.

"As general secretary, I would want to be the servant of the entire family called North Carolina Baptists. I believe our greatest days are ahead in missions, evangelism, education and benevolent ministries."

The committee had recommendations of qualified people from "seven or eight" states in addition to North Carolina it was reported.

Smith was born in Franklin, N.C., July 7, 1929. He graduated from Wake Forest University with a B.A. in religion in 1953 and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., with an M.Div. in 1956.

He was pastor of the Union Hope Baptist Church, Zebulon, N.C., from 1954 to 1957, and the Jersey Baptist Church, Lexington, 1957 to 1962.

Smith was an area missionary for the Baptist State Convention, operating from Sylva, from 1962 to 1967. He became director of Town-Country Missions in 1967 and remained there until he was named associate general secretary in 1978.

The recommendation of the search committee was made by mail to the members of the general board. The general board will act upon the recommendation in September and send its decision to the annual session of the convention which meets in Asheville, Nov. 12-14.

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BTC-N

Williamsport Students Lose
Round In Equal Access Test

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
7/31/84

WASHINGTON (BP)--A federal appellate court has ruled that a group of high school students in Williamsport, Pa., was properly denied permission to hold religious meetings on school premises on an equal basis with other non-academic, extracurricular student groups.

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Ruling one day before the House of Representatives gave overwhelming approval to a federal equal access bill, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia reversed a federal district court judge who earlier ruled for the students.

The 2-1 decision came in a case considered the "cleanest" legal test to date of the free speech right of high school students to participate in on premises meetings where the speech content is religious. An appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court is expected.

The ruling was seen as a temporary setback to numerous religious organizations which have supported the 22-year ban on government-sponsored devotional exercises in public schools, but support equal access including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, in Washington.

Baptist Joint Committee General Counsel John W. Baker, in submitting a brief at the court of appeals siding with the students, said the case gives the courts a "clear opportunity in a clean case to define the boundaries of free speech rights" for high school students.

In its decision, the Third Circuit Court majority ruled the Williamsport Area High School principal and the local school board were justified in denying permission to an interdenominational student group called "Petros" to use the school cafeteria during an extracurricular activity period scheduled twice weekly during the school day. If it had granted the permission, the panel ruled, the school board would have created an unconstitutional establishment of religion.

Citing a 1971 Supreme Court decision which set up a three-pronged test to determine when laws violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment, the appeals panel held that granting Petros permission to meet would have had the primary effect of advancing religion and would have improperly entangled school officials in a religious matter.

The court noted Pennsylvania's compulsory attendance law, a school board policy requiring all student groups to be monitored by school personnel, and the fact the extracurricular meetings are held during the regular school day as factors in its reasoning.

The appeals panel went to lengths to distinguish the Williamsport situation from that at the University of Missouri--Kansas City, where in 1981 a student religious group convinced the Supreme Court it should have equal access to university property for its meetings.

"Unlike a university," the 2-1 majority wrote, "where it is generally understood that a student is, with reason, responsible for the conduct of his or her own affairs, the behavior of a high school student is subject to constant regulation and affirmative supervision of adult school authorities."

The one dissenting judge, who called the majority's interpretation of the First Amendment in the case "wooden," said he found the Williamsport situation "strikingly similar" to that in the University of Missouri case. Furthermore, he noted, the exclusion of Petros "may in fact be understood as a manifestation of official hostility towards religion."

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FMB-N

Largest Volunteer Project
Enrolls More Than 16,000

By Mary Jane Welch

Baptist Press
7/31/84

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--More than 16,000 children attended Vacation Bible Schools and more than 1,500 people made professions of faith in Jamaica as a result of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's largest volunteer project ever.

Although the project was marred by an armed robbery which caused 12 volunteers to return home early, the 449 volunteers held Vacation Bible Schools in 112 churches, evangelistic services in about 49 and dental clinics in 7. It was the largest group of Southern Baptist volunteers ever to work overseas on a single project at one time, and all figures on the results are not yet in.

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Two teams of volunteers from LaGrange, Ga., returned home after one team's villa was broken into by armed robbers who killed the guard and then terrorized and robbed four of the six occupants. Frank Sledge, pastor of Franklin Road Baptist Church, was bruised in the robbery, but his wife and two other women from the church were uninjured.

Police recovered a rented car taken in the robbery and arrested two suspected robbers before Sledge left the island, said James Cecil, the Foreign Mission Board coordinator for the project. The car's owner also told Sledge police knew the whereabouts of two other suspects.

Two nights after the first break-in, robbers attempted to break into a villa where Georgians James Jordan, his wife and two daughters and two other volunteers were staying, but they were scared off, said Cecil. And that Saturday a thief stole items from another villa.

But after the second robbery attempt, Jamaica's Ministry of Tourism placed extra guards at the volunteers' villas. The minister of tourism personally contacted Cecil, assuring him that they would provide extra security for any future volunteer groups. Despite the break-ins, Cecil reported that even the Bible schools the LaGrange volunteers were helping with continued as planned. Church members led the schools with supplies and instructions left by the LaGrange group. There, as in most churches, Jamaican workers were scheduled to work alongside the Southern Baptist volunteers.

Many volunteers want to return next year, said Cecil. Cawley Bolt, director of Christian education for the Jamaica Baptist Union, affirmed the value of the project in helping Jamaican workers learn teaching techniques and said it should continue at least at present levels in coming years.

Cecil pointed out that although Southern Baptists have no missionaries on the island, Jamaican Baptists are eager for volunteer help in a number of areas, such as medicine and construction.

This marked the first year the Foreign Mission Board participated in the project started by churches in Florida. John Baskins, a Florida layman who has spent his last seven birthdays in Jamaica as a volunteer, noted that in the previous six years, more than 6,000 volunteers have gone to Jamaica, and more than 40,000 children have been enrolled in Bible schools.

The volunteers themselves came back excited about their experience. Larry Williams, pastor of North Hardin Baptist Church in Silsbee, Texas, said the week got off on a negative note for his team when their luggage, including their Vacation Bible School supplies, failed to arrive until Thursday. Because of a mix-up, the car they had expected to rent was unavailable. And a young woman on the team suffered a miscarriage during the week.

But through it all, he was able to see the Holy Spirit working, said Williams. By being flexible and improvising, they were able to continue the Bible School for an average of 140 children a day and lead evangelistic services at night. Eighty-four people made professions of faith, three made decisions to enter Christian ministry and one surrendered to missions. A woman in the church, a gynecologist, provided them transportation and helped care for the young woman, who chose to stay in Jamaica and return home with the rest of the team.

For another volunteer, Ruth Wiles of Graham, Texas, the experience was a step in discovering God's will in her life. Since her husband, then pastor of First Baptist Church, Graham, died last year, she has been struggling with the idea of mission involvement. The Jamaica trip helped her see that God can use her teaching skills in the summers if nothing else. But as she moves to Buckeye, Ariz., to take a teaching job, she feels she may be considering a longer commitment in a couple of years.

She wasn't the only volunteer whose life goals were influenced by the Jamaica project, said Cecil. A young Texas newscaster told him she had decided to enter seminary this fall and at least eight others told him they were considering career missions because of their experience in Jamaica.

The highlight of the trip for her, said Wiles, was talking with the young people she taught in Bible school about their relationship with Jesus. The last morning she talked about people giving Christ Lordship in their lives.

Then she gave each young person a pen and paper and asked them to write a personal prayer request for her to take with her. She asked those who did not know Christ personally to make that their prayer request. Five of them did. The young people's openness in sharing their prayer requests with her, a stranger, showed her how God uses all kinds of people together in his work, she said.

Don Listrom, the Foreign Mission Board's controller, made his first volunteer missions trip in 30 years of working for the board. Although the week was tough because of a daylight to midnight working schedule, he said it was "awesome because of the need and the people."

He and his wife, Joanne, who worked with youth at St. Ann's Bay Church, found themselves working with three times the number of youth they had expected. With scant supplies and little to be found on the island, they sought to improvise handicraft projects which might help the young people develop marketable skills.

Mrs. Listrom settled on macrame, using a coarse twine found in the hardware store, and Listrom used felt brought from home to teach banner making. They left instructions for later use with the "very competent" Jamaican teachers they worked with, but wished they had brought more supplies from home to leave.

The whole week taught him that Christians must be conscious of how they spend their money when fellow Christians are in need, he said.

After arriving, Listrom, a member of Monument Heights Baptist Church in Richmond, was asked to preach evening services for small Stepeney Baptist Church in the mountains. "I think I set a record preparing six sermons in two days," he said.

The Stepeney church was one of the seven churches which held dental clinics during the week. Listrom announced early in the week that a dentist could visit the church to pull teeth if at least 30 people signed up as interested. By the night, 42 had put their names on the list. When the dentist came that Friday afternoon, he actually saw 82 people, and was told that many more were probably on their way up the mountain but didn't make it in time.

Throughout the week, says Listrom, his experience and that of others confirmed that people around the world are approachable and open to the gospel. He recommends such a volunteer trip to any Christian wanting to minister but not to someone who just wants to take a vacation, he said. The need is too serious for that.

Although they had worked long hours under sometimes difficult situations, he said everyone in his group wept when they left.

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HMB-F

Baptists Begin Ministries
As Olympic Torch Lit

By Phyllis Thompson

Baptist Press
7/31/84

LOS ANGELES (BP)—When former decathlon champion Rafer Johnson became the first black athlete to light the Olympic flames starting the 23rd Olympiad, Southern Baptists officially began their Summer Games Ministries of "sharing the light with the world."

At the Summer Games Ministries center, located in what was once a sewing shop only five blocks from the Olympics coliseum, Southern Baptist missionaries, summer workers and volunteers provided help for hundreds of Olympic visitors.

On opening day of the Olympics, 320 people visited the center's information desk and another 300 came for meals. A large screen television room providing network coverage for those unable to get tickets overflowed its 150 capacity.

Most came seeking a reprieve from the streets crowded with nearly a million spectator. A few had more specific needs.

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Spanish dictionary in hand, Baptist Home Mission Board US-2 missionary Doni Hammonds of Atlanta, director of the Summer Games Ministry center, struggled to understand a frantic visitor from Venezuela. Word by word, she pieced together his story, discovering he had become separated from his Venezuelan tour group following the opening ceremonies.

By 1:30 a.m. the grateful young man was reunited with his Venezuelan friends with the help of Hammonds and other Baptist volunteers.

Later during the center's early morning shift, restaurant coordinator Steve Phillips, a professor at Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Ark., received a call from the Los Angeles police department asking Southern Baptists to help with another problem.

A group of 14 tourists from Ireland, Belgium, France and Germany had car trouble in early morning traffic. Phillips drove the tourists to their destination and helped make arrangements to get their car repaired. In the process, he also rescued a stray kitten from the busy streets and presented it to an ecstatic neighborhood child.

Opening of Baptist ministries at the Olympics was the culmination of plans in the making since 1979. "During the months and years of planning and preparation, we've been wondering how everything would come together," said Hammonds. "But yesterday, our whole reason for being here became obvious.

"If we can minister in some small way to individuals, to groups, to anyone who needs our help, then we are accomplishing what we came for," she said.

Throughout the Olympics, the Summer Games Ministries Center is open from 7 a.m. until 1 a.m. daily. The center is providing meals, entertainment, information and assistance. Hundreds of Southern Baptist volunteers also are roaming the streets, giving away tracts and brochures in a massive direct witness effort.

Two performing groups are visiting area shopping malls and churches. Local Southern Baptists are staffing two information centers in San Bernardino and Riverside on the eastern fringes of the Olympics.

At the Olympic Village in downtown Los Angeles, where 8,000 athletes from 140 countries reside during the games, four Southern Baptists are working in official capacities with the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee.

Two Baptist Student Union directors for University of Southern California, Yoshiya Togami and Randy Deering, plus Elmer Goble who is executive director of Southern Baptists' Summer Games Ministries, are working with 10 other chaplains of all faiths providing worship services and counseling to athletes and coaches.

L.G. Chaddick, a Baptist home missionary who is director of Christian Social ministries for Los Angeles Baptist Association, is serving as a guide for press groups visiting the Olympic Village.

"Our purpose is to provide ministry in whatever way possible," said Chaddick. "Through our efforts, we want to tell the world who Southern Baptists are and what we are about."

"I think we are seeing that goal accomplished," said Goble, who gives overall administrative direction to Baptists' Summer Games Ministries. "Five years ago, few people in Los Angeles knew much about Southern Baptists. Now even the police turn to us for help.

"In the end, that's what counts," Goble said. "The Olympics will be over in two weeks, but what we do here will have lasting effects."

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(Phyllis Thompson is associate editor of Missions/USA magazine published by the SBC Home Mission Board.)