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84-180

Religious Groups Ask Court To Decide 'Equal Access'

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--Led by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, religious groups representing more than 100 U.S. denominations with some 80 million members have asked the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the right of secondary school students to conduct on-campus religious meetings, provided they are student-initiated, student-controlled and not sponsored by public schools.

In a friend-of-the-court brief filed Dec. 13 in the case of Bender v. Williamsport Area School District, Baptist Joint Committee general counsel John W. Baker asked the high court to overturn a lower federal panel's ruling that a student-run religious group in Williamsport, Pa. High School was not entitled to meet during a designated extracurricular activities period.

"Many of those persons who are responsible for operating our nation's public schools have either failed to read or have grossly misread this Court's decisions," Baker wrote, referring to the high court's 1962 and 1963 decisions invalidating state-sponsored devotional exercises. "As a result, many school districts have assumed or have been persuaded that all religious activities in the public schools, even when the state is not involved in those activities, are unconstitutional."

Baker, whose brief was filed for the Baptist Joint Committee, National Association of Evangelicals, National Council of Churches and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), also asked the court to review the Williamsport case in light of congressional passage this year of the Equal Access Act guaranteeing students the right to meet on school premises for religious purposes.

The Williamsport case, the third such dispute to reach the Supreme Court in recent years, originated when local school administrators denied permission to an evangelical student group, Petros, to meet on an equal footing with other student groups in the central Pennsylvania town's high school. Williamsport school policy set aside two one-hour periods weekly for such extracurricular activities.

But when student Lisa Bender and a group of her friends asked permission for Petros to meet, the school principal said no. After his denial was upheld by the school board, the students went to court. Although a U.S. district court judge upheld the students' right to meet, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals reversed, leading to the appeal to the high court.

Twice before, in cases from Lubbock, Texas and Guilderland, N.Y., the court has refused to review courts of appeals rulings that likewise held against religious groups in their efforts to meet on school premises.

But the earlier cases, according to Baker, "had factual and/or historical problems which made them hard cases." In contrast, he argued, the Williamsport dispute involves legal issues that "are clear and thoroughly evolved."

Without Supreme Court resolution of those issues, Baker elaborated, school officials "find themselves in a 'Catch 22' situation" in which they may be sued if they permit the gatherings or if they refuse to permit them.

"In order to prevent a flood of litigation from both sides of the issue," Baker concluded, "it is essential" that the high court resolve the matter.

When the justices will decide whether to hear the case is unknown.

'Call' Erred In Crediting Source;
Parks Says 'Must Speak Truth In Love' By Bob Stanley

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—President R. Keith Parks said the editor of The Call: Dallas '85, a new independent publication, had apologized for using one of Parks' articles from the agency magazine, The Commission, without crediting its source.

But Parks told the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Dec. 12 he believes the content of the article is correct and his responsibility requires him to continue "speaking the truth in love" whenever necessary for the good of foreign missions.

He said Editor Larry Dipboye of The Call had promised to run a clarification in its next issue indicating the article had been reprinted from the October-November issue of the foreign mission magazine.

A printed notice in The Commissions gives permission to reprint non-copyrighted articles from the publication, "if credit is given" to the magazine.

Parks' article was reprinted on the back cover page of the new publication, which describes itself as the voice of "loyal Southern Baptists." The newspaper contends recent conventions have elected a series of leaders "who have lost touch with what it means to be a Southern Baptist."

While he was not notified that the article was being reprinted, Parks said this is not too unusual because his writings frequently are reprinted without advance notification. "And I don't object because I think what I have written is correct and maybe it will help those who read it," he said.

Board member Mark Corts of Winston-Salem, N.C., at the close of the board meeting, suggested that a "simple, low-key, non-defensive statement" be released to Baptist Press. He said he felt this was necessary because the article appeared in the context of a partisan paper that had been given wide and unsolicited distribution. Corts said the paper made the inference that those "in that party" were pro-cooperative missions and those not in the party were not pro-cooperative missions.

The Parks article, entitled "'Gospel missions' or cooperative missions," said there are still some remnants today of a controversy which raged almost a century ago over whether missions should be supported directly by individuals and churches or through the united efforts of the denomination and its mission board.

Parks noted in the article that at the same time missionary Lottie Moon was rallying Southern Baptist women to support the board's efforts, a breakaway group of 12 North China missionaries headed by T.P. Crawford led a strong attack on the board from 1884 to 1893.

"Crawfordism," Parks wrote, got support from Landmark Baptists who already distrusted the convention and its boards. Later in the article Parks stated: "Some Southern Baptist descendants of 'Crawfordism' are at work today.... Their approach is to solicit support from churches or other groups and carry on missions outside the way we Southern Baptists have committed ourselves to work."

Parks said he has received five letters and two phone calls since the article appeared in the new publication. One letter interpreted his article as an attack on "our newly elected officers" and said Parks should apologize to them or "resign immediately and do your politics outside the office...."

The board president said he had reviewed the article carefully and saw nothing in its content for which he should apologize. Parks said he was troubled by "a growing tendency to categorize and to react emotionally rather than to evaluate content and react in the way that we have functioned as a denomination."

One question he asked those writing him was whether they would have questioned the article's content had they read it first in The Commission, rather than in the new publication.

Parks asked why the position taken in the article, on that Southern Baptists have traditionally held and to which they are committed, should be viewed as "being in defiance of our newly elected officers and an apology due them."

But he strongly defended his duty to speak out even in times of controversy when anything is said or done which would erode confidence in the board or Southern Baptists' foreign missions program.

Parks said he is frequently asked whether the current controversy in the convention is affecting foreign missions. "My answer to that question is 'yes,'" he said. "I am not trying to assign blame as to who is responsible for the controversy. The fact of the controversy is apparent, and the fact that it does affect foreign missions and all that we are doing as a denomination is also apparent."

Another point raised in two or three of the letters and in other circles is whether an agency executive should speak out on controversial matters when he is responsible to all Southern Baptists.

Parks said he'd told some of the board members in committee discussions that "if the day ever comes when I or any other elected official of any Baptist agency declines to speak what we feel to be right and true and best, then you ought to fire us--not because we've said something controversial some of our constituency may not like.

"I hope none of you in your pulpit would simply speak what you think all of the members would be pleased to hear, fearing that you might say something controversial or might step on some major contributor's toes," he said.

Parks told board members he assumes he is in his position and they are in theirs "to try to speak out on the causes for which we are responsible in a responsible way, speaking the truth in love and certainly disagreeing when we need to, but disagreeing in a spirit of love and harmony."

The mission executive said he has felt affirmed as he has discussed with "other groupings of the board" his resolve to speak out whenever the cause of missions is threatened. But he noted it has never been his intention to polarize Southern Baptists or to try to take sides.

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Hunger Gifts Head
For Record Year

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
12/14/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptist hunger experts are hoping generous giving in December will mean another record year for the Southern Baptist Convention's program of worldwide hunger relief.

Through Nov. 30, total gifts to hunger funds administered by the Foreign and Home Mission Boards had surpassed \$4,679,000—more than 10 percent ahead of the 11-month figure for 1983.

The Foreign Mission Board reported 11-month receipts of \$4,258,373 for overseas hunger relief, while the Home Mission Board received \$421,181 for domestic hunger relief.

John Cheyne, human needs ministries consultant at the FMB, said his office expects gifts to overseas hunger relief to reach \$1 million more than the record total for 1983.

Cheyne pointed out the FMB this year already has appropriated more than \$3 million for Africa, including \$1.6 million devoted strictly to emergency food distribution.

Nathan Porter, national consultant for domestic hunger at the HMB, noted December and January are usually "the two biggest months" for hunger relief as funds are channeled to the two mission boards following observance of World Hunger Day in many Southern Baptist churches in October.

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December receipts, along with an increase generated by recent implementation by several state conventions of the 80/20 division suggested by the Southern Baptist Convention (80 percent of undesignated hunger gifts to overseas hunger relief and 20 percent to domestic hunger relief), are expected to bring 1984 domestic hunger relief totals beyond the 1983 figure.

Foy Valentine, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, which coordinates Southern Baptist awareness and action on hunger issues, interpreted the anticipated record in gifts for hunger relief as "an encouraging sign of growing awareness" of the world hunger crisis.

"These increases reflect significant progress toward a Biblical perception of authentic Christian witness, compassionate Christian ministry and effective Christian social action in behalf of the hungry," he said. "As long as hunger continues to devastate the weakest and poorest of people on the earth, Christians are compelled to act compassionately and responsibly to help the hungry in Jesus' name."

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'From Here To Victory'
To Cap 8.5 Campaign

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
12/14/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The Southern Baptist goal of 8.5 million enrolled in Sunday school by Sept. 30, 1985, is still attainable, Harry Piland told Sunday school leaders meeting.

Plans for a three-month "From Here to Victory" emphasis to climax the final year of the Southern Baptist enrollment campaign were detailed during annual planning and promotion meetings for state Sunday school workers in Nashville.

To meet the enrollment goal, Southern Baptists will need a net enrollment gain of more than 643,000 for the 1984-85 church year, Piland, director of the Sunday school department of the Sunday School Board, pointed out.

The enrollment gain for the 1983-84 church year is projected to be about 31,000, bringing the total to a record 7.84 million. The average annual gain for the past five years has been more than 100,000. In 1978, the Sunday school enrollment stood at 7.3 million.

Piland cited the recent controversy within the convention which may be sapping energy away from other efforts as a possible cause for the projected lower 1984 enrollment gain. However, he emphasized, "I don't want to count that as the reason I'm not on the job or why we are not working as hard as we can. The future of the world depends on our response to the challenge."

"We can do it (reach the goal) because He can do it," Piland said. "It's late, but it's not too late. Victories are won in the last quarter."

In a political convention-style roll call of state conventions and fellowships, state Sunday school directors listed their states' enrollment goals for the year which, if achieved, would produce a Southern Baptist Convention Sunday school enrollment of 8,551,490—just over the goal of 8.5 million.

Texas, the largest state convention, listed a goal of 1,312,000 that would require a 42,000 net increase during the year. Puerto Rico Baptists have set a goal of 8,500 that would more than double the current enrollment of 3,930.

An enrollment-enlargement campaign, prospect discovery and training workers for growth will be some of the methods used in an effort to reach that goal, said Hiram Duffer, director of religious education for the Baptist Association of Puerto Rico.

The Southern Baptist General Convention of California has set a goal of 230,000 that would require an enrollment increase of more than 24,100.

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Relying on the Sunday school growth spiral has "revolutionized our work" in California in the last four years, said Jerry Harris, director of the Sunday school department for California Baptists. Continued emphasis in 1984-85 will be given to urging churches to use the spiral.

A mass media blitz with a Sunday school promotional theme may be developed for final months of the campaign in North Carolina to help reach a total enrollment of 855,000, said Robert Stewart, Sunday school director for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

The state goal will require a one-year net gain of 189,000.

The convention-wide "From Here to Victory" emphasis will begin with a commitment day on June 30 and end with Celebration Sunday on Sept. 29.

Also unveiled during the planning and promotion meetings was a 1985-90 campaign called Challenge 10/90 which will be a plan to have a Southern Baptist Bible study enrollment of 10 million by 1990.

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Foreign Board Asks Canadians To Start Mission Program

Baptist Press
12/14/84

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board adopted a proposal Dec. 12 encouraging Canadian Baptists "to establish a foreign missions committee or board at their earliest convenience."

The proposal, directed to the approximately 4,000 Canadian Baptists related to Southern Baptist work in western Canada, also offers help in missionary orientation and finding assignments overseas.

"This proposal is intended to offer assistance to the Canadians in such a way as to stimulate and strengthen their own initiatives rather than absorb those initiatives in the work of the Foreign Mission Board," the document's statement of purpose reads.

The action is the latest in a series the Foreign Mission Board has taken in response to a vote at the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City. The convention approved a report by a study committee which recommended the SBC Constitution not be amended to permit seating of messengers (delegates) from Canada, as a 1983 convention motion had asked. Instead, the report outlined a plan for helping Canadian Baptists evangelize their own country.

If the Canadian Baptists adopt the idea of forming a mission committee or agency, the Foreign Mission Board would:

- Help identify missionary assignments overseas. The worldwide network of Southern Baptist missionaries would locate assignments which could be filled by Canadian missionaries. Canadian workers could then join the local organizations of Southern Baptist personnel in various countries. But the Canadian mission agency wouldn't be limited to Southern Baptist-related mission fields; it could also find and establish its own work overseas.

- Help screen missionary candidates, offering the expertise of FMB personnel consultants.

- Help orient new missionaries. Canadian Baptists could take advantage of orientation programs offered at the new missionary learning center near FMB offices in Richmond, Va.

Also, the Foreign Mission Board is offering to underwrite the cost of missionary screening and orientation for 10 years or "until other arrangements are mutually agreed upon." Canadian Baptists would be encouraged to provide any additional orientation they feel is necessary and eventually develop their own independent selection and orientation process.

The Canadians are also being asked to consider setting aside their Lotti Moon Christmas offerings and a portion of their Cooperative Program gifts as a "starting point" for supporting Canadian Baptist missionaries overseas.

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"This really goes to the heart of the Foreign Mission Board's position regarding the Canada question from the very start," said Don Kammerdiener, director for Middle America and the Caribbean and a member of the joint committee directed by the Southern Baptist Convention to develop work with Canadian Baptists.

"If we're in the business of developing indigenous work in each country, part of that indigenization is they be able to have their own mission program and develop a full ministry," Kammerdiener said.

"If we take leaders out of one country and appoint them as our missionaries, then we would be in a position of needing to do it for all countries.... So we're trying to devise something that would not set a precedent we couldn't live with with other groups and at the same time help (Canadian Baptists) fulfill their missionary ambitions and desires."

FMB policy requires Southern Baptist missionaries be native or naturalized U.S. citizens. But the board has named a few Canadians (and other non-citizens) as missionaries or journeymen in exceptional cases, including Saskatchewan natives Henry and Ila-Mae Dueck, who were named Southern Baptist missionary associates Dec. 11 for publications work in Zimbabwe.

But the Duecks will probably be the last Canadians directly named missionaries by Southern Baptists if Canadian Baptists form their own mission board.

In other Canada developments, Southern Baptist missionaries James and Georgie Teel have applied for Canadian residence documents and will likely move to Calgary, Alberta, early in 1985. Teel, a veteran missionary to the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Argentina, was named Foreign Mission Board representative to Canadian Baptists in September.

The Teels "will respond to whatever they're asked to do" to assist Canadian Baptists in their ministry, according to Kammerdiener. But the first two priorities will be helping them develop a theological education program and strengthen an already active Baptist student ministry on Canadian university campuses.

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Parham To Join Staff
Of Christian Life Commission

Baptist Press
12/14/84

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Robert Parham has been elected director of hunger concerns for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission effective Jan. 1.

Parham, 31, is a December graduate of Baylor University, where he earned a Ph.D. degree, with an emphasis in Christian ethics. He also has earned the master of divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and a bachelor of science in foreign service from Georgetown University, Washington.

Parham, who was raised in Nigeria by Southern Baptist agricultural missionary parents, will direct an expanded program of hunger awareness and action for the social concern agency, according to CLC Executive Director Foy Valentine.

While a student at Baylor, Parham has been as pastor of the Cego Baptist Church in Cego, Texas. At Southern Seminary he was student government president and received the Outstanding Senior Award.

Parham is married to the former Betsy Nurn of Huntsville, Ala. She is a graduate of Samford University and Southern Seminary. The Parhams have an infant daughter, Elisa Ann.

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Small Kentucky Church
Gives \$200,000 For Ethiopia

By Craig Bird

Belfry, Ky. (BP)--A small church in the mountains of eastern Kentucky has given \$200,000 for Ethiopian hunger relief.

First Baptist Church of Belfry averages less than 135 in Sunday school, already gives 25 percent of all its income to the national Southern Baptist mission and educational programs through the Cooperative Program, and currently doesn't even have a church secretary.

But when December tithes and offerings swelled the budget surplus to \$125,000 the church moved rapidly to aid drought victims on another continent.

The church, locally in the heart of the depressed coal industry (several church members have been laid off from their jobs), usually collects \$8,000 to \$11,000 each month in contributions with December being the strongest month financially. Last December collections were approximately \$35,000.

But tithes and offerings Dec. 2 exceeded \$125,000. On Dec. 3 the church deacons recommended \$100,000 be sent to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to help Ethiopia. Dec. 5 the church, with only affirmative discussion, unanimously approved the recommendation. An individual member then anonymously added \$100,000 to the contribution.

"We simply realized that--even with all we want and need to do locally--everything else we are doing becomes pale and insignificant compared to the fact a million people could die of hunger within a month or less if something drastic isn't done," Pastor Jim Watt said.

Something drastic is being done.

In late November the Foreign Mission Board authorized \$200,000 for Ethiopian aid. The first \$50,000 was used to assist in feeding 10,000 children a day in a feeding program in the Sidamo Province, according to John Cheyne, senior consultant for human needs ministries at the Foreign Mission Board. The other \$150,000 is being used to purchase equipment and open a road into the Menz-Gishe area of the country. Approximately 250,000 people living in the area have been isolated from hunger relief effort because of lack of a passable road.

The Foreign Mission Board will concentrate on a feeding program for the 30,000 residents of the Gishe area while other relief efforts use the road to transport aid to the rest of the region, Cheyne said.

The \$200,000 from Belfry will allow the relief work in the long-suffering nation to be greatly expanded.

All hunger relief gifts received by the Foreign Mission Board go directly to aid, with no administrative or promotional cost taken out. The FMB had earlier released more than \$220,000 for aid to Ethiopia during 1984. Southern Baptist missionaries--who had been restricted to working in the capital city of Addis Ababa by the Marxist government--are coordinating the food distribution and related efforts funded by Southern Baptist contributions.

The action by First Baptist Church, Belfry was not out of character--the proportion of the act was just bigger.

Watt has been pastor of the church 16 months, "and a week hasn't gone by during that time without us helping somebody," he said. This week the church will distribute food baskets or vouchers worth \$75-\$100 to 25 needy families.

Last spring when floods ravaged the area, Southern Baptist relief teams from other cities used the church as a base and fed thousands of people there for two weeks.

"This is a helping church," Watt said. "When coal booms and the money comes in we try to deal with it as Christian stewards and see how the money can help people instead of building bigger buildings to run up huge utility bills."

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In the past the church has sent donations to struggling churches, "staying anonymous as often as possible because we aren't seeking publicity."

This gift was made public this time for two reasons, he explained. "First you don't hide a \$200,000 contribution. Secondly, we hoped to spark a response among other people to respond to the needs in Africa."

It appears to be working.

Watt presented the check to Cheyne Dec. 11 at a meeting of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. The next day the church received \$1,400; Dec. 13 another \$1,000; Dec. 14 \$600. "We have gotten contributions from as far away as Louisville, from non-Baptists, non-Christians, we've gotten contributions as large as \$500 and as small as \$5," he said.

All the donations will be forwarded to the Foreign Mission Board for distribution.

The consistency of the church's willingness to help others has helped the congregation's standing in the community. "Southern Baptists are a minority here (Belfry is located on the West Virginia border, not far from Ohio) and many people just don't understand much about Southern Baptists," Watt said. The positive image makes people more open to the church's evangelical witness.

The gift will save literally thousands of lives. The publicity surrounding the gift will give church members the opportunity to explain Baptist ways--and especially the Cooperative Program (the Southern Baptist national, unified budget where churches voluntarily pool their resources to more effectively present the message of Jesus Christ to the world) to people unfamiliar with Southern Baptist life and work.

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(Jack Sanford, editor of the Western Recorder, newsjournal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and Mary Jane Welch, staff writer at the Foreign Mission Board, contributed to this story.)

Stanley's Church Doubles
Cooperative Program Gifts

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12/14/84

ATLANTA (BP)—Fulfilling a pledge made earlier this year by Southern Baptist Convention President Charles Stanley, First Baptist Church of Atlanta voted to double its gifts to Southern Baptist missions through the denomination's Cooperative Program.

The congregation adopted a 1985 budget of \$4.75 million, which is identical in total amount to the 1984 budget, but allocates \$250,000 instead of \$122,000 to the SBC Cooperative Program.

Earlier this year in a meeting with Baptist editors, Stanley, pastor of the church since 1971, said he had challenged the church's budget committee to increase Cooperative Program giving to at least five percent.

Fred Powell, senior associate pastor of the church, confirmed that the church had responded favorably to Stanley's challenge. Powell said the church budgets its Cooperative Program allocation on a dollar amount rather than a percentage basis.

Powell said earlier reports the church gives 2.1 percent to SBC missions through the Cooperative Program were in error. The percentage is actually 2.6 percent for 1984, and 5.2 percent for 1985, Powell explained.

He added that this year First Baptist Atlanta is giving an additional \$75,000 through the SBC Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions, and \$25,000 through the SBC Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions as part of \$600,000 total mission giving.

He said total gifts through the church in 1984 would be about \$4.2 million, almost \$500,000 less than the budget because of redistribution of some income for building purposes.

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