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Refugee Resettlement Office
Responds To SBC Resolution

By Michael Tutterow

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Immigration and Refugee Service Office has posted a list of immediate needs for refugee sponsors in response to a resolution adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas June 11-13.

SBC messengers adopted the resolution encouraging Southern Baptist participation in sponsorship and church-centered ministries with refugees.

The denomination previously had set a goal of resettling 1,000 refugees during 1985. Last year, Southern Baptists resettled 819 refugees, placing them third among 17 participating denominations in refugee resettlement.

The SBC refugee office now has more than 50 cases of refugees (about 65 people) needing sponsors, said William Rutledge, director of immigration and refugee service for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Cases range from individuals to families, explained Rutledge. The current case load indicates the refugees either have not found a sponsor or they have not yet arrived in the United States, he added.

A volunteer agency, which acts as mediator between United Nation's refugee camps and the United States government, assigns cases to participating U.S. denominations involved in refugee resettlement, said Rutledge.

In May, the last month figures were available, Southern Baptists were assigned 18 cases (about 50 people), he said.

Coupled with the 18 new cases were an additional 38 cases from April, carried over because the refugee office was unable to find sponsors, Rutledge said. Eight cases were sponsored during May; another 17 SBC churches were enlisted as back-up sponsors. Still, at least 31 cases were carried over into June, he noted.

But Southern Baptist cases are not the only ones needing sponsors, said Rutledge. Sometimes another group which has assumed responsibility for sponsorship is unable to follow through, he explained. The refugee family, already in route to the United States, arrives expecting a sponsor but winds up in a transit center in Maryland, said Rutledge.

During May, the center reported 15 persons, including two unaccompanied minors (children arriving unaccompanied by parents or guardians), were without sponsors, he noted.

In actuality, said Rutledge, Southern Baptists had the opportunity to sponsor 63 cases during May (about 75 people), a typical monthly average.

Delays in sponsorship in the United States affect refugees throughout the world, he added. About 2,500 Indochinese refugees arrive in the United States each month, all in need of sponsorship, from a refugee camp in Bataan, Philippines, said Rutledge.

"Those 2,500 are counted on to leave so another 2,500 others can come from refugee camps in Laos and Thailand," he said. "To not pick them up prevents ~~Southern Baptists~~ from leaving Indochinese refugee camps."

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That leaves refugees with one of two fates: either they remain overseas in camps, or another agency--with less than the SBC standard of follow-up--picks them up, only to drop them once they arrive in the United States, said Rutledge.

In addition to the already heavy June caseload, Rutledge reported several specific cases in need of sponsors.

If a refugee's family already resides in the United States, they are eligible to come to the U.S. under the family reunification program, he explained. Though the family would provide most if not all the basic living needs for the refugee, the government requires the involvement of a back-up sponsor, added Rutledge.

A Charlotte, N.C., Baptist church sponsored a Cambodian family eight months ago; now the family is self-supporting. They are willing to serve as primary sponsors for four relatives, but do not have room in their home for the new family.

At this time, the Charlotte church is unable to provide housing for the family, so Rutledge is in search of another North Carolina church willing to act as back-up sponsors to provide housing for the family.

A Vietnamese family of five who has friends in Oklahoma also are in need of sponsors, said Rutledge. So far sponsors from any state have not been found, he said.

Complicating the matter are medical needs, noted Rutledge. The father, who has an uncontagious form of leprosy, will require treatment for about five years, he explained.

Though the greatest number of refugees are Indochinese, refugees from other countries are at the transit center awaiting sponsorship, said Rutledge.

Ayele Dilnessa arrived in March from Ethiopia. A student, he speaks four languages, including English, and is a professing Christian.

Kazimier Stanislaw Sikora, a 32-year-old Polish Catholic, arrived in early May. He worked as a geologist, salt miner and taxi driver, and speaks Polish and minimal Italian and English. His wife and son still live in Poland.

Bekele Tollossa, a 25-year-old Ethiopian, arrived in the U.S. in April. He has a masters degree in agriculture and speaks four languages, including English. The cases are examples of the hundreds of refugees that Southern Baptists attempt to sponsor each year, noted Rutledge.

"Ten million refugees worldwide await sponsors and the opportunity for personal and religious liberty," Rutledge said.

The SBC resolution coincided with the 10-year anniversary of the denomination's resettlement of Indochinese refugees, noted Rutledge. Since 1975, Southern Baptists have sponsored about 12,000 Indochinese refugees and 2,618 refugees from 19 countries, he said. During the 10-year period, 281 SBC ethnic congregations have sprung up in the United States among Indochinese refugees alone, he added.

"The more potential a denomination has for sponsorship, the more cases it receives," Rutledge explained, noting the denomination boasts 14.3-million members. Coupled with state convention structures, which include language missions program leaders responsible for refugee resettlement emphases, "Southern Baptists have the best network and potential for resettling refugees."

As of May 1985, Southern Baptists had resettled 336 people, a third of their goal, noted Rutledge.

"We don't have anything to be ashamed of," he concluded. "We're just not doing enough."

Churches interested in sponsoring these or other cases should write to the Immigration and Refugee Service Office, 1350 Spring Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30367, or phone 404-873-4041.

Court Strikes 'Shared Time'
In Federal, State Aid Plans

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court ruled July 1 that federal and state programs which send public schoolteachers into parochial schools to provide specialized instruction violate the constitutional separation of church and state.

In a pair of 5-4 decisions in related cases, the high court struck down separate programs in New York City and Grand Rapids, Mich., that used public monies to send teachers into parochial schools to teach subjects ranging from remedial reading to physical education.

While opponents of public aid to parochial schools had held out some hope the justices would invalidate the Grand Rapids program, paid for with state funds, most observers did not expect a majority to vote against the more established New York City plan, funded under Chapter 1 of the federal Education Act.

Under that plan, the secretary of education is authorized to distribute federal financial assistance to local schools--private as well as public--to meet the needs of educationally deprived children from low-income families. In New York City, local officials have had such a program in place since 1966, the first year the federal money became available.

Services provided in the New York plan include remedial reading, reading skills, remedial mathematics, English as a second language and guidance services. The services are provided by regular employees of the public schools, including teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers.

Overseeing the whole operation is the city's Bureau of Nonpublic School Reimbursement, an agency that makes teacher assignments and sends supervisors into the classroom to ensure teachers are not engaging in religious instruction.

Writing for the narrow majority, Justice William J. Brennan Jr. faulted the New York plan for violating the Constitution by excessively entangling church and state in the supervision process. Excessive entanglement is one of three tests the Supreme Court has used for the past 14 years in determining whether laws dealing with religion violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

"When the state becomes enmeshed with a given denomination in matters of religious significance," Brennan declared, "the freedom of religious belief of those who are not adherents of that denomination suffers, even when the governmental purpose underlying the involvement is largely secular."

He also warned that "the freedom of even the adherents of the denomination is limited by the governmental intrusion into sacred matters" when the church benefits from government programs such as the one in New York.

Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr., whose vote was ardently courted by attorneys for both sides during oral arguments in the case last December, declared in a separate concurring opinion that the "constitutional defect" in the New York plan "is that it provides a direct financial subsidy to be administered in significant part by public school teachers within parochial schools--resulting in both the advancement of religion and forbidden entanglement."

Among the dissenters, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger lamented the decision "will deny countless schoolchildren desperately needed remedial teaching services," and declared further, "Rather than showing the neutrality the Court boasts of, it exhibits nothing less than hostility toward religion and the children who attend church-sponsored schools."

In a similar vein, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, in a dissenting opinion joined by Justice William H. Rehnquist, labeled the decision "tragic" for schoolchildren in economically deprived neighborhoods. By its ruling, she said, "the Court deprives them of a program that offers a meaningful chance at success in life, and it does so on the untenable theory that public schoolteachers...are likely to start teaching religion merely because they have walked across the threshold of a parochial school."

Also struck down was a similar "shared time" program set up by the Grand Rapids school district in which public schoolteachers were sent into that city's parochial schools to offer remedial and enriched reading and math, as well as courses in art, music and physical education.

A second Grand Rapids program, a community education curriculum offered on parochial school premises after regular school hours, was likewise invalidated. Among the offerings for children and adults were arts and crafts, home economics, gymnastics, drama, chess, model building and nature appreciation. Teachers in the program were part-time public school employees, nearly all of whom taught at the same parochial schools during the regular day.

In both programs, regulations required each classroom to be free of religious symbols such as crucifixes and Christian art--a process referred to as "desanctification"---and required teachers to post a sign reading, "Public School Classroom." Of 40 religious schools in the programs, 28 were Roman Catholic, seven Christian Reformed, three Lutheran, while one each was Seventh-day Adventist and Baptist.

Justice Brennan, who as senior justice for the majority assigned both the New York and Grand Rapids opinions to himself, declared the establishment clause was penned by the nation's founders to accomplish more than to forbid an official state religion or prefer one religion over another.

That view--a strong rebuttal to opinions expressed last month by Justice Rehnquist in an Alabama school prayer case--has held that the founders, supported by later Supreme Court decisions, determined "jealously to guard the right of every individual to worship according to the dictates of conscience while requiring the government to maintain a course of neutrality among religions, and between religion and non-religion," Brennan declared.

He also defended the high court's reliance since 1971 on a three-part test (the challenged law must have a secular purpose, must have the primary effect of neither advancing nor inhibiting religion, and must not excessively entangle church and state), ruling the Grand Rapids programs violated the second--or primary effect--prong. Such reliance is needed, Brennan wrote, because "The government's activities in this area can have a magnified impact on impressionable young minds, and the occasional rivalry of parallel public and private school systems offers an all-too-ready opportunity for divisive rifts along religious lines in the body politic."

The Grand Rapids programs, he continued, failed the second test because participating teachers "may become involved in intentionally or inadvertently inculcating particular religious tenets or beliefs;" because the programs themselves "may provide a crucial symbolic link between government and religion, thereby enlisting...the powers of government to the support of the religious denomination operating the school;" and because the programs may directly promote religion "by impermissibly providing a subsidy to the primary religious mission of the institutions affected."

In a brief dissent, Rehnquist reasserted his view expressed in the Alabama silent prayer case that the high court over the past 40 years has relied on what he described as the "faulty 'wall (of separation)' premise," a fallacy by which "the Court blinds itself to the first 150 years' history of the Establishment Clause."

Justice Byron R. White, noting he has "long disagreed with the Court's interpretation and application of the Establishment Clause in the context of state aid to private schools," also dissented.

Chief Justice Burger and Justice O'Connor dissented in part, saying that while the community education program in Grand Rapids violated the Constitution, the shared time plan should have been upheld.

Baylor Names Director Of
Christian Education Center

WACO, Texas (BP)—Randy M. Wood, associate dean of students at Oklahoma Baptist University, has been named director of the newly created Christian Education Center at Baylor University.

The center is designed to serve educators who have a Christian commitment by offering expertise in a number of skill areas. It will begin operation this fall, as part of the Baylor School of Education.

Wood holds a doctorate from Baylor in religion and educational psychology. He earned a master's degree in counseling and guidance from Texas Christian University and has served five years on the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, with a master's degree in pastoral care. Wood was ordained to the ministry by Seventh and James Baptist Church in Waco.

Wood currently is director of the Albert J. and Laura Belle Geiger Center for University Life at Oklahoma Baptist University. He also has been an adjunct professor in education at the graduate school of Oklahoma City University, an instructor in psychology at McLennan Community College in Waco and a staff counselor at the Baylor Health and Counseling Center.

The Center for Christian Education was created to be a resource center for Christian workers, said Dr. Bill D. Lamkin, dean of the School of Education.

Volunteer church workers who fill educational positions within churches and schools, teachers and administrators in Christian schools, pastors and staff members who want to update specific educational skills, parents who want parenting skills, writers of denominational curricula, or leaders at Christian conference centers are among the many with specific needs who may use the center, Lamkin said.

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