

(BP)**- - BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

March 6, 1985

85-25

**Judge Dismisses \$5 Million Suit
Against Foreign Mission Board**

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—A \$5 million damage suit against the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has been dismissed "without prejudice" by U.S. District Court Judge D. Dortch Warriner.

The plaintiff, Nasser Lotfi of Austin, Texas, a former foreign mission volunteer, requested the dismissal. Warriner dismissed the suit Feb. 28.

Lotfi had sought \$5 million in damages and \$60,000 in disability and medical benefits stemming from an alleged beating in 1982. The suit claimed Turkish immigrants beat Lotfi into unconsciousness March 27, 1982, in Augsburg, West Germany, where he was working to develop a congregation of Baptist believers. The suit said Lotfi suffered permanent disabling injuries to his back and spine.

Dismissal of the suit "without prejudice" means Lotfi can refile the suit, but the dismissal order stipulates he must refile in the U.S. District Court for the eastern district of Virginia. This is the court where the suit was filed March 26, 1984. Lotfi was given 10 days to contest this requirement.

Lotfi initially filed the suit in the U.S. District Court in Fort Worth, Texas, in March 1983. It was dismissed in September of that year for lack of jurisdiction.

Lotfi, identified by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram as a former officer in the Iranian military and a naturalized U.S. citizen, went to West Germany in January 1982 for a two-year volunteer term. He was assigned to work among Turkish immigrants in cooperation with the German Baptist Union and Southern Baptist career missionaries.

Foreign Mission Board Officials said Lotfi was originally selected because of his apparent Christian commitment, Middle East background, language skills and intense desire to serve. Consultations in July 1982 resulted in a decision to end the agreement under which Lotfi went overseas.

--30--

**Sanctuary Study Set
By Baptist Committee**

By Dan Martin

**Baptist Press
3/6/85**

WASHINGTON (BP)—The religious liberty implications of the Sanctuary Movement will be studied by a special task force of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

The study was approved during the annual meeting of the 44-member governing board of the BJCPA, a First Amendment organization composed of nine Baptist denominations in North America.

In addition to setting the study, the committee also adopted a proposed budget for 1985-86, reiterated its long-standing position opposing state-sponsored prayer in public schools and heard reports on pending cases before the Supreme Court and legislation currently before Congress.

--more--

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

Prior to authorizing the Sanctuary study, members of the committee heard a report by Charles Z. Smith, professor emeritus and former dean at the University of Washington Law School. Smith, an American Baptist, explained the Sanctuary Movement is an effort to harbor refugees from Central America who have been declared illegal aliens by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Smith, who has been a special prosecutor for the United States, said many persons involved in the movement believe the refugees are fleeing for their lives from political oppression. The government, he said, has declared the Central Americans to be "economic refugees" and thus not entitled to refugee status.

He explained the complicated situation by noting if a person from Cuba and a person from Haiti arrived in the United States on the same boat, the Cuban would be entitled to stay as a political refugee, but the Haitian would be deported as an economic refugee.

First Amendment questions involved, according to Smith, may revolve around whether the government may determine the nature and mission of the church and whether government agents have the right to carry tape recorders into church services to gather evidence against possible "conspirators" who would shelter refugees.

Currently, he said, "there is limited participation among Baptists. I know of (only) seven American Baptist Churches who have declared sanctuary. There are about 150 to 200 churches in the United States across denominational lines who have publicly declared sanctuary."

Smith is an attorney for an American Baptist pastor in Seattle named an unindicted co-conspirator in a recent case involving refugees from El Salvador.

Following Smith's presentation, Stanley Grenz, a professor at North American Baptist Theological Seminary in Sioux Falls, S.D., called for a task force to study the religious liberty implications of the Sanctuary Movement.

In supporting the task force, William R. Estep, a professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, noted the religious liberty questions "are worth investigating. We are not taking a position for or against Sanctuary."

Sammuel T. Currin, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina in Raleigh, opposed the task force, saying: "Anyone who participates in an illegal activity should be prepared to suffer the consequences."

"The real problem with the illegal aliens," he added, "is the turmoil in Central America brought about by the Communists and Marxists."

He introduced a motion to "urge the President and Congress to take every measure possible to deal with the Communist-Marxist problem in Latin America and to stabilize the area, thus reducing immigration problems...."

Currin's motion was referred to the task force for study.

Also opposing the task force was J.I. Ginnings, a businessman from Wichita Falls, Texas, and a new Southern Baptist representative, who said: "I do not believe we want to see our (SBC) money spent on anything that opposes the legitimate carrying out of the laws of the United States. The Sanctuary issue is, 'Will the government be permitted to enforce its immigration laws?'"

Lloyd Elder, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said: "The only reason to pursue this is the First Amendment question. It will not be a study of the Sanctuary Movement."

In other business:

"The BJCPA adopted a proposed 1985-86 budget of \$576,000, of which \$418,000 would come from the SBC Cooperative Program budget.

In response to a question by Ginnings about the level of funding from the SBC, James M. Dunn, BJCPA executive director, said: "While we receive a large commitment from the SBC, we also spend about 90 percent of staff time in responding to SBC constituents."

He also noted more than half of the 28 million members in the affiliated bodies are Southern Baptists and statistics indicate 75 cents of every dollar sent by Baptists beyond the local church comes through the SBC.

Dunn also said the BJCPA will be looking for ways to develop additional funding from the other Baptist denominations as well as from other sources.

At the close of the meeting, Albert Lee Smith of Birmingham, Ala., introduced a motion to put the BJC on record supporting separate measures in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate identical to President Reagan's school prayer amendment, which was defeated during the last term of Congress.

Smith, a former one-term congressman from Alabama and a recent unsuccessful Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate, said: "Since prayer was outlawed in 1962 we have seen an increase in divorce, homosexuality and promiscuity...because we have turned from God."

Southwestern professor Estep said he opposes the proposed prayer amendment "because I believe in prayer. I agree completely that the nation has turned from God and is drug-crazed and debauched. But I do not agree this will all be changed simply because a prayer amendment is passed.

"The amendment," he added, "is not a return to prayer, but is a call for civil religion, which is the antithesis of the Christian faith."

With only four votes favoring Smith's motion, the BJCPA reiterated its long-standing policy of opposition to state-sponsored prayer in the public schools.

—30—

New Study Cites
Hunger 'Epidemic'

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
3/6/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A study indicating hunger in America has reached "epidemic proportions" should remind Southern Baptists and other concerned Christians "we must look across town as well as overseas" in responding to human need, Robert Parham feels.

Parham, director of hunger concerns for the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, feels the recently-released findings of the Physician Task Force on Hunger in American "present clear and convincing evidence millions of Americans are going hungry in the midst of abundance."

The report follows a year-long investigation by researchers who traveled back roads, opened refrigerators and searched out "the human face of hunger." The group of prominent doctors and public health experts from across the country reviewed previous studies on hunger and compiled additional data through "hundreds and hundreds" of interviews and field studies.

Despite the nation's much-celebrated economic recovery, the task force found that up to 20 million Americans "may be hungry at least some period of time each month." The study defined hungry persons as those who are chronically unable to purchase an adequate diet as well as those who periodically run out of food altogether.

The report also concluded "the recent and swift return of hunger to America can be traced in substantial measure to clear and conscious policies of the federal government." Proposed cuts in food programs would be "absolutely devastating," task force members stressed.

Among the study's findings:

—more—

--Second Harvest, an umbrella organization, notes a 700 percent increase in food distribution since 1980. Begun in 1967, Second Harvest is a nationwide network of 74 food banks.

--Clinics in poor areas are reporting cases of kwashiorkor and marasmus, two diseases of advanced malnutrition usually associated with the Third World.

--The U.S. infant mortality rate is worse than that of other industrial nations and appears to be leveling off instead of declining. The 1983 infant mortality rate was 10.9 per 1,000 live births, which is "behind that of comparably wealthy nations." In New York's central Harlem, the rate is as high as 25.6 per 1,000.

--From 1982 to 1985, \$12.2 billion was cut from federal food stamps and child nutrition programs.

Parham noted that while the health of the American economy can be measured by indicators such as the Gross National Product, Consumer Price Index, interest rates and unemployment levels, the country has no "hunger index."

"This is why the report of the Physician Task Force is so important," he said. "Its emphasis on the epidemiological extent of hunger in this nation arms us with the facts and compels us to action in behalf of our hungry neighbors."

—30—

Baptist Joint Committee Panel
To Seek New General Counsel

Baptist Press
3/6/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—Acting to fill a key vacancy on its staff, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs March 5 approved a search process for securing the services of a new general counsel and director of research services.

The position is open because of the recent death of John W. Baker, a member of the staff from 1969 until his death in January.

Executive director James M. Dunn, along with the agency's four current officers, will conduct the search. Besides Dunn, they are chairperson Donald R. Brewer, a Southern Baptist attorney from Chicago; first vice-chairperson Wesley Forsline, pastor of the American Baptist-related Calvary Baptist Church, Minneapolis; second vice-chairperson Violet Ankrum, past president, Women's Auxiliary, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.; and secretary Donald E. Anderson of Arlington Heights, Ill., editor of The Standard, monthly publication of the Baptist General Conference.

The search panel is currently receiving applications for the position and indicated it welcomes all interested Baptist attorneys to send resumes to Dunn at 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Once the panel makes its choice, the entire 44-member Baptist Joint Committee will be asked to approve the selection in a mail ballot.

During its two-day meeting at First Baptist Church in Washington, the committee paid tribute to Baker in a ceremony marked by personal reflections and testimonies. Baker's widow, Mary, and two of their sons attended.

Baker died Jan. 12 of heart failure following a heart attack suffered last Christmas Day. He was 64.

—more—

During his 15-year tenure at the Baptist Joint Committee, Baker became known as one of the nation's foremost legal experts on matters of religious liberty and separation of church and state. He filed 21 friend-of-the-court briefs in federal courts, all but a handful at the U.S. Supreme Court, and assisted Baptist churches and institutions in many other legal battles. He also represented the Baptist Joint Committee before congressional committees and lobbied Congress on a variety of church-state issues.

In another personnel move, the Baptist Joint Committee named its director of information services, Stan Hastey, as associate executive director. He will assist Dunn with administrative duties and be a spokesman for the agency. Hastey, 40, an 11-year staff veteran, is also Washington Bureau Chief for Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention.

--30--

Church Shares Real Estate
Profit With Mission Causes

By John Rutledge

Baptist Press
3/6/85

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--The sale of 22 acres of land by Shearer Hills Baptist Church in San Antonio for \$5.4 million has allowed the church to give a 20 percent "tithe" of the proceeds to mission causes.

Pastor Charles Wisdom, who is leaving to become pastor of First Church in Katy, Texas (a suburb of Houston) said the church paid \$250,000 for the acreage north of San Antonio in the late 1970s with the idea of starting a church.

Instead the land was sold. About \$3 million will go to buy land elsewhere and build a church and \$1.2 million will pay off the church's indebtedness and build education space. Another \$100,000 will be placed in a scholarship fund to benefit ministerial students from the church.

Southern Baptist institutions receiving part of the "tithe" include: the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor (\$50,000 for scholarships honoring former China missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Charles L. Culpepper); the San Antonio Association (\$500,000 for a land holding fund); the Baptist General Convention of Texas (\$100,000 for its land holding fund); and Hispanic Baptist Seminary (\$300,000). The San Antonio Educational Television board, which is applying for a full-power license to provide Christian programming in cooperation with the American Christian Television System (ACTS) of the Radio-Television Commission, will receive \$50,000.

With the purchase of the land to start another church and with the \$600,000 to the local association and the state convention land funds, "we feel like we've had a hand in starting new works," Wisdom said.

--30--

(John Rutledge is a staff writer for the Baptist Standard, the newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.)



BAPTIST PRESS

901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN WAY NO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
901 COMMERCE
NASHVILLE, TN. 37203

NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION