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New Beirut Facility Needed In Baptist Middle East Work

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)—The war in Lebanon has forced Baptists to break ground for a new building for Baptist ministries to the Arab world. But they're not building because the old structure was destroyed; they've simply run out of space.

The new facility—an annex to the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in east Beirut—will house the Arab Baptist Publication Center, the Baptist Center for Mass Communications and the Middle East Evangelism Ministry.

"It's of necessity...not to meet growing needs but immediate needs," says Southern Baptist missionary Pete Dunn, who directs the mass media efforts. Dunn and his wife, Pat, are in Birmingham, Ala., for a brief visit with relatives.

The expansion has been "imposed upon us by a wartime situation which has left people destitute spiritually as well as physically." The publication, mass media and evangelism ministries are current tenants in the three-level seminary structure built in 1961.

"We're all crowded together," Dunn says. The mass media office is "in the basement...in the same room with the seminary's textbooks." In an adjacent small room is its audio studio. Publications work now fills the top floor. Hallways throughout the building are crowded by stockpiles of books and materials for responding to requests from throughout the Arab world.

Leadership training is jeopardized by the tight quarters, Dunn says. "If the seminary were to start getting the enrollments of just a few years ago, there's no way it can put more students in there, because we're using most of the students' rooms." Seven full-time students from two countries are enrolled, compared to 15 from six countries several years ago.

The one-story annex is to be completed early next year. A second story will be added when more money is available, Dunn says. The annex will house a warehouse and distribution office for the publication ministry and a large studio and control room for video or audio productions by the mass media ministry. A small bomb shelter for about 25 people will be underneath the annex if extra funding is secured this summer.

"On the surface, it may look foolish to go ahead with this kind of a building in view of the Lebanon situation," Dunn admits. But the construction was postponed when the civil war broke out in 1975, then when fighting and tensions spiraled in 1977 and 1979, then when Israeli troops invaded to rout the Palestinian Liberation Organization in 1982.

Now, the missionaries and national Baptist leaders from Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt who serve on a board of directors for the international ministries have prayed and reached a decision "we just absolutely have to have additional space," Dunn says.

The essence of their outlook, he says, is, "Let's go on with the facility and trust the Lord to give us peace. If he wants to close it down, he'll close it down."

"People are asking about Jesus Christ. People are really seeking spiritual answers to spiritual problems. It's overwhelming us. In February and March, we had more letters than we did in one whole year.

"Conflict produces need," Dunn says. "We've got to fill those needs."

High Court Accepts Second
Abortion Case For Next Term

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)—After agreeing in April to review limits states may place on abortion, the Supreme Court announced May 20 it is adding a second abortion case, this one from Illinois, to its oral argument calendar for the term beginning next October.

The new case, challenging portions of Illinois' 1979 abortion law and amendments to that statute added last year, will give high court justices the chance to review two lower federal panels' decisions striking down portions of the law.

According to the state, the law is needed to protect women from being administered medications to induce abortion without their knowledge and to protect "viable" fetal life.

Illinois Attorney General Neil F. Hartigan and several physicians contended the law was designed to prevent the administration of so-called "abortifacients"—including prostaglandin suppositories and injections—without specific notification to pregnant women the procedures would result in abortion. "Women have a right to choose not to have an abortion that is at least as fundamental as the right to choose abortion," they argued.

Further, they said, the law was designed to protect "those women most likely to experience harm...who unknowingly accept abortifacients and later learn what they thought was a contraceptive or other medication in fact was an article violating their most deeply held beliefs."

While the state acknowledged revisions were made in another section of the 1979 law dealing with fetal rights after the lower courts invalidated it, the Illinois appeal underscored the state's "compelling interest in protecting post-viable fetal life." That interest "grows substantially as the pregnancy advances," the argument continued, adding the woman's right to an abortion "does not include a right to actively seek to kill the fetus when there is a reasonable possibility the fetus is capable of sustained survival outside the womb."

On the other side, a group of physicians that successfully challenged the Illinois statute in a federal district court and then withstood a state appeal in the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, accused Illinois of a "long history of enacting unconstitutional abortion laws."

They argued the court should dismiss the state's appeal because "there is no pressing need to reevaluate Roe v. Wade," the 1973 decision striking down state abortion statutes. (That decision held that during the first three months of pregnancy a woman possesses a constitutional right to privacy which enables her, in consultation with her physician, to have an abortion. During the second trimester, the court ruled, the state's interest in the unborn fetus grows and the state may place some restrictions on abortion. During the final trimester the state may go so far as to outlaw abortion.)

The physicians also argued the Illinois law violates the Constitution by intruding on the medical discretion of doctors and forcing them "to foist upon the patient the state's view that life begins at conception."

In announcing it will review the dispute, the high court noted the Illinois case will be heard alongside a separate Pennsylvania case accepted in April. (84-1379, Diamond v. Charles)

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U.S. Safety Experts Warn
Against Drinking And Boating

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)—As summer approaches, America's boating enthusiasts are being reminded booze and boating, like drinking and driving, are a dangerous combination.

The National Transportation Safety Board has declared alcohol abuse by boaters on U.S. waterways to be a "major" safety issue, and a growing number of states are adopting legislation aimed at curbing the problem.

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According to the U.S. Coast Guard, each of approximately 5,700 boating accidents last year resulted in at least \$200 in property damage or serious injury. More than 1,000 persons were killed. Half of those accidents, the Coast Guard estimates, were alcohol-related.

"The drunk driver, whether at the wheel of an automobile or a boat, threatens innocent lives," emphasized Foy Valentine, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission which deals with issues related to abuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Valentine urged churches and families "to help counter the destructive association of alcohol with recreation" by supporting both creative approaches to prevention education and the enactment and enforcement of responsible laws.

According to statistics compiled by the Coast Guard and USA Today, states with the most deaths caused by boating accidents in 1984 were California (93), Florida (74), Texas (74) and Louisiana (58). The U.S. has an estimated 62 million boaters.

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Cavender, Self Tell Meeting
Of SBC Control By Elections

By Al Shackelford

Baptist Press
5/22/85

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Norman Cavender, a deacon and Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church, Claxton, Ga., joined Bill Self, pastor of Wieuca Road Baptist Church of Atlanta, as speakers for a "Meeting of Concerned Baptists," May 14 at West Hills Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn.

Jack Prince, pastor of the host church, told the estimated 450 attenders "being Baptists, we may differ in certain areas of thought, but we love our convention. We may differ, but we agree in two basic areas: our commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord, and our commitment to carry the good news of Jesus to every human being in the world," Prince added.

Self said, "You are here because you love our denomination."

Using Exodus 13-14, where the children of Israel faced a decision to enter the Promised Land, Self's message revolved around three questions: (1) Do you see the giants in the land or the providence of God?; (2) Whom do you follow: the mob or Moses?; (3) Where are we going: the wilderness or the Promised Land?

"Some want to tear up the greatest missionary-sending organization in our world because they disagree with some allocations," Self said. "I don't worship the Cooperative Program, but I have never seen a better method for supporting missions on the face of the earth."

The Atlanta pastor said there are "giants" who want to dismantle all of this, but "we are not Southern Baptists because we are all alike, but because we agree on what we ought to do."

He said the current controversy is not about theology, adding a "conservative is one who wants to conserve the roots and keep the roots tied to our historic base, while a liberal is one who wants to cut the roots away. Those who are trying to make independent fundamentalist Baptists out of cooperative Baptists are actually cutting the roots away."

Cavender said, "The principles of cooperation and trust are being eroded, and the issue has nothing to do with the Bible. You don't defend the Bible by wrapping it in man's definitions, or by squeezing it down to a creedal statement, or by condensing it down to a pamphlet and saying, 'This is what the Bible means and what you have to believe about it,' or by giving somebody the authority to tell you what you have to believe."

He added that the worse excesses of Scripture ever practiced were when the church became the authority over the Bible.

The Georgia layman urged, "Let the Holy Bible be the Holy Bible; let it be read freely; let all the views about it be heard; let the preachers preach as they feel led and let the teacher teach us as God leads them to teach."

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Cavender quoted from a number of articles in Southern Baptist and independent publications which he said indicated people are not always telling the truth about the convention's problems. "While some are telling us this is a spontaneous, grass-roots response by Southern Baptists, the Southern Baptist Journal last year reported that in 1977 this group had voted to start a 'get out the vote' campaign to help get 'conservative' men elected as SBC presidents."

He said the packing of the trustee boards has been going on for five years, and within the next few years, the boards will fall under the control of one narrow wing of the convention.

Noting James T. Draper Jr., former SBC president, had suggested churches might withhold Cooperative Program funds unless Charles Stanley is elected president next month, Cavender said the average Cooperative Program gifts of churches of the last four presidents was about 3.5 percent, while during the last 25 years prior to 1979, that percentage had been 14.5 percent.

"If your church and all churches followed the example of the last four SBC president's churches, we would have to call home 4,000 of our 6,000 missionaries, because there would be no money to pay them," Cavender said.

Self said he had been taught Baptists were born out of conflict with the state and the state church. "Secular government has always been the enemy of believers," he added. "Now we are told we must have alliance with the federal government."

Self said he was not afraid of people coming to Christ, reading his Word, and being led by the Spirit of God to interpret Scripture. However, he is afraid of Baptists having a creed written by men. "A creed takes away my priesthood and your priesthood and gives us something to fight over. Jesus Christ is too big to be reduced to any man's creed."

Cavender quoted from Dave Lucas in the Southern Baptist Journal who wrote that the Baptist Faith and Message statement is the "very basis of all Southern Baptist authority." Cavender asked, "What happened to the authority of the Bible?"

In his conclusion, Self said, "We are living in serious times, and if we do not go to Dallas and vote like Southern Baptists, we will be turned into the wilderness and this generation will die off and our sons and daughters will not have the convention we have had."

Cavender concluded, "The principles of our heritage are in danger today of being curtailed or even destroyed unless real Southern Baptists stand up. It is time for you and for me to make the Southern Baptist Convention to be 'Southern Baptist' once more."

An offering was taken to cover the expenses of the meeting, with all funds above the expenses going to the Cooperative Program. Cavender and Self did not receive honoraria, only travel expenses, Prince said. However, Prince told a reporter the offering did not quite cover the expenses of the meeting, but that the deficit has been made up by Knoxville-area pastors.

Also participating in the meeting were Wayne Nicholson, pastor of McCalla Avenue Baptist Church of Knoxville, and two members of the host church, Ida Miller and Ernie Douglas.

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(Al Shackelford is editor of the Baptist and Reflector, newsjournal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.)

Training Leaders Focus
Priorities On Future

By Gail Rothwell

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5/22/85

ATLANTA (BP)—Examining the goals you have set for the year 2000 will help shape your priorities today, James Williams told state and denominational church training leaders meeting in Atlanta during their semi-annual planning session.

Williams, associate to the president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, challenged church training personnel to look to the future while giving urgency to the denomination's Bold Mission Thrust commitment of reaching the world with the gospel.

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"Certainly there is not time to tarry. Focus your priorities on the things that are most important--reaching, discipling and developing people into mature Christians," Williams said. "How the devil must delight in our lack of priority of touching lives with the gospel of Christ and growing churches."

Training leaders also heard church training director Roy Edgemon urge them to examine current trends in society to determine what the needs of people will be in the future.

"Today we have huge numbers of people who do not know who Southern Baptists are--and some of them are in our pulpits," charged Edgemon noting there will be an increased need for discipleship training in the future.

The cooperative effort of the Sunday School Board and the Home Mission Board to train Sunday school workers in evangelism is the "greatest venture the Southern Baptist Convention has ever launched to reach and teach persons," Edgemon said.

The massive campaign, launched during a joint meeting May 15, marks the beginning of a five-year effort to train one million Sunday school workers in evangelism by 1990.

The church training department has produced a short-term training module, Training Sunday School Workers In Evangelism to be used during the emphasis.

In another session state church training directors shared concerns and strategies.

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Court Rejects Presbyterian
Church Property Dispute

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
5/22/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—A St. Louis Presbyterian congregation overcame its last hurdle in a five-year effort to maintain control of its property when the Supreme Court declined to accept the local presbytery's claim it owned the property.

Members of Memorial Presbyterian Church voted unanimously in 1980 to sever ties with its mother denomination, the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. A year later, however, the Presbytery of Elijah Parish Lovejoy sought to take control of the property, invoking a newly-adopted provision of the denomination's Book of Order.

That provision declares that local property reverts to the denomination when a congregation decides to leave.

But attorneys for the congregation argued successfully at the Missouri Supreme Court that because the provision was written after Memorial's decision to withdraw, it was inapplicable.

Most church property disputes in civil courts have involved Presbyterian congregations which have left their denominations because of alleged liberalism. Such legal fights date to 1872, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Watson v. Jones* that civil courts must abstain from resolving disagreements in hierarchical church structures. But in 1979, in a case known as *Jones v. Wolf*, the court upheld the right of states under so-called "neutral principles of law" to resolve church property battles when denominational ownership is unclear.

Presumably such disputes within Presbyterian structures will be reduced dramatically with the 1983 merger of the two main branches of the church into the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The new body's constitution contains a specifically worded provision that all local church property reverts to the denomination when individual congregations decide to leave. (84-1579, Presbytery of Lovejoy v. Jaeggi)

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