



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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86-104

Conferees Begin Work To
Reconcile Tax Reform Plans

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)—Senate and House conferees began work July 17 in an attempt to reconcile differences in the two bodies' versions of tax reform.

Senate conferees include Finance Committee Chairman Bob Packwood, R-Ore.; Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas; Bill Bradley, D-N.J.; John H. Chafee, R-R.I.; John C. Danforth, R-Mo.; Robert J. Dole, R-Kan.; Russell B. Long, D-La.; Spark M. Matsunaga, D-Hawaii; Daniel P. Moynihan, D-N.Y.; William V. Roth Jr., R-Del.; and Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo.

House conferees are Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski, D-Ill.; Bill Archer, R-Texas; Philip M. Crane, R-Ill.; John J. Duncan, R-Tenn.; Richard A. Gephardt, D-Mo.; Guy Vander Jagt, R-Mich.; Donald J. Pease, D-Ohio; J.J. Pickle, D-Texas; Charles B. Rangel, D-N.Y.; Marty Russo, D-Ill.; and Fortney H. Stark, D-Calif.

The conference committee is expected to take at least a month to complete its work. Should a compromise be reached, the conference report then would have to be approved by both houses and signed by the president.

Differences in provisions that would affect churches and their agencies and employees are among those to be worked out by the conferees. A major difference concerns the tax-exempt status of church pension groups—including the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

While the Senate tax reform plan would retain current law allowing federal tax exemption for non-profit organizations offering "commercial-type insurance," the House version would repeal that exemption. Specifying "annuity contracts shall be treated as providing insurance," the House legislation would strip the Annuity Board and other similar church pension and welfare groups of their federal tax exemption.

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Missouri Executive
Announces Retirement

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7/17/86

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)—Missouri Baptist Convention Executive Director Rheubin L. South has announced his retirement effective Dec. 31, 1986.

In a written report to the convention's executive board July 15, South noted he will celebrate his 65th birthday on Dec. 16. In December 1985, the executive board asked South to continue beyond his 65th birthday, through 1988.

"I appreciate the executive board granting the two-year extension of my service as executive director. However, we believe we sense the Lord's will of what is best for us and Missouri Baptists," he said.

South, who was diagnosed as suffering from leukemia in April, thanked board members for their support during his recent hospitalization. He said doctors were delighted and surprised at his progress, adding, "the answer is in the hundreds of prayers of Missouri Baptists and others around the world."

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South told board members he had suffered no side effects or complications from chemotherapy treatment. He said he had experienced a period of high temperature which ended as his body began producing white blood cells. He added his blood count continues to improve and that bone marrow tests conducted just before dismissal from the hospital "were most encouraging." All intravenous antibiotics also have been discontinued.

To implement his decision to retire, South wrote convention President Wallace E. Jones, pastor of Fee Fee Church in St. Louis, formally announcing the retirement decision. In the letter of June 30, South said, "The extent to which my illness affects my ability to serve as executive director has been much in my thoughts and prayers. Verna and I have discussed our future and we feel the Lord has led us in a decision concerning what is best for us and Missouri Baptists."

South began his Missouri service on Feb. 17, 1975, coming from a 23-year pastorate at Park Hill Baptist Church in North Little Rock, Ark.

His pastoral experience also includes two Texas congregations, Yarrellton Baptist Church in Milan County and Fairview Baptist Church in Grand Prairie.

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Florida Woman's Aerobics
Kindles Witness In Spain

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7/17/86

MADRID, Spain (BP)—She dropped a few pounds in Florida. Then in Spain, she helped some missionaries drop a few pounds. In the process, they picked up a witness.

Frankie Cook, a member of First Baptist Church of Panama City, Fla., joined a women's aerobics class when the exercise first became a popular addition to church recreation programs.

In signing up for a mission trip to Spain in 1983, Cook decided to take her aerobics tapes and exercise suit just in case some of the 30 missionary wives attending the week-long mission meeting wanted to catch the physical fitness "bug." She got lots of takers, both at 6:30 a.m. and after supper.

"Exercising that week was the beginning of a physical fitness program for many missionary wives that was to have long-lasting and even eternal results," notes Karen Quimby, one of the wives and Southern Baptist press representative in Spain.

One participant, Phyllis Baker, never had been very athletic and was tempted to dismiss the idea, but at the last minute she tried the class and got hooked.

Baker and Mary Simmons, who also had joined the class, are neighbors in a suburban Madrid apartment complex. Aerobics gave the two missionaries an avenue for building relationships with other neighbors and introducing them to the gospel.

Baker and Simmons's first aerobics session in the apartments grew out of a conversation in the parking lot when a neighbor heard them talk about getting together to exercise. The missionaries invited the woman to meet them in Baker's living room, and before long, five other Spanish women were attending the weekday sessions.

At first, the missionaries simply started the time with prayer. Even so, the neighbors were suspicious of the missionaries' motives. One admitted asking herself, "What does Mary want of me?" She later concluded, "She just wants to be my friend."

The chance for companionship appeals to the women because they're at home all day while their husbands work long, hard hours. Two of the men own their own businesses. One is a doctor. Another works for Spain's major television network. For most of them, church attendance is a rarity.

The exercise class has given Baker and Simmons other opportunities to interact with the women, such as shopping trips and special luncheons.

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Trust between the missionaries and women has been another result of the exercise sessions. When Baker and Simmons asked them to share prayer concerns, the women initially were hesitant. But their attitudes changed when one woman's husband suffered a slipped disc. The group prayed for him and visited him in the hospital.

Before long, the women freely were sharing a variety of concerns, from family illnesses to one wife's anxiety before a driving test. The woman later told of her surprise at passing the test, but others reminded her, "Well, we prayed for you, didn't we?"

The women also have let their children attend various children's church activities, and several of them excelled in memorizing Vacation Bible School verses.

The music for aerobics also has been a point of witness. The women remarked that it was soothing, even though they didn't understand the words sung in English. The missionaries said the words were about Jesus.

The usefulness of that initial week of aerobics instruction continues to astound some of those involved. Karen Quimby, for example, wonders, "Would Frankie Cook ever have imagined what packing that exercise suit and those aerobics tapes for her trip to Spain would mean?"

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Music Missionaries Find
Bible Belt Mission Need

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
7/17/86

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—Jan and Greg Smith had not seriously considered music missions as a career option and they certainly never thought such a need existed in the Bible Belt, they told participants in a Church Music Leadership Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center.

But when Greg encountered his former Baptist Student Union director during a weeklong seminar at William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., the missions need in Georgia became a compelling call to service.

Now in the last months of a two-year Mission Service Corps assignment, the Smiths can look back and see just how quickly the call came.

Greg was minister of music at Southwest Baptist Church in St. Louis when he renewed acquaintance with Bennie Clark, whom he had not seen for years. When Clark told him he was doing missions work outside Atlanta, Greg laughed and said, "There aren't missionaries in Atlanta!"

When Clark explained he had become pastor of a new church in a high-growth neighborhood and the church needed a music minister, Greg's well-ordered life began to change.

"Within a few minutes of talking with him, I realized God was calling me to this new church," Greg said.

Jan's sense of calling came more slowly. "I really thought he was kidding," she recalled. "We had an infant son and stable work. I really thought he must be crazy. It took me a few months to come to the realization of calling."

To gain the needed financial and prayer support for their mission venture, the Smiths talked of their calling to family and friends.

Since Trinity Baptist Church in Conyers, Ga., their new mission field, could afford to provide one-third of their support, they were able to supplement the necessary funds with two part-time jobs and missions gifts from individuals.

The 190-member church meets in two double-wide trailers in the rapidly growing Atlanta suburb. Some 80 persons, many of them children who are not church members, are enrolled in the music program.

"Children's music activities have been a meaningful outreach ministry," Greg said. In addition to "a good all-around children's program" provided by the church, the Smiths have supplied three children's choirs and a children's and youth hand-chime group.

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Other music programs include occasional youth music specials, an adult choir and a brass ensemble.

Providing music literature for a growing program has not been the struggle that some persons experience in new work areas of the United States, they admit. "We are fortunate to be in an area with strong Baptist work where we can borrow materials," Jan said. "And the (Southern Baptist) Sunday School Board has been good to provide us with issues of literature from the previous ordering cycle," Greg added.

While some might question the concept of missions in the Baptist stronghold of Georgia, Greg said, "When I see the bulldozers working toward a subdivision of 500 homes nearby, I feel I am in a mission field."

He also cites a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board study from 1983 which revealed 70 percent of the population within a four and one-half mile radius of their church does not have a church preference. "These people need to be reached," he concluded.

Jan said the experience had "made me appreciate churches that have at hand all the resources they need. We have learned to be flexible. You can do the work without all the resources so many others have."

And Greg added, "Worshipping in a trailer is not unusual for us now. You can worship anywhere. To have a vital community of faith is not dependent on having a particular kind of building.

"It has strengthened my faith, my recognition that God who was trusted to take care of us in the past can be trusted in the future," he said.

While their two-year assignment will soon end, the Smiths agree they've seen "God take a few people and help them grow. Most people don't get to see dreams begin to unfold this quickly."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by BSSB bureau of Baptist Press

Music Curriculum Writer
Works For Children, God

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
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CULLEOKA, TENN. (BP)—"Music has revealed so much of who God is in my life and has given me so many points of worship as I have grown up," said Teresa Gilbreath, a writer for the June, July, August issue of "The Music Leader."

"As I think about the children I've worked with over the years, especially those who have accepted Christ through the choir, it has given me incentive," she said of her contributions to Southern Baptist Sunday School Board church music publications.

Gilbreath, her husband, Clinton, and their four-year-old son, Andrew, live on a farm in the quiet community of Culleoka, Tenn. She is a volunteer children's choir coordinator at First Baptist Church of Columbia, Tenn., and is preschool director for Pleasant Heights Baptist Church, also in Columbia. Clinton is a deacon at First Baptist.

Gilbreath talked about her work with children during the Sunday School Board report at the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta.

A long-time writer for Southern Baptist music curriculum and leadership publications, Gilbreath described herself as "a product of one of the first attempts at graded children's choirs in the Southern Baptist Convention." Her love of music goes back to early childhood, she said.

"I can remember getting a spanking for staying after church without permission to hear the organ being played," she laughed.

Today, her son is using materials in his preschool choir that she wrote while he was an infant.

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Being a composer of published preschool music, as well as a writer of teaching materials and inspirational articles, has given Gilbreath somewhat a celebrity status among children she teaches at church.

"You mean these composers aren't all dead?" the children asked in amazement upon seeing her name in print.

While Gilbreath characterizes her writing and composing as fun and challenging, her personal goal is to provide a means for children "to dream—to reach out and open some doors that they might not have thought were possible."

"I think in terms of children rather than leadership," she said. While she receives phone calls and letters seeking advice on teaching techniques, the most meaningful contact with readers includes references to young singers.

"I recently got a letter with a a photograph of a group of children using a learning activity I had written," she said. "I got kind of a lump in my throat just looking at those children and knowing that even if I don't know their names, the Father could use something I dreamed up in my head to touch those tiny lives."

While Gilbreath acknowledged that not all children who participate in church choirs will become adults who are musically talented, her personal philosophy is that "hopefully they will sing a hymn or hum a tune" because of their early exposure to Christian values through music.

Gilbreath dismissed any references to her seemingly endless creative talents or her tireless work to provide children, in person and through Southern Baptist literature, with a love for music.

"I do it for the sake of the children," she said, "and for the Father."

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