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February 4, 1987

87-15

'PrayerLine' Adds News;
2,749 Call In First Week

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's new toll-free "PrayerLine" telephone number is adding another service: the latest missions news.

Each Saturday and Sunday listeners can dial 1-800-ALL-SEEK (1-800-255-7335) for a two-minute report on missions news from around the world. Callers in Virginia, Alaska and Hawaii must dial a toll number, 1-804-355-6581.

Already, hundreds of churches have used PrayerLine, organizers reported. More than 2,700 people called during the first week of operation.

The 1,800 who called over that weekend got the latest word from Lebanon, where missionaries are grappling with a U.S. government order to leave the country within 30 days. Such updates on crisis situations calling for prayer will continue to be a feature of PrayerLine, said Minette Drumwright, who heads up the board's intercessory prayer emphasis.

Monday through Friday, "PrayerLine" offers around-the-clock taped prayer requests from missionaries in 109 countries. The weekend news report also will focus on stories and information highlighting overseas prayer needs. The news report will be taped by the Foreign Mission Board's news department, which also is the foreign bureau of Baptist Press.

"PrayerLine" began in January to support the "concerts of prayer" for world evangelization called for by mission board trustees last December. Southern Baptists are being challenged to set aside the first Sunday of every month for "concerted, united, sustained, extraordinary prayer" for the world.

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Rogers Warns Against Confusing
Roles Of Church, Government

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
2/4/87

WASHINGTON (BP)—While emphasizing the need for godly leadership, Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian Rogers warned participants at the National Religious Broadcasters annual meeting not to confuse the power of the government with that of the church.

"The government must do what the church cannot do, and the church must do what the government cannot do," said Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn. "The church must never attempt to use the power of the government for spiritual goals."

While the government may protect the church, it should never be expected to improve the church spiritually, Rogers said, adding both must be free to do their own tasks.

He urged the audience not to sell their "birthright" to win the power or approval of government.

In addition to misused power, Rogers warned against the dangers of misplaced priorities, mistaken enemies and misguided pride.

Preceding Rogers' address, Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, delivered the invocation for the National Religious Broadcasters Congressional Breakfast.

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Black Civil Rights Leaders
Worship In Baptist Church

By Sherri A. Brown

CUMMING, Ga. (BP)—In stark contrast to a violent racial demonstration earlier this week, black civil rights leader Hosea Williams and 14 others were welcomed warmly during worship services Feb. 1 at First Baptist Church of Cumming, Ga.

Williams, an Atlanta city councilman, was a primary organizer in the Jan. 24 civil rights march by 20,000 people. They were protesting the treatment a week earlier of about 75 marchers who were pelted with rocks and bottles by a crowd of white counterdemonstrators.

About 70 people, most of them black, accompanied Williams in a motorcade from Atlanta on Sunday, Feb. 1, for morning worship services. They attended eight churches in Forsyth County, including Cumming, where no blacks have lived for 75 years.

Quick to point out this was not the first time blacks had worshipped at First Baptist Church, pastor B.V. Franklin Jr. quoted Williams from a televised newscast, as saying Williams felt "at home." "His reception was a good one. That's really who we are," Franklin said.

At the worship service, the visitors were greeted with handshakes and "welcomes" from ushers when they arrived shortly after 11 a.m. The church already was packed when they arrived.

Franklin's sermon was a part of a series he had planned on a passage in I Corinthians, about learning to accept others. "It wasn't a special sermon, but I'm sure it could be applied to this situation," Franklin noted.

A week earlier, Franklin and other civic and church leaders greeted the 20,000 marchers to "welcome them to our city. We wanted to say we support the right of any law-abiding citizen to walk our streets," he explained. The massive demonstration on Jan. 24 was non-violent, in contrast to the smaller march the previous week.

Williams insisted the visits to churches were not intended as demonstrations.

During a nationally televised interview, Williams identified himself as a "dyed-in-the-wool southern Baptist." Emmanuel McCall, director of black church relations at the Atlanta-based Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, explained that while Williams was a Baptist from the South, he was not a member of a Southern Baptist church.

Franklin admitted Forsyth County is not where it should be in race relations but pointed out "we have made great progress."

"When I came here five years ago, I knew of blacks hired to deliver furniture who would sling your furniture in your house so they could make sure they'd be out of the county by sundown," he recalled. Today, although they do not live in the county, blacks own land, are welcomed as patrons of shops and restaurants and are employed by several businesses in the heart of the city, he noted.

The public view of Forsyth County "is regrettable," Franklin continued. "But this is not the only place in the United States (that needs to work on race relations). The publicity has brought out a lot of radicals who are against blacks. I hope it doesn't give them a place to voice their opinions. They were not active until all this stuff hit the fan with the march."

The local justice department asked that the black visitors be escorted out of the church service before anyone else, to avoid possible confrontations.

"That was regrettable," said Franklin. "It would have been much better if the people had been able to greet them and be with them. Then they could have seen what the majority of this city is like.

"It's a great place to live," he insisted. "For anybody."

Southern Baptist Teacher
Withdraws Dismissal Complaint

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)—A Southern Baptist schoolteacher whose firing led to a Supreme Court ruling has withdrawn her complaint against her former employer.

Linda Hoskinson, who lost her job with Dayton Christian Schools in 1979, recently informed the school board and attorneys for the Ohio Civil Rights Commission of her decision not to pursue litigation against the school system.

Last year, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled Hoskinson could challenge her dismissal from the school before a state civil rights panel without violating the school's First Amendment rights.

Hoskinson, a member of Far Hills Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio, taught for five years in one of the schools operated by the independent Dayton Christian Schools. In early 1979, the school system refused to renew Hoskinson's teaching contract after learning she was pregnant and then dismissed her for consulting an attorney for legal advice.

After Hoskinson filed a complaint with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, Dayton Christian Schools filed a federal lawsuit challenging the civil rights panel's jurisdiction on church-state grounds. A U.S. district court ruled in Hoskinson's favor, but the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that decision. Ohio's attorney general then appealed the case to the Supreme Court.

While not ruling on the case's merits, the high court held the elimination of prohibited sex discrimination was a sufficiently important state interest to allow the civil rights commission to consider Hoskinson's complaint.

In a six-page letter, Hoskinson detailed her experiences during the past eight years and the reasons leading her to withdraw her complaint.

The schools' refusal to renew her teaching contract surprised Hoskinson since she was never informed the school had a policy denying employment to women with preschool-age children, she said in the letter.

Hoskinson attempted to appeal the decision within the school system, she wrote, but was informed no means to do so were available. She added she was unaware the school system would consider her consulting an attorney a violation of her contract, in which she had agreed to abide by the doctrine of the "biblical chain of command." The doctrine required teachers to take grievances only to their immediate supervisors and to acquiesce in the final authority of the school board.

"I was simply exercising what I thought was the privilege of any citizen, Christian or otherwise," she wrote. "I needed to know if the school was acting arbitrarily, or worse, illegally, in its refusal to renew my teaching contract."

Hoskinson said her intention was to seek advice and counsel from the attorney, not to file suit against the school system. The school system, however, immediately suspended Hoskinson and two weeks later terminated her employment without pay, according to the letter. After a later meeting with the school board, she was convinced the decision would not be changed, she wrote.

Hoskinson then filed a complaint with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. She stated she never wanted to cause "undue interference by the state in the doctrinal positions or religious practices" of the school but believed she had no other means to appeal her dismissal.

"The school has contended for some time that by filing a complaint with the OCRC I was opening the door to state control of a religious institution," she wrote. "The fact is the school had been receiving state funds for several years at the time I was fired. ... It seems inconsistent to open one's mouth in protest against state control while opening one's hand to state support."

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Hoskinson wrote she had hoped for a quick settlement following the Supreme Court's ruling, but found the school system continuing to adopt a "rigid position" that the only acceptable solution was for her "to repent ... and to yield to the board's authority."

According to the letter, the board offered to pay Hoskinson \$1,200, the salary she would have drawn from the time of her dismissal to the time the school system estimated she would have taken pregnancy leave. The board also offered to place in its record that she left due to a philosophical difference, she added.

Hoskinson said she was disappointed with the board's offers and with the lack of "moral responsibility" it demonstrated "to rectify the injury to my Christian reputation or teaching career resulting from the forced termination."

The letter described several attempts Hoskinson made to reach some agreement with the school board. Although she had several helpful meetings with two school board members, a letter she wrote to be read by the entire school board received "condemnatory and judgmental" response from the board, she stated.

Since her next step would have been either to file legal action against the school or to allow the civil rights panel to proceed with a formal hearing, Hoskinson made the decision to withdraw her complaint, the letter stated.

"I always intended for my actions to exert the pressure of moral persuasion only," she concluded. "I do not desire that the government legally coerce a Christian school to act in a Christian manner."

"The Scripture teaches that it is better to be wronged than to take a brother to court. Rather than seek any further action that would avenge myself for wrong done against me, I will trust God to deal justly with his people."

Upon receiving Hoskinson's letter, the Dayton Christian School Board issued a statement expressing its approval of Hoskinson's decision and its hope the Ohio Civil Rights Commission will drop the case. The statement continued:

"During the last several months, Linda and members of the Dayton Christian Executive Committee have met to pursue spiritual reconciliation. We were able to share views, discuss the issues and, most importantly, to pray together."

"We have all grown spiritually during the past eight years, and each one of us will be a better servant for God because of it."

"Clearly, taking this matter out of the court system will bring glory to God our Father."

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Congregation Plays Role
In Reconciliation Process

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
2/4/87

WASHINGTON (BP)—When Linda Hoskinson lost her job, she lost more than just her means of financial support. She also lost the support of her church.

Hoskinson's firing by Dayton Christian Schools eventually led her, the private school system and the Ohio Civil Rights Commission to the U.S. Supreme Court, which held she could challenge her dismissal before the state civil rights panel without violating the school's First Amendment rights. It also led to a request from her church — 75 percent of whose members, by Hoskinson's estimate, had some connection with Dayton Christian Schools — to seek a new church home.

After she was dismissed from her teaching position and asked to leave her church, Hoskinson met Kenneth L. Mahanes, pastor of Far Hills Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio.

Mahanes says Hoskinson found a warm, non-judgmental environment at Far Hills. "Not all of our members may have agreed with her, but they opened their arms to her," he recalls.

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Hoskinson remained in the background of the church for a period rather than pushing herself on members, Mahanes says. She and her husband now are workers in the church's preschool program.

"Through the affirmation she received from the people, her Christian faith was strengthened," Mahanes notes. "She discovered that Southern Baptists are not mean-spirited people."

"This situation has shown Southern Baptists at our best -- a group of people committed to the Bible but open in mood and spirit. I think that is who we have always been as Southern Baptists."

Hoskinson recently decided to withdraw the complaint she had filed with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission against Dayton Christian Schools.

Mahanes reports a process of reconciliation has begun between Hoskinson and the school system.

"Linda felt a lot of hurt in the early days," Mahanes he says. "It was a frightening experience for her. But recently I have seen some spiritual therapy taking place -- a heightening of love, understanding and openness."

Mahanes credits Hoskinson with taking the first step in bringing about reconciliation.

"She presented a Christ model," he says. "She became very vulnerable since she had no legal protection once she withdrew her complaint."

"Reconciliation has begun, but it is not yet complete. Reconciliation is not necessarily an act, but rather a process."