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October 8, 1987

N-HMB

87-150

HMB Trustee McGhee Dies  
Following Plea For Peace

By Sherri Brown

ATLANTA (BP)--Trustee Beth McGhee collapsed and died during the Oct. 7 meeting of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Mrs. McGhee, 61, of Tucson, Ariz., had just made a plea for peace in the denomination when she collapsed in her seat.

When it became apparent Mrs. McGhee had been stricken, three physicians, all board members, went to her aid. Trustee chairman Clark Hutchinson of Marietta, Ga., and HMB President Larry Lewis led in prayer while medical attention was given and an ambulance was summoned. Trustees and guests were asked to leave the ballroom of the Colony Square Hotel while efforts to aid the stricken woman were underway.

Earle Moore, a physician and trustee from Chase City, Va., said Mrs. McGhee died of a heart attack within moments of her collapse.

Just prior to collapsing, Mrs. McGhee, a member of 22nd Street Baptist Church in Tucson, Ariz., made a plea for denominational peace during discussion on the HMB's response to a motion made at the 1987 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis.

The convention motion requested that HMB trustees go on record as to "the reasons why they have voted to deny Church Pastoral Aid to ordained women in light of the fact that this action violates the autonomy of the local church with regard to the right of that church to call whom it chooses as a pastor."

In October 1986, trustees voted that "no financial support be given in the future for a woman serving as pastor of a local church." At the same time, trustees voted not to require ordination for either men or women for appointment as home missionaries.

Trustees were discussing a proposed response, which included a quote from a 1984 convention resolution which encouraged "the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination," as Mrs. McGhee spoke.

The HMB administrative committee proposed response included a paragraph which said: "Also we feel this action of our Board is commensurate with the faith and practice of the majority of Baptist churches affiliated with our Southern Baptist Convention."

During discussion of the response, Mrs. McGhee told trustees: "The thing I desire most is that peace be in our convention, that two sides be brought together. We're hurting if we don't. We're not reaching as many lost people if we don't come together.

"That last paragraph (of the response) is a divisive statement. I think it would be offensive to those of our constituency who do not interpret the Scriptures as the majority of the messengers and the Home Mission Board interprets the Scriptures. In the interest of peace and bringing our people together in oneness, may we delete that last paragraph."

Following her plea for peace, Mrs. McGhee returned to her seat as another board member spoke against the request. She slumped in her chair moments later.

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After Mrs. McGhee was taken to a nearby hospital, the meeting was continued. As the first item of business, Ann Frazier, a trustee from Roanoke Rapids, N.C., asked that the motion which was under discussion be postponed until the March board meeting. The request was adopted by common consent.

Subdued trustees moved quickly through the remainder of the agenda, and in closing remarks, HMB President Lewis broke the news of Mrs. McGhee's death.

"There's a day when all of us have an inevitable appointment with the Lord," Lewis said. "None of us knows when that moment will come, but all of us know it will come. And that's what we're all about: preparing ourselves and others for our inevitable appointment with the Lord.

"When that time comes for me, I hope that it might be my joy to be speaking for a good cause. I think that all of us want to reflect on the fact that this dear lady (Mrs. McGhee) was calling our convention to peace and her last word to us was a longing plea that we might be together again."

Mrs. McGhee had been a member of the HMB since 1982. She was a past first vice president of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention and past president of the Arizona Woman's Missionary Union. She also was chairman of the Arizona WMU Centennial Celebration.

Mrs. McGhee, a homemaker, was involved in the life of 22nd Street Baptist Church as church organist, Sunday school teacher, WMU director and member of the missions committee.

She is survived by her husband, Harold, an independent insurance agent, and four children, Sean, Jeff, Candy Moser and Mindy Marsh, all of Tucson.

In business conducted by the board, five staff members, four missionaries, 12 church planter apprentices and 11 missionary associates were elected.

In staff matters, M. Rodney Webb, assistant director of the ethnic church growth department was promoted to director of that department, and Gary Leazer, assistant director of interfaith witness was named director of that department.

W. Daniel Lindsey, Los Angeles County evangelism missionary, was named associate director of the associational evangelism department; Robert Campbell, associate director of specialized evangelism department was named associate director of the associational evangelism department, and James R. Newton, director of communications for Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and former editor of news and information for the HMB, was elected director of the newly formed news and information department.

During board committee meetings, Rebecca Lewis, an ordained chaplain from Houston, was considered and approved as a missionary by the personnel committee. She will be voted on by the HMB executive committee during its December meeting.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

Jim Newton Returns  
As HMB News Director

N-HMB

Baptist Press  
10/8/87

ATLANTA (BP)--James R. Newton, director of communications for Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, will return to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as news director Nov. 1.

Newton, who was HMB news director from 1980 to June 1987, will become director of the newly formed news and information department. He also will be chief of the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

In addition to electing Newton as news director, trustees of the HMB during their October meeting, also created the new department, elevating the news office in the HMB structure.

While at the HMB, Newton will continue to work with the Lausanne Committee as communications consultant, helping prepare for an international conference in Singapore in 1989.

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Newton has 28 years experience in denominational journalism, working for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the central office of Baptist Press, the Brotherhood Commission and the Home Mission Board. In addition, he assisted the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in operation of newsrooms at the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists in 1983 and 1986.

Newton and his wife, the former Patricia Tullos of Clinton, Miss., will move to Atlanta later this year. They have two daughters, Kayla, a student at Mississippi College in Clinton, and Jana, of Jackson, Miss.

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Mission Work In Cuba  
Transferred To FMB

By Leisa Hammett-Goad

N-HMB  
Baptist Press  
10/8/87

ATLANTA (BP)--In its October meeting, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board directors voted to transfer responsibility for relationships between the Southern Baptist Convention and Baptist Convention of Western Cuba to the Foreign Mission Board.

Both Foreign and Home Mission Board administration have agreed the transfer will benefit the work of Cuban Southern Baptists. The FMB directors will vote on the the transfer in their Oct. 14 board meeting.

Baptist work in Cuba began in the late 1890s when Alberto J. Diaz, a soldier during the 10-year war in Eastern Cuba, jumped ship during an ambush. He was picked up by a ship and sailed to America where he was given a Bible and became a Christian.

He returned to Cuba and, with the help of home missionary W.F. Wood, established the first Cuban Baptist church.

Before becoming the first superintendent of Cuban missions, Wood worked with Cuban refugees in Florida. He convinced the Southern Baptist Convention that they must take the gospel message to Cuba. The SBC decided that the Home Mission Board would initiate the work.

Moses McCall and then Herbert Caudill succeeded Wood as missions superintendent. During McCall's stint, the Cuban Convention was formed in 1905.

Caudill, who died at age 84 a week before the October board action to transfer Cuba, served there 40 years. In 1965, Caudill and his missionary son-in-law David Fite were imprisoned and accused of illegal currency exchange and other charges.

After 20 months in prison, Caudill was released for health problems, was treated and remained in Cuba until Fite was released in 1969.

Historians credit Wood, McCall and Caudill for establishing a strong lay leadership who continued Baptist work after Southern Baptist missionaries left Cuba in 1969.

Cuban Southern Baptists, said Oscar Romo, HMB language missions director, have continued to grow in numbers despite massive immigration from Cuba. Throughout history, Cuban Southern Baptist work has flourished despite such obstacles, including the Spanish American War (1895-1898) -- when all pastors were expelled -- and the Castro revolution.

Since Southern Baptist missionaries left Cuba, the HMB continued to work with the Cuban convention by supplying building materials, literature and training and by maintaining relationships through the Baptist World Alliance.

With the transfer, the FMB can better supply literature for the Cuban convention, because of its international focus, said Romo.

Don Kammerdiener, FMB vice president for the Americas, noted the FMB also can offer Cubans training by Baptists outside the United States. One such event already is planned.

The transfer, he added, will allow Cuban Baptists to obtain training at FMB overseas seminaries. "It is more logical that study be done in Latin America, because it is not possible to do so in the U.S. due to political factors between the two countries," said Kammerdiener.

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"We are very excited about the opportunity to relate to Cuba on a formal basis," said Kammerdiener, adding, "we are highly appreciative of the excellent work the Home Mission Board has done, especially in maintaining Baptist contacts in Cuba."

In 1959, the SBC recommended a gradual transfer of relationships with the Cuban Convention from the HMB to the FMB. "The gradual transfer," Romo explained, "has been a period in which we've learned how to work with Cuba in the present circumstances of their country. This knowledge is being shared with the FMB," said Romo.

The October action to transfer will be effective December 31, 1988

Other board transfers have occurred, said Gerald Palmer, HMB missions vice president. In 1973, the HMB transferred work in Panama to the FMB. He also noted that work with Hawaii was once a FMB responsibility but is now an HMB responsibility.

Although the mission boards maintain territorial assignments, exceptions have occurred. The FMB has missions work in Guam and the Marianas which are U.S. territories and the HMB has work in Puerto Rico and American Samoa.

The two boards work together to achieve the most logical way to assist a convention such as Cuba, Kammerdiener said.

Palmer said that past and recent exchanges of mission work are an effort by both mission boards to strengthen one another's work.

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CORRECTION: In BP story dated 10/5/87 and titled "Seminary Graduate Builds Shelter Of Love For Battered Women," please change the name of the school in 12th graf from Southern to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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High Court Hears Arguments  
In 'Moment Of Silence' Case

*N-BJC*  
By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press  
10/8/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--The constitutionality of a New Jersey "moment of silence" statute may not be the focus of the Supreme Court's decision in one of the first cases argued during its new term.

Attorneys on both sides of the case, *Karcher v. May*, devoted considerable time to the question of whether the former speaker of the New Jersey General Assembly and the former president of the state Senate have standing -- or the legal right -- to appeal the decisions of two lower federal courts.

If the high court were to decide the case on the question of standing, it would not resolve the underlying question of whether the New Jersey law violates the First Amendment's ban on an official establishment of religion.

The New Jersey statute, which is similar to laws passed by more than 20 states, requires a one-minute period of silence in the state's public school classrooms at the beginning of each school day.

The law was enacted in 1982 after the state legislature overrode a veto by Gov. Thomas H. Kean. Following a legal challenge by a group of schoolchildren and their parents, Kean and the state's attorney general decided against defending the statute in court.

But Alan J. Karcher, speaker of the Assembly, and Carmen A. Orechio, Senate president, intervened in the case. After both men lost their leadership positions in 1985, neither the executive branch nor the legislative leadership opted to pursue the matter.

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Rex E. Lee, attorney for Karcher and Orechio, argued his clients should have legal standing since their "reputational standing" as legislators was at stake.

The opposing attorney, Norman L. Cantor, countered the only question was whether the two lawmakers may pursue the appeal even though the New Jersey legislature has decided against such action. Cantor argued Karcher and Orechio originally intervened by virtue of their former positions, not as individual legislators and thus cannot do so now.

Questioning by Justices William J. Brennan Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Sandra Day O'Connor and Antonin Scalia indicated their doubts as to whether the two legislators have legal standing in the case.

As to the law's constitutionality, Lee said the statute has a secular purpose and should not be struck down just because it "provides an accommodation for those students who want to use the moment of silence for prayer."

But Cantor called the claim that the law's purpose was to provide a calming effect in classrooms a "sham," adding the statute has on its face the "considerable indicia of prayer."

A U.S. district court rejected the claim that the purpose of the law was secular, not religious, holding the claim was an after-the-fact rationalization and a pretext. A three-judge panel of the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals upheld that decision.

O'Connor asked Cantor whether he thought the law could pass a constitutionality test "if all we had before us was the wording of the statute." (It states, "Principals and teachers in each public elementary and secondary school ... shall permit students to observe a one-minute period of silence to be used solely at the discretion of the individual student, before opening exercises of each school day for quiet and private contemplation and introspection.") Cantor called that possibility "conceivable."

In 1985, the high court struck down an Alabama law that required a one-minute period for silent meditation or prayer. But a majority of justices, including O'Connor, said it was likely they would uphold a similar law that did not mention prayer or was not intended to promote religion.

Justice John Paul Stevens, who wrote the 1985 decision, indicated during questioning he thought the New Jersey law might be acceptable since it could be interpreted to require the moment of silence prior to the beginning of the school day.

A decision in the case is expected before the end of the court's term next June.

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High Court Opens New Term;  
Rejects Religious Disputes

By Stan Hastey

*N-BIC*  
Baptist Press  
10/8/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--On a day most notable for the absence of one of its nine members, the U.S. Supreme Court opened the 1987-88 term by turning aside seven separate appeals in religious disputes. None of 22 new cases accepted for review involves a religious question.

While Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist paid public tribute from the bench to retired Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr., the chances that Circuit Judge Robert H. Bork would succeed Powell dimmed as an apparent majority of U.S. senators lined up to vote against him.

The prospect of Senate rejection of President Reagan's nominee left open the likelihood the court must conduct much of the business of the new term with a vacancy that could leave the justices divided, 4-4, in several key disputes.

Among more than 1,000 cases disposed of on its first day, the court:

-- Let stand a lower federal court decision that the New York State Labor Relations Board did not exceed its authority by intervening in a dispute between a parochial school and its lay teachers. (86-2058, Christ the King Regional High School v. Culvert)

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-- Declined to review a decision by the Connecticut Supreme Court upholding the authority of the state human rights office to investigate alleged religious discrimination in Catholic parochial schools, despite the schools' contention such proceedings improperly entangled agents of the state in church affairs. (87-126, Archdiocesan School Office v. Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities)

-- Upheld rulings of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals and a federal district court that the late L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology, was in fact that church's "managing agent" despite his 1966 resignation as executive director of the controversial sect. The district court also threw out a Scientology lawsuit against the federal government after Hubbard refused to give a deposition in an FBI investigation designed to discover if he was the church's head. (86-1733, Founding Church of Scientology of Washington, D.C. v. Director, FBI)

-- Refused to review a Texas court's ruling that awarded a Presbyterian congregation's property to a congregational minority that remained loyal to the denomination, instead of deeding the property to a majority that voted to leave the denomination. The dispute is one of many around the country involving congregations that have left the recently reunited Presbyterian Church for the new, more conservative Presbyterian Church in America. (86-1911, Casa Linda Presbyterian Church in America v. Grace Union Presbytery)

-- Let stand an Ohio Supreme Court finding that legally competent patients in state mental health hospitals may not be forced against their religious beliefs to submit to medical treatment, even though the treatment is arguably life-extending. The free exercise clause of the First Amendment protects the right of such patients to refuse the treatments, the Ohio panel ruled. (86-1853, Ohio Department of Mental Health v. Milton)

-- Refused a Michigan automobile dealer's appeal of a lower court decision that the state has the power to forbid auto sales on Sundays in the interest of the public's health, safety and welfare. A law prohibiting Sunday auto sales does not violate the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, the lower panel held. (86-1920, McDonald Pontiac-Cadillac-GMC v. Prosecuting Attorney for County of Saginaw)

-- Also let stand a decision of the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals that a group of doctors and patients who sued an anti-abortion organization they claimed threatened, harassed, intimidated and assaulted them does not constitute a class of victims and therefore is not entitled to relief under the federal Civil Rights Act. (87-50, Roe v. Abortion Abolition Society)