



BAPTIST PRESS

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October 20, 1987

N-10

87-157

Tennessee's Shelby Association
Expels Church With Woman Pastor By Bill Bangham & Roy Jennings

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The 120-church Shelby Baptist Association in Memphis, Tenn., has withdrawn fellowship from Prescott Memorial Baptist Church for calling a woman as pastor.

Messengers to the association's annual meeting Oct. 19 approved a motion that Prescott Memorial "not be recognized as an affiliated church" of the association. They contended the church violated New Testament teachings on the role of women in the church when it elected Nancy Hastings Sehested as pastor this summer.

An estimated 75 percent of about 360 registered messengers to the annual meeting approved the measure, reported association Moderator John Bedford.

Questions of the church's doctrinal soundness were raised in an executive board meeting of the association three weeks earlier when members discussed the selection of Sehested, formerly an associate pastor of a church in Decatur, Ga., as pastor. The association's credentials committee was asked to investigate and report during the annual meeting.

In a closed session excluding all but participating messengers, the credentials committee reported its findings. While the calling of a woman pastor was "an irregularity that may threaten fellowship of the association, the credentials committee recognizes the autonomy of the local church body," said Ken Story, committee chairman and pastor of Germantown Baptist Church.

"Each church has a right to act as it pleases," he said. "However, the association is also autonomous and free to choose which churches will be in its fellowship."

The committee: reported on a meeting with members of Prescott Memorial, moved that no action be taken and suggested the term 'doctrinal soundness' was sufficiently vague as to warrant a delay to adopt guidelines before any action was considered.

"There may be also other churches in the association who are engaged in practices that would be considered irregularities," said Story.

The credentials committee's motion was defeated.

In a counter motion, Patrick Stewart, pastor of Covington Pike Baptist Church, moved that Prescott Memorial no longer be recognized as an affiliate church of the association.

"It is the responsibility of the association to refuse to recognize messengers from any church which persists in practices contrary to the purpose statements of this association," Stewart said. Quoting from association bylaws he continued: "Knowing that Prescott would be involved in missions endeavors, I could not work hand-in-hand with them in establishing mission churches with women as their pastors. Therefore that is divergent of the purpose and the statements of this association."

During the debate that followed, Prescott Memorial member Tom Walsh read a prepared statement from the church. In said in part: "We made our decision after months of careful deliberation, accompanied by prayer and the study of scripture. We are absolutely convinced that God has led Nancy Sehested to us, and we rejoice that she has accepted our call.

"We did not call Rev. Sehested because she is a woman, or in spite of that fact. We called her because she is a richly gifted child of God who is willing to share her gifts with us."

When a messenger called for the vote and discussion was closed, Sehested and another messenger were left standing at microphones.

"Since I am at the center of this," Sehested said, "I would like the opportunity to speak."

Amidst cries of, "Too late, too late," Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church and current Southern Baptist Convention president, appealed to messengers that Sehested be extended the courtesy of speaking.

While asking the messengers to show courtesy by relaxing the rules, Rogers said he planned to vote to withdraw fellowship when Sehested finished speaking.

"Unless you override me, I am going to suspend parliamentary process and do this," Bedford said.

"I am full-blooded Southern Baptist," Sehested said. "My mother is a Southern Baptist deacon. My grandfather was a Southern Baptist minister for 70 of his 93 years. My dad is a retired Southern Baptist minister; for 50 years an ordained minister.

"I decided to follow in my dad, in my granddad's, footsteps and become a pastor."

Sehested stated her authority to preach comes "by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, becoming a servant. Following in his footsteps ... I found a towel with my name on it.

"And who was it that taught me this wonderful freedom of the spirit? ... My Southern Baptist church, who said God calls each of you, and with God everything is possible -- except to be able to stand behind a pulpit, ... women can't do that.

"They never said that."

Sehested contended the autonomy of the local church or association was not the question, but whether the Holy Spirit has the right to work in people's lives.

"While we are in this place debating about who can and cannot stand behind a piece of wood; there's a world out there. And the cries of that world are growing louder. There's a world that is desperately in need of all of us," she added.

"Are we going to say to that world, 'No, not all things are possible. A woman cannot preach.' How will the world hear us tonight?"

Prescott Memorial is noted for taking unpopular stands in the past. In the 1950s and '60s, it championed civil rights. Today it is committed to peace and justice issues.

The church still will continue to cooperate with the Tennessee Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. The actions of Shelby association have no bearing on those affiliations. And Rev. Sehested will continue as pastor of the church.

"We will continue to support Southern Baptist missions and institutions," said Sehested, "as we have in the past."

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(Both Bangham and Jennings attended the meeting as messengers from their local churches.)

Strategic Placement, Sacrifice
Emphasized In Personnel Needs

N-F
By Eric Miller

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Greater emphasis on sacrifice and strategic placement of missionaries surfaced Oct. 15 as Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board leaders examined 426 missionary job requests for 1988.

The board's mission strategists, missionary enlists and area directors who oversee missions work met at the board's home office in Richmond, Va., to look at new positions recommended by the 3,800 missionaries already on the field.

Missionaries listed 307 positions that need to be filled by seminary-trained Southern Baptists with skills in evangelism and church development. Preachers are needed for 213 general evangelism positions.

And sacrifice is needed on the mission field, said R. Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board.

"The Lord never promised the world would be easy to win," Parks said. A day is coming, he noted, when some missionaries will have "to live out of a suitcase" or live in one country to work in another country closed to missionaries.

Sacrifice is a part of good strategy, Parks added. Strategy must be governed more by a desire to win the world for Christ and less by missionary family concerns, he noted. Accessibility to an English-language school for the children cannot be a determining factor if missionaries are needed more in other areas, he explained. In such instances, Parks said, missions will have to seek alternatives for the children's schooling. This already is the practice in many parts of the world where parents teach their own children or at a certain age must send them to boarding schools.

Putting missionaries to work in institutions may not always be good strategy, he said. Hospitals and other institutions must be evaluated for their effectiveness in reaching a lost world for Christ, he noted. While many institutions are a vital ministry, he explained, some consume budgets and missionary manpower and do little for global evangelism.

Parks suggested a "leap" in strategy could occur if Southern Baptists can find ways to cooperate with other Christian groups in global evangelism.

Those at the meeting emphasized a need to match the right missionary with the right job.

On a list of the top 25 job requests worldwide, the No. 1 request is for someone to live in the Kyela district of Tanzania to plant churches, help existing ones, train leaders and plan crusades in the rural area.

This part of Tanzania has experienced phenomenal evangelistic responses, with 40,000 baptisms in less than a decade. Missionaries Doug and Evelyn Knapp have worked there for 16 years, but are nearing retirement.

A staff surgeon needed at the Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen ranks No. 2 on the job list.

Other high-ranking requests call for general evangelists and church planters in Taiwan, Tanzania, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Equatorial Brazil, Belgium, Mexico, Hong Kong, Zambia, Indonesia, Argentina and Greece.

Nurses are needed in Ethiopia in an area with no running water and electricity. A missionary to provide dental care and training is needed for a clinic in The Gambia. In Togo, where half of the population is college age or younger, a missionary is needed to coordinate a student ministry.

The 307 jobs listed under evangelism and church development also include those in seminaries, religious education promotion, music promotion, English language ministry, women's ministry, youth ministry and student ministry.

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Health services accounts for 38 positions, including 15 doctors, three dental personnel and 16 nurses. Seventeen jobs fall under education, and 19 under business services, including jobs for a dozen business administrators. Six are needed in support services, such as maintenance and construction, and 16 fall under community development, which includes eight jobs in agriculture and three in social ministry.

For the 1988 request year, which starts in October 1987 and ends in September 1988, there are requests for 221 auxiliary personnel. These are special assignment volunteers and Mission Service Corps personnel, who serve from four months to two years, and journeymen, whose term is two years.

Fifty-three auxiliary workers are needed to work in evangelism and church development, 65 in education, 29 in health services, 12 in media, 19 in support services, 28 in business services and 15 in community development.

For the past year, 224 general evangelists were requested, and 58 of those requests were filled. About 50 to 60 general evangelists rise out of a pool of 15,000 seminary-degree pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention each year, noted Bill Morgan, director of the missionary enlistment department.

While the Foreign Mission Board struggles to find preachers to send overseas as general evangelists, it has less difficulty finding personnel for other positions, said Louis Cobbs, director of the board's personnel selection department.

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CORRECTIONS: In BP story dated 10/15/86 and titled "FMB Reaffirms Policies On Divorce, Seminaries," please change wording in third graf to read: "In other actions the board approved a lean \$167.8 million budget for 1988, received information that John David Hopper has been elected as president" (then pick up the rest of graf).

In BP story dated 10-14-87 and titled "John David Hopper Elected Ruschlikon's New President," please change wording in second graf, third sentence to read as follows: "Hopper's election was affirmed by the Europe, Middle East and North Africa Committee" (then pick up rest of the sentence).

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Court To Review State Limits
On Charitable Solicitors

N-BSC
By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
10/20/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court has announced it will review lower court decisions that struck down North Carolina regulations limiting professional charitable fund-raisers' administrative expenses.

Earlier this year, the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va., agreed with a federal district court in North Carolina that the regulatory scheme violated the fund-raising groups' First Amendment right of free speech.

According to North Carolina Attorney General Lacy H. Thornburg, the purpose of the regulations is limited to determining "reasonable expenses" incurred by for-profit professional fund-raisers in spending funds donated by the general public. The state's interest, Thornburg has asserted, is to protect the public from fraud.

The original challenge to the North Carolina law containing the regulations was brought by the state chapter of the National Federation of the Blind.

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Four years ago, the Supreme Court struck down a Maryland law limiting professional fund-raisers' administrative expenses to 25 percent of funds raised. In that 5-4 ruling, the high court concluded the Maryland statute violated the free speech clause of the First Amendment, a view reflected in the lower court decisions striking down the North Carolina scheme.

Oral arguments in the case will be scheduled for later in the current term. A decision is expected by next spring. (87-328, Riley v. National Federation of the Blind of North Carolina Inc.)

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Draper Denounces Gambling
At Political Action Rally

By Ken Camp

N- Texas
Baptist Press
10/20/87

DALLAS (BP)--Gambling is a "ruinous exploitation" of the poor and is a direct violation of scriptural teachings, according to former Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr.

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, spoke on "The Mandate to Defeat Gambling" at a mid-October anti-gambling rally in Mesquite, Texas. About 150 east Dallas County residents attended the rally, sponsored by the Mesquite Political Action Committee.

In a Nov. 3 binding referendum, Texans will vote on the legalization of pari-mutuel gambling on dog and horse races. Pari-mutuel wagering on horse races has been illegal in Texas since 1937.

Addressing the social impact and spiritual implications of gambling, Draper said, "The Bible clearly prohibits the kind of gain that is gotten from gambling."

He noted gambling redistributes wealth but creates no new wealth; it is a regressive form of taxation; it creates a climate for crime; and it creates a new generation of compulsive gamblers.

"Gambling stimulates covetousness, greed and materialism. The gambler breaks at least two of the Ten Commandments: 'Thou shalt not covet' and 'Thou shalt not steal,'" he said. "If the gambler wins, he is a thief. If he loses, he is a fool. Gambling is nothing but theft by mutual consent."

Draper went on to say gambling violates the commandment of Christ to "love thy neighbor," runs contrary to the principles of Christian stewardship and cannot be reconciled to belief in the sovereignty of God.

"Faith in a sovereign God is incompatible with the worship of 'lady luck' that is involved in gambling," he said.

Weston Ware, associate director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, urged the east Dallas County citizens to "get out the vote" on Nov. 3, particularly among their fellow church members.

"If people in our churches do not care, then we do not deserve to win on Nov. 3," he said. "But I believe that we do care and that we can win because we are working together."

Ware encouraged those in attendance at the rally to raise money for the anti-gambling effort, encourage absentee voting among senior adults and shut-ins, conduct a telephone campaign and provide transportation to the polls on Nov. 3.

New York native Larry North related his personal experiences as a child, growing up in the home of a compulsive gambler. He said he "escaped" to Dallas largely because Texas was free from the curse of legalized gambling.

"I heard this was God's country," he said. "Let's keep it God's country."

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Texas Gambling Opponents Ask
Willie To Change His Tune

By Ken Camp

N-Texas

DALLAS (BP)--Pleading "Mommas, Don't Let Your Puppies Grow Up to Be Greyhounds," opponents of gambling in Texas expressed dismay over country singer Willie Nelson's scheduled participation in an Oct. 20 Dallas fund-raising concert promoting pari-mutuel gambling on dog and horse racing.

Texans will vote Nov. 3 on the legalization of pari-mutuel betting on dog and horse races.

"We just can't believe that Willie would knowingly want to have any part in the barbarous bloodsport of dog racing or the cruel competition of horse race gambling," said Gary McNeil, legislative assistant with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

McNeil quoted Humane Society officials who claim up to 100,000 rabbits and kittens are killed each year by greyhounds in training, that more than 30,000 greyhounds are slaughtered annually because they no longer are needed for racing or breeding, and at least 2,000 crippled horses are put to death due to injuries resulting largely from drug-related on-track breakdowns.

"When Willie steps on the stage Tuesday to sing 'Promise Land,' we want him to realize that pari-mutuel gambling could make Texas an arena of cruelty, not a land of promise," McNeil said. "In Texas, our heroes have always been cowboys, and everybody knows that cowboys care about animals.

"Our hope is that Willie will have a last minute change of heart and change his tune to 'Mommas, Don't Let Your Puppies Grow Up to Be Greyhounds.'"

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Mississippi Musician
Dan C. Hall Dies

N-CO
(Miss.)

Baptist Press
10/20/87

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Dan C. Hall, director of the church music department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for 23 years, died in his sleep, Oct. 16.

Hall was director of associational work for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church music department for eight years before returning to his home state.

He was a graduate of Mississippi College and earned the master of sacred music degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Hall organized the Mississippi Singing Churchmen in 1965.

He is survived by his wife, Mera, and five children.

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Alabama Layman
To Head Presidents

N-CO
(Miss.)

Baptist Press
10/20/87

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (BP)--Steve Tondera, a layman from Huntsville, and president of the Alabama Baptist Convention, has been elected president of the state convention presidents' fellowship.

Tondera, an administrator at NASA and a member of First Baptist Church in Huntsville, succeeds Frank Gunn, president of Mississippi Baptists and pastor of First Baptist Church of Biloxi.

Glenn Davidson, president of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio and pastor of Pisgah Heights Baptist Church in Cincinnati, was elected vice president.

The fellowship, which began in 1985, meets three times a year. Out of this fellowship came the idea for the SBC Peace Committee.

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