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88-104

Court strikes down state
limits on fund-raisers

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)--The nation's high court has struck down a North Carolina law regulating the activities of professional charitable fund-raisers.

In a 7-2 decision handed down June 29, the Supreme Court upheld two lower court rulings that the regulations infringed upon the solicitors' freedom of speech.

The North Carolina law contained three major provisions. It defined the "reasonable fee" -- using a three-tiered schedule -- a professional fund-raiser could charge as a percentage of the gross revenues solicited; required professional fund-raisers to disclose to potential donors the gross percentage of revenues retained in prior charitable solicitations; and required professional fund-raisers to obtain a license before engaging in solicitation.

Writing for the majority, Justice William J. Brennan Jr. said "solicitation of charitable contributions is protected speech" and thus the use of percentages to decide the legality of the fund-raiser's fee is unconstitutional because it is "not narrowly tailored to the state's interest in preventing fraud."

Calling the state's claim that charities' speech must be regulated for their own benefit an unsound "paternalistic premise," Brennan wrote: "The First Amendment mandates that we presume that speakers, not the government, know best both what they want to say and how to say it. ... To this end, the government, even with the purest of motives, may not substitute its judgment as to how best to speak for that of speakers and listeners; free and robust debate cannot thrive if directed by the government."

Brennan said North Carolina may constitutionally enforce its anti-fraud law and require fund-raisers to disclose certain financial information to the state.

The court also held the law's disclosure and licensing requirements unconstitutional. Concerning the disclosure requirement, Brennan wrote, "Mandating speech that a speaker would not otherwise make necessarily alters the content of the speech." Turning to the licensing requirement, he said, "The state's asserted power to license professional fund-raisers carries with it -- unless properly constrained -- the power directly and substantially to affect the speech they utter."

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'Bulldog' administrator
retires from foreign board

By Eric Miller

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Perhaps John Mills will slow down a bit now that he's retired from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

In the past 12 months as special assistant to FMB President R. Keith Parks, Mills has logged more than 140,000 miles and spoken about 200 times. But the rest of his career has been just as rushed.

Forty years ago, Mills and his wife, Virginia, became missionaries to West Africa, where they served nearly 30 years. They left the mission field in 1976 when Mills was elected area director for West Africa, a post he held until early 1987.

Summing up her husband's career, Mrs. Mills said he worked at his job the way he played tennis. "He would go racing after that ball even though, to me, it was obvious he couldn't get it," she said. He pressed toward each milestone with "bulldog tenacity."

Mills was never one to "goof off," said Alice Gaventa, a former missionary who worked under Mills in Nigeria. Once when he arrived home in Richmond, Va., at 2 a.m. after traveling more than 24 hours from Africa, he was only 30 minutes late for work the next day.

As a missionary, he was known for his dependability. Missionaries said, "If you need a job done, give it to John Mills." His wife would say, "Not another project!" and Mills would answer, "Oh, this will take only 15 minutes."

Soon Mills was doing the jobs of three men and worrying about the quality of his work. But it caught up with him. While he was at home alone in Nigeria in 1964, he had a heart attack.

During his convalescence, he lay in the bed, counting the squares on the ceiling and wondering whether he would ever get back to his mission work.

As he gained strength, his doctor told him to start walking for exercise. He walked three miles a day, missing only four days in five and one-half years.

"No matter what the weather -- freezing or snowing or blowing or raining -- he'd be out there walking that three miles," his wife said. They attended language school in France after his heart attack and before returning to the African mission field.

The Millses were the first Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to the West African country of the Ivory Coast.

He also helped start work in other West African countries unreached by Baptist missionaries by making survey trips of those countries, said Davis Saunders, the board's vice president for Africa.

The Millses and their children, Carol and John Timothy, went through five coup attempts in West Africa. Mills said he "learned to grin when you go through military checkpoints and fellows throw a gun in your face."

"The hardest thing we had to do as missionaries was be away from our kids," he said. Their daughter was 14 when she went to a high school 1,000 miles away. Knowing she was to be gone nearly four months and telephoning her was impossible, Mills cried when she left.

He also cried when he heard a fellow missionary had been left a human vegetable by a disease.

But by then, crying had become a part of missionary life. The Millses cried in a motel room after they were turned down for medical reasons by the Foreign Mission Board the first time they applied for missionary appointment. They were accepted a year later after medical clearance.

He cried in the third grade when the whole class laughed at him for saying he wanted to be a missionary. He had been inspired the summer before by a story about David Livingstone, the Scottish missionary to Africa.

Mills' biggest contribution to missions "has been one of consistent loyalty and faithfulness and the putting of missions above personal desires and wishes," said William Gaventa, a former missionary who worked under Mills in Nigeria.

Gaventa sees in Mills a "dogged determination to persevere and to keep on doing what seems right regardless of what the circumstances are."

He upheld board policy to "the letter of the law" and even reminded his wife, "Spend the Lord's money as carefully as you would your own."

He seldom joked about his job. His seriousness about work motivated others to take their work more seriously, Mrs. Gaventa said.

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Another of Mills' contributions is a handbook he wrote for new believers in 1951. The 44-page handbook, once in eight languages, is still in use in parts of Africa, Saunders discovered on a recent trip through the continent.

Known by many as a gifted preacher in Africa and America, Mills said he writes a sermon, memorizes an outline of it and preaches without notes. While preaching, he thrives upon audience response -- eye contact or nodding heads. A good preacher, he said, "proclaims truth in a way that motivates people."

Retirement for Mills, which officially began July 1, probably will involve interim pastorates or pulpit supply work in the Pasadena, Texas, area where the Millses will settle. "I'm sure I'll be miserable if I don't preach," he said. "I've averaged four or five times a week preaching ever since I was 17 years old."

Fishing, golf and reading may occupy some of their time, Mrs. Mills said: "But I don't expect John just to sit down and relax."

"Racing after that ball with all he had has so typified his life. If I've tried to give any advice at all, it is just to try to enjoy the flowers along the way."

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

HMB president's wife supports
missionaries in prayer ministry

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
7/5/88

ATLANTA (BP)--Home missionaries whose birthdays fall on Fridays this year may get a surprise phone call from Betty Jo Lewis, wife of the president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Every Friday when she isn't traveling with her husband, Larry, Mrs. Lewis comes to the small intercessory prayer office on the third floor of the board's downtown Atlanta headquarters. She calls missionaries who are celebrating birthdays that day, inquires about their prayer concerns and then prays with them over the phone.

Mrs. Lewis is only the first of hundreds of people to pray for the specific requests each missionary shares. The requests are placed on tape recordings that are played back as Southern Baptists call 1-800-554-PRAY.

The president's wife is one of about a dozen volunteers who work with prayer line director Conrad Keil to keep the prayer line running. Keil is a volunteer himself, appointed through the board's Mission Service Corps.

The Home Mission Board began its prayer line in 1983 during an emphasis on starting new churches. Because response was so good, the line was continued and expanded to support all phases of home missions.

Keil, a former Louisiana pastor, has directed the ministry since April 1985, presiding over its growth from 800 to 5,000 calls per month.

The prayer line process is simple. Home missionaries call the toll-free number to give prayer requests. Keil places one of those requests and the missionary's address on the prayer line's answering machines each day. Other Southern Baptists then call the same number to receive the request and leave their names and addresses.

When Keil learns that a request has been answered -- whether two weeks or two years later -- he writes a letter to every person who took down the request through the prayer line.

Both Keil and Mrs. Lewis believe this network of prayer support is essential. "If our work is not undergirded in prayer, we're not going to accomplish very much," Keil said. "I believe prayer is the foundation for our work in missions."

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Mrs. Lewis called prayer the "source of power" for home missions because "missionaries are real people and their families have real needs. The prayer line brings us into corporate prayer where we span the miles and the racial and economic barriers," she said.

The prayer line benefits not only the missionaries who are prayed for, but also the missions supporters who do the praying. Take the example of Maxwell Baker, a retired bivocational pastor from Rio Vista, Texas.

Every day he is able, Baker dials the Home Mission Board's toll-free number to receive a new prayer request. He writes each request on a 3 x 5 index card and dates it, writes the missionary a note and then prays until he hears an answer.

Baker said about one-third of the missionaries he contacts write him back. Regardless, he hears how the requests are answered through letters from the Home Mission Board.

Those letters are Baker's reward, he said. "I keep all the letters Mr. Keil sends to me. I have more than 200 letters that prove that God answers prayer."

Because Home Mission Board administrators realize their greatest support comes from people like Baker, they have formed a Prayer Task Force to study ways to use prayer effectively. The prayer line is just one aspect of prayer for home missions.

Another key aspect is Prayer for Spiritual Awakening, seminars the board conducts to teach Christians how to pray effectively. The Prayer Task Force will recommend additional ways to encourage prayer for missions and to get prayer requests out to Southern Baptists.

Bob Bingham, vice president of the services section, chairs the task force. "Although we have a hard time regulating prayer, we hope to take the collective efforts of the board and pattern them into a mosaic of prayer," he said.

Educating Southern Baptists about the home missions challenge and the power of prayer goes hand-in-hand, Bingham said. "As Southern Baptists have become more aware of the lostness of the nation, they are more open to pray for its redemption."

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Laws allowing death penalty
for juveniles struck down

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
7/5/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--Stopping short of completely banning the death penalty for juveniles, the U.S. Supreme Court June 29 struck down state statutes that allow the execution of offenders who are under 16 when they commit a capital crime.

The case in question was that of William Wayne Thompson, an Oklahoman who was convicted, along with three others, of murdering his former brother-in-law. Following his conviction, Thompson -- who was 15 at the time of the 1983 slaying -- was sentenced to death and sent to await execution at a state penitentiary.

Oklahoma's death penalty law, like those in 18 other states, does not expressly state a minimum age for capital punishment.

Although a 5-3 majority held such laws unconstitutional, only four justices -- one short of the needed majority -- agreed that all executions of juveniles under 16 should be banned.

Justice John Paul Stevens -- writing for himself and Justices William J. Brennan Jr., Thurgood Marshall and Harry A. Blackmun -- said imposition of the death penalty for offenses committed by people under 16 is "nothing more than the purposeless and needless imposition of pain and suffering," thus making it an "unconstitutional punishment" under the Eighth Amendment, which prohibits "cruel and unusual punishments."

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Stevens contended a review of the work product of state legislatures and sentencing juries -- which he called "indicators of contemporary standards of decency" -- confirm that "such a young person is not capable of acting with the degree of culpability that can justify the ultimate penalty."

Although casting the necessary fifth vote to overturn Thompson's sentence, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor refused to join with the plurality's broader opinion. Thus, under the court's ruling, states now could pass new laws to impose the death penalty for offenders under 16 if their legislatures specifically determined capital punishment for juveniles that age is warranted.

"Although I believe that a national consensus forbidding the execution of any person for a crime committed before the age of 16 very likely does exist, I am reluctant to adopt this conclusion as a matter of constitutional law without better evidence than we now possess," O'Connor wrote in a separate concurrence.

In addressing the specific case, O'Connor said: "There is a considerable risk that the Oklahoma legislature either did not realize that its actions would have the effect of rendering 15-year-old defendants death-eligible or did not give the question the serious consideration that would have been reflected in the explicit choice of some minimum age for death-eligibility. ... In this unique situation, I am prepared to conclude that petitioner and others who were below the age of 16 at the time of their offense may not be executed under the authority of a capital punishment statute that specifies no minimum age at which the commission of a capital crime can lead to the offender's execution."

In a dissenting opinion, Justice Antonin Scalia -- joined by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justice Byron R. White -- rejected the idea that Thompson was a "juvenile caught up in a legislative scheme that unthinkingly lumped him together with adults for purposes of determining that death was an appropriate penalty for him and for his crime."

Challenging the plurality opinion, Scalia wrote, "It is assuredly for us ultimately to judge what the Eighth Amendment permits, but that means it is for us to judge whether certain punishments are forbidden because, despite what the current society thinks, they were forbidden under the original understanding of cruel and unusual ... or because they come within current understanding of what is cruel and unusual because of the evolving standards of decency of our national society; but not because they are out of accord with the perceptions of decency, or of penology, or of mercy, entertained -- or strongly entertained, or even held as an abiding conviction -- by a majority of the small unrepresentative segment of our society that sits on this court."

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Author had premonition
'The Station' would last

By Bill Webb

Baptist Press
7/5/88

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP)--When Robert J. Hastings wrote "The Station," he had a feeling it would last.

Hastings, now retired, was editor of the Illinois Baptist, newsjournal of the Illinois Baptist State Association, when he penned the short devotional piece for his editorial page June 14, 1978.

"The Station" appears in the June issue of Reader's Digest, with a circulation of more than 16 million, under the title, "Where Joy Abounds."

The piece has appeared four times in Ann Landers' advice column, syndicated in some 1,200 newspapers worldwide with an estimated combined circulation of 90 million.

ABC Radio commentator Paul Harvey read "The Station" on his noon newscast after visiting a rural Baptist church and discovering the piece on the back of the church bulletin.

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Hastings included "The Station" in two of his books, "Tinyburg Revisited," coming out this summer and "A Penny's Worth of Minced Ham." It also will be included in a forthcoming book, "Gems," a collection of favorite columns assembled by Ann Landers.

"I had the feeling when I wrote it that it would be a piece that would last. ... I just had the feeling," Hastings said. "I looked at it more as a gift. It wasn't something I hammered out and labored over."

"The Station" describes a journey on a train, with the passenger eagerly anticipating the culmination of the journey, the ultimate arrival at the station.

Hastings reminds his readers that joy in life is to be found in day-by-day enjoying the journey, not simply anticipating the destination.

"I think the reason for its popularity has been that it speaks to people of all cultures," Hastings said. "Part of it is autobiographical in that growing up in the Great Depression, we were challenged by the great American dream. Everybody has a little bit of that. ... You don't wait until you achieve something in order to enjoy life. If you achieve that 'dream,' that is no guarantee of satisfaction," he said.

The article "speaks more to an affluent generation ... than it would in the '30s," he explained. "People in the '30s weren't even thinking about getting to the station. Nowadays, that's where many people are headed."

Kathy Mitchell, executive assistant to Ann Landers, said, "'The Station' is so requested, it's incredible."

Hastings receives correspondence or a phone call related to the now-famous piece "not every day but nearly every day."

Perhaps the most memorable has been correspondence with Irv Gaipman of Plainview, N.Y. It was Gaipman's letter to Ann Landers that prompted the columnist to run "The Station" for a fourth time.

Gaipman explained how he and his wife had been moved by reading Hastings' column to take a European vacation after they learned Mrs. Gaipman was terminally ill.

Gaipman's expression of the happiness he and his wife had found in making the doubtful trip triggered an avalanche of mail and calls to Landers' Chicago office.

Hastings gets satisfaction knowing "The Station" will help people he will never know.

These days the author is "majoring on writing fiction." He composes radio scripts of "Tinyburg Tales" -- about the citizens of a mythical small town -- for 30 radio stations. He is in demand as a storyteller for various audiences.

Even in retirement, he is savoring the journey.

Text of "The Station"

By Robert J. Hastings

Tucked away in our subconscious minds is an idyllic vision in which we see ourselves on a long journey that spans an entire continent. We're traveling by train and, from the windows, we drink in the passing scenes of cars on nearby highways, of children waving at crossings, of cattle grazing in distant pastures, of smoke pouring from power plants, of row upon row of cotton and corn and wheat, of flatlands and valleys, of city skylines and village halls.

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But uppermost in our minds is our final destination -- for at a certain hour and on a given day, our train will finally pull into the station with bells ringing, flags waving and bands playing. And once that day comes, so many wonderful dreams will come true. So restlessly, we pace the aisles and count the miles, peering ahead, waiting, waiting, waiting for the station.

"Yes, when we reach the station, that will be it!" we promise ourselves. "When we're 18 ... win that promotion ... put the last kid through college ... buy that 450 SL Mercedes Benz ... pay off the mortgage ... have a nest egg for retirement."

From that day on we will all live happily ever after.

Sooner or later, however, we must realize there is no station in this life, no one earthly place to arrive at once and for all. The journey is the joy. The station is an illusion -- it constantly outdistances us. Yesterday's a memory, tomorrow's a dream. Yesterday belongs to history, tomorrow belongs to God. Yesterday's a fading sunset, tomorrow's a faint sunrise. Only today is there light enough to love and live.

So, gently close the door on yesterday and throw the key away. It isn't the burdens of today that drive men mad, but rather the regret over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow.

"Relish the moment" is a good motto, especially when coupled with Psalm 118:24, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

So stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, swim more rivers, climb more mountains, kiss more babies, count more stars. Laugh more and cry less. Go barefoot oftener. Eat more ice cream. Ride more merry-go-rounds. Watch more sunsets. Life must be lived as we go along.

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(Robert J. Hastings is editor emeritus of the Illinois Baptist.)

Lengthy pastorate may be
too much of a good thing

By Charles Willis

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--A lengthy tenure as pastor of one church can become too much of a good thing, both for the pastor and the congregation, a consultant in pastoral ministries told participants in the Bible-preaching/administration conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Charles Belt of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church administration department, said, "Churches that are alive and vital usually have leadership that is alive and vital."

But Belt said, in some instances, lengthy tenure can lead to a variety of problems including stagnation, burnout, declining ministry benefits, dependency, a limited model for ministry and difficulty for the next pastor.

"The longer you stay, the more people trust you and love you," he said. "It's a blessing and a tremendous facilitator of ministry. But if it goes too far, people can fall apart if the pastor isn't there. Sometimes dependency is so great, the church cannot function if the pastor leaves.

"One of the greatest signs of effective leadership is that when the pastor is gone, the congregation can carry on as well without the pastor as they did with him.

"Historically, we've had long-term pastorates, and even lifetime pastorates have been very common. The phenomenon of short-term pastorates is relatively new."

Lengthy tenure in one church has its advantages, Belt acknowledged. Among the benefits are knowing people well, sharing dreams, providing stability, becoming a part of the community and growing spiritually.

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"The longer you stay at a church, the more you have opportunity to be involved in the People's lives in ways you never could with a short tenure," he observed. "In fact, one of the overall keys to staying a long time is getting to know the people."

For those who aspire to long tenure, Belt urged periodic self-evaluation and awareness of the problems that can arise.

"If during the course of the leadership, things become non-productive, if the spirit of the church begins to dry up, if there is not a freshness of spirit, then the pastor may need to take a longer look," said Belt.

"Pastors need to keep a challenge before the people. Pastoral leadership has to be stretching out on the growing edge. You can't give what you don't have; you can't lead people down a path where you've never been; you can't pass on a dream you've never had."

Belt cautioned that feeling some of the symptoms of a too-long tenure may not necessarily be a signal that the relationship should end. The pastor may have problems and situations that cause discouragement, indicating a need for personal rest or spiritual renewal.

"Leadership that blesses," he reminded conference participants, "is leadership that gives life."

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Swap gives pastor
different audience

By Susan Todd

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Alabama pastor Wayne Burns has made a swap for the summer that's taken him out of the pulpit and sent him "around the world" on Wednesday nights.

Burns, pastor of Eastdale Baptist Church in Montgomery, has found himself for three months the sole leader of Girls in Action, the missions organization for girls in grades one through six.

As school neared the end, Burns said, the age-level missions organizations in the church decided to fold for the summer. Some of the leaders were going to be out of town for many weeks and felt it best to suspend meetings for the summer.

"I have never been in favor of calling off things during the summer," Burns said.

He asked several church members to step in to lead the GAs but got no volunteers. He realized that if the program were to continue, he would have to take the responsibility.

But it wasn't as if he didn't already have responsibilities for Wednesday night activities at the church. Taking the leadership for GAs would mean finding other leaders for the weekly churchwide prayer meetings.

Burns appealed to church members and circulated a sign-up sheet. Before long, he had men and women to lead each of the weekly prayer times.

The congregational-leader-turned-GA-leader doesn't regret his three-month swap: "I was familiar with the (GA curriculum) materials before, but you really learn about the materials as you prepare each week. Being familiar with materials is not the same as reading Discovery" magazine for girls in GAs.

Burns and his group have followed the studies and activities provided in Discovery and Aware, the magazine for GA leaders. For example, one suggestion was to make banana bread while studying about the tropical islands of Indonesia and the missionaries who serve there. So, Burns and the girls made banana bread.

The study of Indonesia and publishing efforts headed there by Southern Baptist missionaries prompted a trip to the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union national headquarters in Birmingham, Ala.

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Burns and his group of GAs saw some of the publishing process while touring the facility. WMU publishes six monthly magazines, four quarterly magazines and about 300 products, including books.

"The thing I have found about trips like this is the girls remember what they see," Burns said.

Girls in the group all agreed Burns has been a wonderful GA leader, noting he has made missions exciting.

"We do fun things that have to do with the country we're studying," said 11-year-old Andria Dyess. She also rated his teaching efforts as top-notch because "he has things set up and ready when we get there."

Blair Frederick, another 11-year-old GA, said, "We've talked about missionaries in Indonesia translating Bibles." She enjoyed learning that missions is "more than preaching and telling people" about God. "It's translating Bibles and books so people can read them."

Courtney Baggett added, "Last week we learned about editing." She credited Burns with explaining the process and giving them time to understand it.

His GA leader experience has been a good experience -- one that he would recommend to any pastor, Burns said. He added he has learned what is going on in GAs and has gained a greater appreciation for the program and its materials.

But he and the girls are not the only ones to benefit, Burns said.

"It's probably been good for some others to do prayer meeting," he quipped.

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(BP) photo available upon request from Woman's Missionary Union

'Bad' preachers' kids
may be venting anger

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Preachers' kids. For many people, the term brings to mind stereotyped images of children who exceed the bounds of good behavior, but such characterization often is inaccurate and unfair.

Terry Peck, a consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church administration department and author of "Parenting in the Minister's Home," led daily sessions with his wife, Diane, on parenting for ministers during the Bible-preaching/administration conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

He said unexpressed anger is the problem behind the behavior of some children of ministers. She added she believes some Christian people tend to feel expressed anger is not appropriate, thus causing children to internalize their feelings.

"So much is made of preachers' kids who 'go bad,'" she observed, "when there are thousands and thousands who are great."

But of those whose conduct does raise church members' eyebrows and add to the stress of their minister parents, many are expressing resentment toward their parents and the church members.

"Some children resent the time other people take away from their family," he said. "They begin to realize few of their friends' parents are required to interrupt family time or cut short vacations because of work needs. Church members may need the pastor, but the minister's children want their daddy, too."

He said he has known several children of ministers who as young adults denied or postponed response to a call from God to Christian service out of this kind of anger.

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Financial and social constraints that keep a minister's children from being like their peers can be the source of hostility, too, they said.

For example, she recalled talking with ministers and their spouses who always take their vacations by going to Ridgecrest or Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist conference centers.

"This is a wonderful place," she agreed, looking across the campus, "but sometimes kids need to be 'normal' -- to go to the beach or an amusement park.

"Security can be a problem, too. Many ministers' wives work today, and also ministers' families may move or talk about moving more than most other families do."

Appropriate clothing, music and activities can be additional battlegrounds between ministers and their children, she said. For example, some children resent the expectation that they attend every church activity.

"In some cases, daddy behind the pulpit is different from daddy at home," she added. "He may be more pious at church; he may not practice what he preaches."

Children look for consistency, she said, noting, "We fool ourselves when we think we can fool our kids."

He suggested minister parents "spend focused time with each individual child. Ministers' kids ask in many ways, 'Do you love me as much as you love all those other people you always spend time with?'"

She agreed, adding: "Getting priorities straight is important. Ministers' children need to see their parents are normal human beings who make mistakes. They need to hear their parents confess their shortcomings.

"And parents need to know their kids are just kids. Being in a minister's family does not qualify them for sainthood."