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June 1, 1989

89-88

Court lets stand ruling
on pre-game invocations

By Kathy Palen

N-BuC

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has let stand an appeals court decision that invocations said before public high school football games violate the First Amendment's establishment clause.

In a one-line order, the high court rejected an appeal by the Douglas County (Ga.) School District, which was seeking a review of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that banned the pre-game prayers.

The dispute began in 1985 when Doug Jager, a member of the Douglas County High School band, objected to the invocations.

At that time, the prayers were led by ministers -- almost all of whom were Protestant -- who were selected by the Douglas County Ministerial Association. Many of the invocations opened with the words "let us pray" and invoked the name of Jesus Christ.

Jager wrote a letter of complaint to his school's principal, who asked the school's band director to talk with the student. The director, who led band members in saying the Lord's Prayer before each performance, lectured Jager on Christianity.

In an attempt to settle the matter, school Superintendent Kathryn M. Shehane invited Jager and his father to a meeting during which she and three area ministers presented an alternative "equal access plan" for the invocations. The plan stipulated that no ministers would lead the prayers, but instead the student council would select students, parents and school staff members to do so. These individuals, according to the plan, would be "selected without regard to religion or the lack of religious beliefs."

The Jagers, who are descended from Native Americans, rejected the plan and filed action in district court to enjoin the school district from continuing the invocations. They also asked the court to hold the practice unconstitutional.

The district court upheld the constitutionality of the school district's equal access plan, ruling the invocations had valid secular purposes.

But in January 1989, the 11th Circuit panel ruled the plan violated the establishment clause.

"Protestant Christianity is the majority religious preference in Douglas County," the appeals court wrote. "Therefore, the likely result of the equal access plan will be the continuation of Protestant Christian invocations, which have been delivered since 1947."

In appealing to the high court, attorneys for the school district argued the appeals court decision would "invalidate years of tradition of opening public events with ceremonial invocations."

But attorneys for the Jagers countered that the case does not involve "presidential inaugurations, sessions of the U.S. Congress or sessions of the U.S. Supreme Court" but rather "the actions and the motives of one county public school system in the state of Georgia with a troubled history of non-compliance in matters governed by the establishment clause."

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In commenting on the case, Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said he thinks it is unfortunate the Douglas County School District labeled its proposal an "equal access plan."

"There is a world of difference between granting student religious groups equal access to a public forum for their meetings and giving them a microphone and a captive audience at a school-sponsored event," Thomas said. "Including non-Protestants may be equal treatment, but it is not equal access. Equal access implies that all who participate in the religious activity do so voluntarily."

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Cornerstone Commission,
FMB, Mexicans to cooperate

By Eric Miller

N-FMB

Baptist Press
6/1/89

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Leaders of the Houston-based Cornerstone Commission, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and the National Baptist Convention of Mexico announced in late May they had reached an agreement to work together.

The Cornerstone Commission, a church-starting agency formerly known as the Genesis Commission, wants to help start 5,000 churches in Mexico within 10 years at a cost of \$25 million, Executive Director Paul Ferguson said in an interview.

Cornerstone receives financial contributions from Christian businessmen from a variety of denominations, Ferguson said. So far, the commission has enough money for the next three years, he added.

Don Kammerdiener, FMB vice president for the Americas, noted five key areas of cooperation outlined in the agreement between Cornerstone, the mission board and Mexican Baptists: the Mexican Baptist convention's acknowledgment of the Cornerstone program, use of Mexican convention financial channels for Cornerstone aid, Mexican Baptist involvement in selecting new church sites and sponsoring churches, commitment of Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico to help churches aided by Cornerstone the same way they assist other churches and evaluation of results.

The commission also will send volunteers, mostly high school and college groups, to Mexico through the Foreign Mission Board's volunteers in missions department. Volunteers will help build churches, show evangelistic films, lead Bible schools and spread the gospel door to door.

The Cornerstone Commission is the brainchild of Randy Best, a Texas entrepreneur. While on a visit to Africa, Best was impressed to thank God for his wealth and seek guidance in how to use it, said Ed Young, a Cornerstone trustee and pastor of Houston's Second Baptist Church, where Best is a member. Best envisioned starting churches as the most effective way to use his money for the kingdom of God.

Best pays all administrative costs of Cornerstone, which has a small staff, so all donations go straight to the mission field, Young said.

Started in 1986, by early 1988, Mexican Baptist leaders had announced they would not support the work of the Genesis Commission because it refused to work through the Mexican convention.

Bill Darnell, a Southern Baptist minister, later resigned as the commission's executive director, and commission leaders changed the agency's name to the Cornerstone Commission. Darnell was replaced by Ferguson, 56, a senior Texas district court judge and former chief of staff at Second Baptist in Houston.

Early on, the commission was swept into the Southern Baptist Convention's political controversy, Kammerdiener recalled. The commission "became identified as setting up an alternative foreign mission board and representing the extreme right wing of our convention," he said. No one was more surprised than Best, who at the time was a new Southern Baptist with little understanding of the controversy, Kammerdiener and Young said.

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Cornerstone leaders approached the Foreign Mission Board in January 1989 about working together in Mexico. Representatives of the two agencies, as well as Mexican Baptist leaders, met in February and reached a tentative agreement. Mexican leaders gave final approval May 18.

Cornerstone's "only vision is to start churches," Ferguson said. "We don't plan to send missionaries; we just plan to start churches."

"We want to put cornerstones (churches) up around Mexico," Young said.

To do that, Cornerstone gives a new church \$5,000 over a three-year period. Under the May agreement, all funds will go through the Mexican Baptist convention.

The \$5,000 covers a pastor's salary and literature. Near the end of the three years of support, Cornerstone withholds funds for six months to encourage the church to become self-supporting. Later, the commission gives the church the rest of the funds.

Established Mexican Baptist churches will nominate all new pastors and decide on church sites, and Cornerstone will see that new pastors undergo "a very intensive pastors' training course," Ferguson said.

After the 30-day course, Cornerstone will provide continuing education through experienced Mexican pastors from sponsoring churches. This also will involve a 40-hour sequence of videotapes on church administration, evangelism, preaching, missions, New and Old Testament and theology.

Manuel Martinez, 52, a Baptist seminary instructor and pastor for 25 years, designed the training course and video presentation, Ferguson said. Martinez is Cornerstone's national director in Mexico.

Allen Alexander, chairman of the organization of Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico, said in an interview that the commission at first caused some to fear that it would "divide the attention and loyalty of Baptist churches in Mexico."

When the commission began work in Mexico, it "caused some friction because a church supported by the commission would have work just a few blocks from a church of the national convention," he noted.

But since the commission will now work through the Mexican convention, it will not unilaterally start churches and determine where new work begins, Alexander said. "So it's not the fault of Cornerstone if there is disharmony," he added.

Money is fine for building costs, but as Southern Baptists, "we are not convinced money is the ultimate good, nor the ultimate evil," Alexander said. "There is a great deal to be said for the incarnational presence of people helping people. Personnel is the best resource we have."

The commission began work in Mexico in the fall of 1987 and started 10 churches then. It started another 50 in 1988, Ferguson said, adding that each new church, after two years of stability and financial independence, is challenged to start a new church each year.

During negotiations for the cooperation agreement, Young asked Kammerdiener what would happen if Cornerstone continued operating apart from the Mexican convention.

"You will create some churches that will prosper and make a contribution to the kingdom of God," Kammerdiener told him. "But in some of those churches, you will make a mistake on who should be the pastor or who should be the leader or one of those leaders will come to the United States or leave the work or have difficulty, and those churches will suffer and possibly die because they're cut off from the denominational leadership."

Churches that cooperate with the Mexican convention will still have problems, but they will overcome them within "the context of a denominational fellowship," Kammerdiener said.

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Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks said Cornerstone's methodology "is not 100 percent of the ideal way we as Southern Baptists do cooperative missions. But recognizing the autonomy of churches and the independent spirit of Southern Baptists, I am very grateful that there is a deliberate choice to work harmoniously with the Foreign Mission Board and the Mexican convention."

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Music editors play tune,
see notes for new hymnal

By Charles Willis

A-SSB

Baptist Press
6/1/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Playing "Amazing Grace" on a keyboard at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board these days will produce more than a tune loved by millions of Southern Baptists. If the right keyboard is used, out will come the printed music, too.

Finale software, produced by Wenger Corp., a Minneapolis-based music company, enables Sunday School Board editors to play music on a keyboard connected to a computer. It produces printed music, and they use desktop publishing software to design page layout for "The Baptist Hymnal," to be published in 1991.

The new computer software is cutting an estimated 50 percent from the time required to edit both music and texts, said Mark Blankenship, manager of the youth/adult/general materials section in the church music department.

The software has cut editing time from two hours per page to one hour, Blankenship said. Editors have begun work on selected hymns from "Baptist Hymnal," 1975 edition, which have been approved for inclusion by the hymnal committee.

More than 8,400 hours will be required to key more than 20,000 pages for 27 editions of the hymnal, Blankenship estimated. The additional time saved from the initial hour of editing for each page is in the electronic transfer of instrumental parts from the master orchestra score.

Seven people are involved in various aspects of the editing process, with ongoing editorial work on church music department publications continuing throughout the hymnal project.

Batches of edited hymnal pages will be started through the printing processes beginning in June 1990, with delivery of finished products to the Sunday School Board expected to begin in early February 1991, Blankenship said.

All products will be unveiled during PraiSing II, a music worship celebration in Nashville March 11-14, 1991.

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Surplus literature
helps chaplains

By Frank Wm. White

F - SSB

Baptist Press
6/1/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--A surplus of outdated church literature and requests from chaplains who lack funds to purchase materials has given the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board opportunities to help present the gospel message to people who otherwise might not hear it.

Surplus dated literature usually is destroyed after each quarter because it is outdated and warehouse space is needed for the next quarter's material, explained Woody Parker, manager of the special education section in the board's special ministries department.

In the past eight quarters, however, the special ministries department has provided about 290,000 pieces of the surplus literature to Southern Baptist chaplains for use in prisons, military installations, hospitals, retirement centers and other institutions.

The department first began providing a small amount of surplus material to 18 prison chaplains several years ago as part of the Home Bible Study ministry, Parker said.

When Home Bible Study materials were discontinued three years ago, rather than stop the use of surplus materials, the department began looking for ways to expand the project.

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In 1987, the department offered materials to 200 chaplains in a pilot project. The project was successful immediately, and now outdated materials are offered to 400 of the 1,900 Southern Baptist Home Mission Board-endorsed prison, military, hospital and institution chaplains, Parker said.

Chaplains have reported using the materials in prison ministries, aboard U.S. Navy submarines and in hospital waiting rooms and counseling rooms.

J. Michael Brown, a chaplain at Broad River Correctional Institution in Columbia, S.C., said the literature is appreciated by men in the prison. "Many of them are new Christians that are looking for sound biblical, instructional materials," he said.

Lt. Walker E. Marsh Jr., a U.S. Navy chaplain, places the literature aboard submarines as they are departing port in the North Atlantic Ocean. If he has any left over, he gives them to the Scottish Baptist churches in the area near the submarine base.

At Baptist Memorial Hospital in San Antonio, Texas, the staff routinely asks for some of the titles they know are being received regularly, said Eugene E. Allen, director of the hospital's department of pastoral care.

In April, 190 chaplains received more than 53,000 pieces of literature with Open Windows, a daily devotional guide, and Home Life, a monthly magazine for families, the most requested items.

Some chaplains may not get as many copies of items as they want because of availability of particular items, but the department tries to make sure everyone gets some of what they request, Parker said.

The project has room to expand, Parker said, noting the project uses only about 10 percent of the total surplus materials available each quarter.

An additional 200 chaplains will be added to the list this fall, Parker said.

He would like to add all 1,900 Home Mission Board-endorsed chaplains to the order list, he said. The list is being expanded based on the department's ability to handle the orders and pay postage costs.

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Korean crusade marks
century of Baptist work

By Ginny Whitehouse

N-FMB

Baptist Press
6/1/89

YUSONG, South Korea (BP)--More than 360 Korean pastors, missionaries, and U.S. volunteers linked hands to sing "Till We Meet Again" in two languages in celebration of a May evangelistic crusade that marked two Korean milestones.

Their victory celebration concluded the crusade, which marked 100 years of Baptist-related work in Korea and formally ended a three-year partnership between Korean and Louisiana Baptists, who sponsored the week-long crusade.

But it also launched a new phase of cooperation between Korean and Louisiana Baptists, who will meet again when Louisiana volunteers return next year to help plant 20 churches throughout the country.

Preliminary reports show more than 3,000 Koreans made decisions for Christ during the crusade that focused on five major cities: Seoul, Pusan, Taegu, Taejon and Kwangju. Southern Baptist missionary Steve Hayes, head of the partnership program, said he anticipates a higher total once all reports are complete.

"We've seen businessmen's lives changed, laymen changed, servicemen changed. God's work was done here," said Belle Beliscamper of Diana, Texas, one of 160 Southern Baptist volunteers from Louisiana and several other states. The team included 10 Korean pastors from U.S. churches.

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The biggest impact was made on Korean Baptists already active in 120 churches involved in the crusade, said to Yu Byung Moon, president of the Korea Baptist Convention. His church, Central Baptist of Taejon, has participated in partnership crusades for 14 years.

"There have been some changes over time, but after a meeting like this, we can encourage 15 members in my church alone to evangelize week by week," he said.

"Everybody that I've talked to said they were excited about what God has done and that they will be able to go home and witness more effectively," added Charles Lowry, director of church programs for the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Lowry headed the Louisiana partnership team.

Little could dampen the enthusiasm of the participants, especially Dallas Bivens of Phoenix, Ariz. Bivens, who has participated in six evangelistic crusades in South Korea, was forced to return home early after becoming ill, Lowry said.

As missionaries put him on the plane, Bivens reportedly said, "I can't wait till next year when I can come back."

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Puerto Rico Holds First
World Mission Conferences

By Roberta Anderson

Baptist Press
N-CO
(Brotherhood) 6/1/89

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (BP)--Puerto Rico's first world missions conference involved 21 home, foreign and area missionaries who shared their experiences, knowledge and hopes through four languages with 6,600 people.

Carlos Cobos, director of world missions conferences and associational relations at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn., said another first was the direct communication between a deaf-language missionary and deaf congregations. No interpreter was needed to sign the words for the nine deaf congregations -- the "speaker," home missionary Larry Barnett, signed for himself. Three deaf conferees surrendered to a missions call, Cobos said.

In addition to sign language, the missionaries communicated to participants in Chinese, Spanish and English.

A world missions conference is an associational missions-awareness project that brings Southern Baptists together with their associational, state, home and foreign missionaries. They are coordinated by the Brotherhood Commission in cooperation with the state Baptist convention and the Southern Baptist Foreign and Home mission boards.

All 59 Baptist churches, missions and preaching points in the Puerto Rico association, which includes the U.S. Virgin Islands, participated, Cobos said of the May 21-28 event.

"It's wonderful, what's happening here," said Elaine Ozment, a Mission Service Corps volunteer in Puerto Rico who coordinated the conference. "The blessings we received this week have been outstanding. I'm not surprised. This is what we were praying for."

The conference has given Puerto Rican Baptists a new vision for missions, Ozment said, noting, "It's exciting to see what we can do cooperatively."

Kelly R. Spear, a Southern Baptist missionary to Spain, said he thought the conference had broken barriers. Puerto Ricans he spoke to were very interested in his work in Spain because of their Spanish heritage and asked a lot of penetrating questions about his work, he said. The conferees were surprised at how few -- 120 -- Baptist churches are in Spain, a country of about 40 million people, and how difficult the work is, he added.

1989 is a record year for world mission conferences, said Cobos, noting 240 are planned in associations around the United States and Puerto Rico. A goal has been to involve all of the 1,216 Southern Baptist associations in a conference between 1985 and 1990. Cobos' figures show the total for the five-year period will be 995.

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