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November 1, 1989

89-157

Southern Baptists start
742 new Sunday schools

By Frank Wm. White

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists started 742 Sunday schools during the 1988-89 church year, a decline from the 861 Sunday schools started in 1987-88 and the lowest total since 874 starts were recorded in 1984-85.

"There is a desire for starting new Sunday schools, but few states have a strategy for getting it done," said Jim L. Harvey, Sunday school growth and administration consultant at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Harvey singled out Texas as a consistent leader in starting new Sunday schools. Texas started 217 Sunday schools in 1988-89, down from the 273 started in the state in 1987-88.

Florida had an increase in Sunday schools, with 118 recorded, compared to 56 the previous year. Harvey pointed out that Florida during the past year had a person responsible for training churches in conducting Outreach Bible Studies as a strategy for starting Sunday schools.

Three state conventions met or surpassed their goals for starting Sunday schools. Alaska started 15, with a goal of 10. Maryland started 18, surpassing a goal of 15, while Minnesota/Wisconsin started 19, with a goal of 12.

Other top state totals were California, 35; North Carolina, 25; and Georgia, 21.

The emphasis for starting Sunday schools supports the Southern Baptist Bold Mission Thrust goal of 50,000 churches by the year 2000. The convention has about 37,567 churches.

"Sunday school is a major part of efforts to start new churches," Harvey said. He pointed out that an ongoing Bible study organization is the basis for continuity for a new congregation.

The outreach organization and potential through the Sunday school is vital to a new work, he said.

"We need for new Sunday school starts to become a major priority in order to reach people," Harvey said.

He listed Outreach Bible Study, Backyard Bible Clubs and Mission Vacation Bible Schools as effective strategies to start new Sunday schools.

The Sunday School Board offers assistance for new Sunday schools with up to \$100 worth of Sunday school material selected by leaders of the new Sunday school. Also available for new Sunday schools is a \$50 discount at Small Sunday School Leadership Conferences; a \$25 gift certificate from Baptist Book Stores for Bible study and administrative materials; free materials to guide the church in starting a media library; 25 "Baptist Hymnals;" graded choir literature for three months; a Holman pew Bible; \$75 in discipleship training material; a Vacation Bible School Plan Book and a copy of the current Church Materials Catalog.

A brochure, "How to Start a New Sunday School" will be available from the Sunday School Board in January.

High court hears arguments
in Swaggart Ministries case

By Kathy Palen

N- BJC

WASHINGTON (BP)--Government should not be allowed to tax a religious organization's dissemination of its religious message, an attorney for Jimmy Swaggart Ministries told the nation's high court.

During oral argument before the U.S. Supreme Court Oct. 31, Michael W. McConnell of Chicago said California's taxation of materials sold there by the television evangelist's Louisiana-based organization places an unconstitutional burden on the ministry's ability to spread its message.

The dispute, Jimmy Swaggart Ministries v. California Board of Equalization, centers on whether California may apply a state sales tax to religious and non-religious merchandise sold by Swaggart's organization at 23 religious crusades it held in California from 1974 through 1981. Also in question is the taxation of \$2 million worth of mail-order sales to Californians by the ministries during those years.

California's Board of Equalization assessed the organization owed \$183,000 in state sales tax, which the ministries paid under protest. When its application for a refund was rejected, the organization filed suit.

A California appeals court ruled in favor of the state, and the California Supreme Court refused to review the case.

In arguing before the Supreme Court, McConnell repeatedly said that "government must leave churches alone in their dissemination of religious doctrines." He said church-state separation means religious organizations cannot be assisted or subsidized by government, but they also cannot be prohibited or penalized by government.

Justice Antonin Scalia asked why religious organizations that sell merchandise should be treated differently than bookstores that sell Bibles or other religious books. Commercial bookstores, McConnell said, are not selling a religious message.

In response to a question from Justice John Paul Stevens, McConnell said transactions between churches and commercial businesses are not an act of religion and can be taxed. Religious organizations are not exempt from taxation in everything they do, he said, only in acts of disseminating doctrine and carrying on of worship.

When Stevens asked what the dividing line between commercial and religious organizations is, McConnell responded, "Purpose -- whether it's providing the word or making a buck."

But California Deputy Attorney General Richard E. Nielsen disagreed with McConnell's interpretation of church-state separation, arguing that it does not mean religious organizations cannot be taxed. Rather, he said, it means a special exemption cannot be made for or a special tax placed on those organizations.

Nielsen described the California sales tax -- which he said is applied to all tangible personal property in the state -- as a "general, non-discriminating, revenue-raising tax." When questioned by several justices about whether the sale of items such as votive candles or printed booklets in local churches is taxed, Nielsen said he was uncertain but did not see why such sales would be exempted.

McConnell, however, argued the California sales tax goes against a 1943 Supreme Court decision that held Pennsylvania could not require an itinerant minister to pay a license tax in order to distribute religious tracts. He claimed both taxes place a burden on the spreading of a religious message.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor asked McConnell if the cost of the sales tax could not be passed on to the purchaser. The attorney said no matter who pays the additional costs, a burden remains on the dissemination of religious material.

McConnell also cited the imposition of an "almost impossible" administrative burden on the Swaggart Ministries, which he said would have to keep track of tax schemes in various states.

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But Nielsen said McConnell's arguments failed to recognize a difference between "any government burden" and an "unconstitutional burden." In the Swaggart case, he said, there is no evidence the sales tax dissuaded any buyer from purchasing merchandise or that it hindered the organization's activities.

In concluding his argument, McConnell said the California sales tax could have a chilling effect on out-of-state ministries. The taxation was triggered, he said, only because Swaggart Ministries held occasional religious crusades in the state. Other religious organizations might opt not to hold such meetings in California in order to avoid paying large amounts of taxes, he said.

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Children of alcoholics told
purge anger for marriage sake

By Terri Lackey

N-SSB

Baptist Press
11/1/89

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Adult children of alcoholics must purge ill feelings toward their parents if they expect to claim a happy, healthy marriage and a functional family life, an author and counselor said.

"If you continue to point your finger in judgment at your parents, it will come back to you," said Sara Hines Martin, a counselor from Smyrna, Ga., who works with children of alcoholics and other co-dependents.

"You'll end up marrying someone just like the parents you continue to judge and wind up putting your children through the same pain you went through," said Martin, author of "Healing for Adult Children of Alcoholics."

Martin, who speaks and writes from experience as a child of an alcoholic father, was the first to lead a seminar on the topic at a Fall Festival of Marriage conference. The conference, held Oct. 20-22 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, was sponsored by the family enrichment section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department.

A child of an alcoholic parent who marries someone with a personality different from the father's or mother's usually will "draw out of that person the same qualities" of the parents.

"We either marry a man like our father, or 10 years later he becomes like our father because of our actions," she said.

Co-dependents must resolve within themselves the ill-feelings they hold toward their parents, who may or may not be alive, Martin said.

"To be judgmental is a violation of God's spiritual laws, and it hurts us," she said.

She described co-dependency as a set of learned behaviors, feelings and beliefs that can cause a person to sacrifice personal values for those of others. Co-dependents also rely on other's approval to feel good about themselves and take another person's needs so seriously that they neglect their own.

Co-dependents have difficulty identifying and expressing feelings and making decisions, she said.

Co-dependent tendencies come not only from families with an alcoholic parent, but from families with physical, sexual and verbal abuse; with an emotionally, physically or mentally handicapped person; with a child with an attention deficit disorder; and with rigid fundamental views, Martin said.

A co-dependent should write down every ill judgment or feeling she or he has for the parents.

"You need to get out all these feelings. Through visualization, talk to your parents, tell them you forgive them," she said.

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Co-dependents should do this without actually confronting their parents "who may not be at the same place as you are," she suggested. "They may not be ready to talk about it."

Because the anger release is only visualization or role playing, it can also work with parents who are no longer living, she added.

Another reason co-dependents marry into a similar family situation is because it is familiar to them, Martin said: "They know how to deal with it. They know the unspoken rules."

Those rules include, "don't talk," "don't feel" and "don't trust."

Family members are not allowed to tell outsiders, who probably know anyway, what is happening inside their family, Martin said.

Spouses and children are forced into repressing their feelings or are made to "stop feeling," she said.

The rule of not trusting is a result of the constantly changing behavior of the alcoholic parent, Martin said. An alcoholic mother or father, when sober, might be loving and kind; but when drunk, violent and abusive, she noted, asking, "How can you trust behavior that keeps changing?"

Because constructive communication likely did not exist in the home of an alcohol-abusive parent, Martin said, a co-dependent must learn communication skills.

It is important for the survival and health of a marriage to "learn effective communication and to learn to identify your feelings, which you were forbidden to do as a child."

A second book, "Shame on You!," written by Martin for adults of alcoholics and other shame-bound families, is due to be released in January 1990. Both books are published by the Broadman division of the Sunday School Board. Martin is a member of Locust Grove Baptist Church in Smyrna, Ga.

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

Marketplace ministry
transforming N.C. church

By Mark Wingfield

F-HMB

Baptist Press
11/1/89

DURHAM, N.C. (BP)--By taking the church into the world, Grace Baptist Church is strengthening the world of the church.

Grace Baptist, an inner-city congregation in Durham, N.C., has found new purpose through marketplace ministry, said Eddie Hammett, minister of education.

Three years ago, Grace Baptist was a church in decline, Hammett explained. It had a history of ministry in Durham but also was "old enough to have a lot of traditions" preventing growth.

Through the preaching of Pastor Frank Zedick and a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board church growth "Probe," the congregation realized it could no longer rely on paid ministers to do the work of the church, Hammett said: "They determined there was more to be done than they could hire ministers to do. In the past, they had done ministry by proxy -- they paid for it to be done."

That realization brought a turnaround in the church, he said. Declining membership has stabilized, and new families now are coming into the church.

When Hammett came to the church nearly four years ago, he "began noticing that we had some wonderful examples of marketplace ministers in our church. But they didn't see what they were doing as ministry."

So Hammett and Zedick began an educational process among members, helping them identify their spiritual gifts and discover how those gifts relate to their jobs.

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Hammett talks one-on-one with church members about their marketplaces. Then he visits them at work to get a feel for what they experience.

"I try to find God at work in people," he explained. "Then I go and say, 'Can I tell you what I'm seeing and feeling?' I try to put theological language to their secular experiences.

"They've been taught for so long that there's a secular world we live in Monday through Saturday and a sacred world we live in on Sunday. I'm trying to merge those two worlds.

"We know how to do church inside the building. Now we believe God wants to teach us how to be the church in the world. The marketplace is what is going to help us penetrate the world."

What has happened at Grace Baptist has little structure. "It's something that's just happening," he said. "We're not programming it."

The nearest thing to a program is an intentional effort to allow church members to tell the congregation about their marketplace ministries. Every worship service and every Sunday school class includes time for marketplace testimonies.

"When these stories are shared, it energizes the congregation," Hammett said. "It gives people in the pew permission to try it too."

The testimonies of Grace Baptists' members show people ministering in varied places:

-- A postal clerk who serves internationals at his window every day learned to speak basic phrases in those languages in order to become a friend. By inviting several internationals into his home he is building relationships that lead to sharing the gospel.

-- A home health-care nurse looks for "divine appointments" with her terminally ill patients. Because of her compassion, several patients and their families have started visiting church for the first time.

-- Three women who work at the same bank befriended a new employee, which resulted conversions to Christianity for both the new employee and her fiance.

-- A hospital administrator is known by the 60 employees he supervises as their minister. "No one ever cared about me like this before," said one employee whom the administrator dealt with compassionately during a termination.

-- A retired man has identified the golf course as his marketplace. He makes certain at least one unchurched person is in any foursome when he plays.

These experiences are causing members of Grace Baptist to redefine how they approach church. Hammett said, noting, "Our standard of success is now based on what kind of people we are producing when we are gathered and what effect they have when scattered."

Hammett, who has become the church's marketplace ministry resource person, spoke about the congregation's turnaround during the National Renewal Conference in Charlotte, N.C. The conference was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's lay evangelism department.

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Court rejects challenge
to Virginia marriage law

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

Baptist Press
11/1/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--U.S. The Supreme Court has refused to hear a challenge to a Virginia law that regulates who may perform marriages within the state.

Roy R. Torcaso, a member of the American Humanist Association, appealed to the high court, arguing the state statute favors ordained ministers and thus violates the First Amendment.

Torcaso applied for certification to officiate at weddings in Virginia, but his application was denied. In order to be certified under Virginia law, an individual must show proof of ordination or be a state resident and post a \$500 bond.

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Torcaso, who does not live in Virginia, is an "accredited humanist counselor" in Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia. He has officiated at weddings in Pennsylvania, Maryland and D.C.

After the Circuit Court of Prince William refused to hear his case, Torcaso appealed to the Virginia Supreme Court. He argued that as a humanist counselor he was as qualified to perform marriages as an ordained minister, but his appeal was rejected.

In appealing to the Supreme Court, Torcaso's attorney, Eugene D. Gulland of Washington, argued the Virginia law violates the First Amendment's establishment clause by discriminating between religious and secular wedding officiants. In addition, Gulland said, the statute violates the free exercise clause by conditioning the performance of public functions upon adherence to religious beliefs.

But arguing in favor of the state law, Virginia Senior Assistant Attorney General Guy W. Horsley Jr. said the statute has the valid secular purpose of regulating the institution of marriage.

Horsley said all individuals, including ordained ministers, are required to apply for certification. The portion of the law that exempts ordained ministers from posting the \$500 bond, Horsley explained, simply recognizes that those ministers are "presumptively responsible."

The intent of the law is that marriage ceremonies be performed by responsible individuals who are accountable for their actions, Horsley wrote. (89-375, Torcaso v. Virginia)