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91-96

NOTICE: Aug. 31, 1991 will be the last day for use of the Jacquard computer in the Baptist Press office. After that date, Baptist Press will be available electronically only on the CompuServe system. We will, of course, continue to mail Baptist Press to all our subscribers.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Fired employee sues
Foreign Mission Board

N-FMB

Baptist Press
6/27/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A woman fired by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in April is suing the agency for \$1 million and charging she was a victim of discrimination because of her sex.

Beverly Pierce, 51, of Mechanicsville, Va., filed suit in Richmond Circuit Court May 31 alleging two counts of breach of contract and one count of sexual discrimination under the Equal Pay Act.

Employed in 1977 by the mission board, Pierce was assistant director of missions ministries in the board's public affairs office when she was dismissed April 15. In that post she scheduled speaking engagements for missionaries on furlough in the United States and helped coordinate World Mission Conferences. These conferences are special mission programs in which churches in an area hear missionary speakers tell about their work.

Pierce charges she was wrongfully dismissed and was penalized for initiating a formal employee grievance while a member of the board staff. She also contends male employees of the board received higher pay than she did for similar work.

Board officials declined to comment on the charges because litigation is pending, but said a response to the suit by the board's attorney denying all charges was to be filed with the court June 27. No court date has been set.

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Polish Baptists cry 'foul'
on church property seizures

By Mike Creswell

N-FMB

Baptist Press
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WARSAW, Poland (BP)--Polish Baptist leaders are crying "foul" over delays in the return of Baptist church properties from the Polish government, even as 2,000 properties are being returned to the powerful Roman Catholic Church.

The church buildings were seized by the communist government after World War II. Now, since Poland has adopted a democratic government, a move is on to restore such properties to church groups.

According to recent press reports in Warsaw, the government already has approved the return of 56 Catholic properties and Catholic authorities have filed more than 1,500 applications on other properties. They expect to file at least 500 more applications later, reports stated. At least 90 percent of Poland's people are said to be Catholic.

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In some cases the government converted seized Catholic properties into public schools. If those properties are returned, the schools will have to be closed or relocated at major expense. But government leaders reportedly are ready to pay the bill.

Meanwhile, the government has not responded to requests made in early 1990 by leaders of the Baptist Union in Poland to return a handful of church properties seized after the war.

"Now it's 1991 and they don't tell us no, they don't tell us yes," said Igor Barna, Baptist general secretary. "They tell us nothing. Since the government has changed, they tell us we're low priority."

Barna criticized a new Polish law governing the return of church properties because it applies only to the Roman Catholic Church and not to other groups such as Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists and the Polish National Catholic Church, a church not affiliated with Roman Catholics. A law that would return seized Orthodox church properties passed one house of the Polish parliament but hasn't emerged from the second.

At issue for Baptists are a dozen properties scattered across Poland that were seized after World War II. Some Baptist church buildings were taken and adapted for government use. In Bartoszyce, a city in northern Poland, the government seized a Baptist church building and forced the congregation to accept a smaller building. When local church leaders petitioned Polish President Lech Walesa for the return of their original building, they were informed they could not have the building because they would be "unable to pay for its upkeep."

So far only one church building has been returned. That 100-year-old structure was returned in May 1990 but is in such a devastated condition it is unusable. "We took it anyway," said Baptist leader Konstanty Wiazowski. "So far we just patched up the roof to stop further damage. It is not restored yet because we do not have the money."

Three buildings once owned by Baptists are in Lodz, Poland's second largest city. One is used by Roman Catholics, one by the Polish National Catholic Church and the third has become a movie theater.

Barna and Wiazowski said a combination of complex historical events, the growing power of the Roman Catholic Church and the current unsettled condition of the Polish government will make recovery of the properties difficult.

Two Baptist unions existed in pre-World War II Poland, one German-speaking and one Polish-speaking. Many German Baptists fled during the war, leaving their properties behind. Some of their church buildings were taken over by the government and some by the Catholics.

In those times, church buildings sometimes were listed under private names instead of church names. The communist government later seized properties if the property owner's name was German, Wiazowski said. Also, Baptists did not have official government recognition in the early decades of the century. Today, difficulties with the Catholic-dominated government continue despite government recognition.

Court appeals are not possible because the laws under which an appeal would be made have not been passed yet, he said. And getting laws passed favorable to Baptists will be difficult because of the influence of the Catholic Church, he added.

The property issue highlights fears by non-Catholic church leaders the Roman Catholic Church is moving aggressively to resume its dominant role in Polish life.

For a decade the Catholic Church aligned itself with the Solidarity trade union movement, which ultimately brought down Poland's communist government and led the nation to adopt a democratic government. Now, about 75 percent of members of the Solidarity-controlled Senate describe themselves as active or devout Catholics.

To Baptist onlookers, the picture is simple to analyze: "The Catholic Church controls Parliament. It can block the appointment of people. The Senate now looks to the Catholic Church for decisions instead of to the Communist Party," charged Wiazowski.

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Baptists also fear they could lose the church properties they now have. "We're always worried about losing properties," said Barna. "We're afraid of the Catholics taking it, or the government."

Baptists are rushing to occupy their new educational complex being built on the outskirts of Warsaw because they worry about losing control of the property, despite a solid claim to the land and the significant construction taking place, Wiazowski added.

One indication of renewed Catholic power is a deal worked out in 1990 in which Catholic priests are allowed to teach religion in the schools again. Another issue is the Catholic Church's determination to outlaw the estimated 500,000 abortions performed in Poland each year.

But the two Baptist leaders acknowledged they have seen a backlash among Poles against the growing influence of the Catholic Church. Attendance at Masses and other events during the recent visit of Pope John Paul II was much less than during his earlier visits, they said.

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Security for preschoolers
termed a must at church

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
6/27/91

FSSB

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--All-too-common news stories of adults showing up at day care centers, schools and churches to steal someone else's child haunt many parents.

Some single parents fear their former mate who fought for custody may try to take a child from day care or Sunday school.

Sunday school workers who have a visiting preschooler with no identification information worry about whom to contact if a problem arises.

These and many other situations are causing Southern Baptist churches to consider security systems in their preschool departments, Maurita Fletcher told participants in a session, "Developing a Preschool Security System," during Sunday School Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

"We want your child to have the best teaching each time he comes to church. We want your child to be safe," said Fletcher, a preschool Sunday school department director at Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville.

"One incident makes a system worthwhile."

When a preschool division gets large enough that workers have difficulty knowing every parent, a security system should be considered, she said.

A system was instituted about five years ago at Two Rivers Church when Sunday morning preschool attendance reached 250-300. More than 350 preschoolers now attend most Sundays.

"We wanted to protect every child. We felt responsible for the welfare of the child. We didn't feel we could do this until we could be sure who picked up the child," said Fletcher.

She said churches use a variety of methods for security. Some give parents a card with their child's name when the child arrives for Sunday school, discipleship training or other activities. That card must be returned when the child is picked up.

Others use color-coded, numbered tags. One is given to the parent and a tag with the same number is pinned on the child and tags are matched before the child is turned over to a parent.

In another system, parents are given laminated identification cards which they use to pick up their preschoolers. Others use numbers where one number is given to the parent while matching numbers are pinned on the child and the diaper bag.

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Before initiating a system, Fletcher said publicity and information should be shared through the church newsletter and in meetings.

A system should be flexible, enable a child to be picked up quickly and be simple and easily implemented.

After a system is selected, the church needs to be sold on it, a vote should be taken among those who will implement it and workers trained before implementation, she said.

In other matters of security, she said workers should have laminated name tags so parents can easily identify workers and ask any needed questions.

A telephone should be located near preschool departments.

Identification tags should be placed on diaper bags "to get the right bottle to your child."

And all teaching in preschool departments should take place with doors closed to eliminate the possibility that a child could wander off.

"We want to provide security for your child, so you can relax while you are at church," said Fletcher.

Eight Sunday School Leadership Conferences are being sponsored this summer at Glorieta and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division.

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

Parents of disabled sons
need strength for each day

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
6/27/91

F-SSB

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--When Weston Knipe begins his mornings with prayer "for strength to get through another day," his consuming demand is the needs of four disabled sons.

Knipe and his wife Marty spend virtually every moment of every day providing care, obtaining services and serving as advocates for their children and others with disabilities, both at schools and in churches. Knipe changed careers after 18 years as an aircraft mechanic and now teaches high school special education classes to have more flexibility to meet family needs.

A twice blended family, all four children are termed educable mentally handicapped. Chris, 12, has cerebral palsy, wears braces, gets around in a wheelchair and is learning to communicate. Sam, 9, has spina bifida, spends most of his time in a wheelchair, must undergo intermittent catheterization every four hours but is highly verbal and open to talking about his disabilities.

Eddie, 16, Knipe's stepson by a former marriage, must be maintained on a low-sugar diet. Chris and Tim, 7, are both Knipe's sons. Sam is Mrs. Weston's son by a previous marriage.

The Knipes attended Sunday School Leadership Conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center where they both participated in special education leadership training sessions.

The Knipes are members of Cornerstone Baptist Church in Tucson, Ariz. Knipe also is special family ministry director for the Catalina Baptist Association.

After his divorce, Knipe assumed he would spend the rest of his life as a single parent.

"Who would want to marry into a family like this?" he asked with a smile.

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At the same time, he was praying that God would equip him for the task of rearing three disabled sons. After finding no support groups which addressed spiritual needs, he started one, and through that group he met his wife.

They were married on Valentine's Day 1987.

Just getting the boys up and off to school is a major task. Once they have left home, Mrs. Knipe has about four hours to shop, run errands and take care of home responsibilities before the first returns.

Days often are filled with medical appointments and conferences with teachers, therapists and others. The Knipes had 21 appointments in one month for the four boys.

Knipe said the greatest challenge he faces is "getting up the next morning."

"Feeling like a family" is the biggest obstacle for Mrs. Knipe.

Through seminars and family counseling, "I think we've blended pretty well, but people still refer to the boys as Weston's or mine," she said.

"Educating the educators" has become a major task for the Knipes, whose children are mainstreamed in public schools, often with teachers who have no training in dealing with disabilities.

"We try to be gently confrontational, often on little things you don't think about," said Mrs. Knipe. "We have to keep in touch."

For example, Tim brought home all the Valentines he had taken for classmates because no one helped him know how to distribute them.

At church, the Knipes say the biggest needs of families with disabled members are acceptance and respite care.

Some churches merely tolerate people with disabilities, said Knipe. Starting a special education class in a corner of the church to minister to the disabled may be a good beginning, but if the people remain isolated, they are only tolerated.

"When you allow disabled people to participate in worship, sing in a choir and be greeters, that's acceptance," he said. "You're giving them the opportunity to minister."

The chance for a few hours or even a night away from responsibilities with a disabled family member may be the greatest gift a church member could give, the Knipes agreed. The stress of constant care is the primary reason for the 80-85 percent divorce rate among parents of disabled children.

While the journey is difficult, traveled one day at a time, the Knipes said they have seen God's presence in their lives -- from progress in Chris's ability to communicate to support from their church in sending them to the 1989 Congress on the Church and the Disabled in Wheaton, Ill.

"A total of \$1,040 was collected to pay air fare, tuition, housing and other essentials." They returned home with \$1.30 in their pockets.

"The Lord knew exactly what we needed," laughed Knipe.

"He continues to answer our prayers to equip us to better serve him."

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

EDITORS' NOTE: Please take note of the four stories on church issues run in Baptist Press dated 6/26/91. This series should have been put in the following order:

- "What is a church? People, not buildings"
- "What must a church offer? Programs tailored to needs"
- "What style must churches use? Some tinker with tradition"
- "What must a church be called? 'Baptist' is topic of debate"

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Break outreach barriers
to AIDS patients, families

By Gary W. Griffith

Baptist Press
6/27/91

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--Christians must break through ministry barriers of prejudice and fear to minister to people infected with AIDS and their families, more than 100 Louisiana Baptists were told last week.

But such ministry should not be an option for Christians, if they follow Jesus Christ's example, said Doyle Bailey, Louisiana Baptist stewardship director. Christ dared the religious community of his day to "cast the first stone," while he gave support, compassion and faith to society's outcasts, Bailey pointed out.

Bailey spoke in one of four "AIDS: Crisis for Church and Families" conferences held June 18-20 in three Louisiana cities -- Alexandria, Shreveport and Baton Rouge. The area meetings were the first AIDS conferences held by a state Baptist convention for Southern Baptists, said Earl Sandifer, Louisiana Baptist church administration director.

"These conferences were held around the state to help create an awareness of the need to minister to these folks (with AIDS) and their families," Sandifer said. "We hope and pray it's been successful."

The conferences were sponsored by the Louisiana Baptist church-minister relations division and church administration department, the pastoral section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church administration department and Central Louisiana AIDS Support Services (CLASS).

Conference speaker Trevor From told participants prejudice remains strong against people with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, even among the medical community, as the debilitating virus reaches the 10-year mark since it was first diagnosed in the homosexual community in San Francisco. There are many doctors in the United States who will not treat AIDS patients because they "do not want to be associated with taking care of homosexual or bisexual men," he noted.

The Alexandria doctor admitted: "The largest risk groups are still homosexual and bisexual men, though their percentages are going down. The percentages of other risk groups are going up, especially heterosexuals. Other risk groups are those receiving transfusions and/or blood products, particularly hemophiliacs; IV drug abusers; and those engaging in sexual contact with infected people."

Speaker Jim Hightower gave statistics on the 70,000 to 75,000 "full blown" AIDS cases currently in the United States:

-- 61 percent of adults with AIDS in the United States are homosexual or bisexual men. However, that figure was 90 percent in the early 1980s, he said.

-- 21 percent are IV drug users.

-- 7 percent are in both of the previous categories.

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- percent are hemophiliacs.
- 5 percent are heterosexuals.
- 2 percent are infected through blood transfusions.
- 3 percent are cases in which it cannot be determined how the virus was received.

In just 10 years, the number of heterosexuals with AIDS symptoms has grown from none to more than 3,500, said Hightower, a church administration consultant with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. He noted the heterosexual community can no longer say AIDS is a disease of the gay community.

In fact, some African countries have reported as much as 40 percent of the population being affected by AIDS, with almost 100 percent receiving the virus through heterosexual contact, he pointed out.

"AIDS did not start with gay people, but it was brought to this country in a population that was at high risk for immune complex diseases. So AIDS spread in the gay population, but the start was not there," From noted.

In addition to the more than 70,000 people with "full blown" AIDS cases, there are an unknown number of people who have been infected with the virus and have not yet exhibited its debilitating "syndrome," or collection, of symptoms, Hightower said.

From agreed. "AIDS is like an iceberg in that only the smallest part (of those who have the virus) are symptomatic. Probably the largest portion of people infected are asymptomatic, or have very few symptoms, and are yet untreated or unknown."

Despite a flood of information, and even mass distribution of a brochure on AIDS by the federal government, many people are confused about how the disease is contracted, From noted.

"You don't get it from casual contact: swimming pools, toilet seats, eating foods prepared by a person who is HIV-positive or mosquitoes," From said. "When people start asking about mosquitoes, I tell them, 'If mosquitoes were the carrier, then South Louisiana would not be here.' It's not an easily transmitted disease."

During his address, From fielded a question from a Louisiana Baptist pastor who asked: "If you had a church member who had AIDS, could you absolutely tell the others there is no way they could catch it through handshakes or hugging? Or would you have to say the idea is remote?"

From responded: "I would have to say it is so far remote you couldn't catch it. I've been dealing with AIDS patients since 1981, and out of compassion and necessity, I've not avoided bodily contact at all. If I were going to catch it, I would have done that by now. If patients need a hug, they need a hug."

"Without blood or semen contact, you have to have eight gallons of saliva to possibly get the disease. HIV has been isolated in tears, but the concentration is so low it would take another eight gallons. It's not a hardy virus."

A person cannot get AIDS by shaking hands, hugging or taking care of an AIDS-infected person because the only way to get the virus is through sex or sharing a needle with someone who is HIV positive, From stressed.

Such casual contact is necessary as AIDS is becoming more a chronic illness than an acute illness, Hightower said, explaining AIDS patients are beginning to live longer and better lives than those in the past 10 years.

Hightower urged Christians to take that information and realize now is the time to develop ministries to AIDS patients that have been sorely missed in the past.

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Christians cannot withhold ministry using the excuse that homosexuals brought the disease upon themselves and it is God's judgment, he said. Hightower referred to 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, which lists types of sinners who will not inherit the kingdom of God, including homosexuals.

Christians usually focus on the sin that least applies to them and then read over the rest of the list quickly, he said. "In the Bible there is really no distinction between big and little sins. In Scripture, sin is sin. You must take these (verses) and begin with the sin that applies to you and not the sin that applies to your neighbor."

Christians also must realize "all of us are sinners" and deserve God's judgment, but God instead gives hope and love, Hightower said. "What that loving God asks of us is to do goodness and to show kindness and to love mercy. And our response to people must be out of an idea of 'we love because God first loved us,' not a 'these folks are terrible' response."

During his address at the Alexandria conference, Bailey said Christians need to admit their fears and emotions in order to overcome with reason their reservations of contact and ministry to AIDS patients.

"None of us have the answer. All of us are afraid," said Bailey, an HIV counselor and founding board member of CLASS in Alexandria.

Bailey told of the first CLASS party in which an AIDS patient offered him a cookie he had made. "I looked at that chocolate chip cookie, and that was condensed death to me. I just knew that wasn't chocolate chips but the AIDS virus. Here (in my head) I knew that was totally irrational. Something else was going on in the other parts of my being that made it very difficult. I ate the cookie, expecting to die in two weeks. But I didn't."

Some Baptists have said AIDS is not a disease that affects church members and therefore does not need to be addressed through the church, Bailey said. However, about 50 percent of those who come through CLASS either for testing or counseling have been Baptists, he noted. "Some folks have the attitude that this isn't affecting Baptists, but that's not true. Now we've got to start ministering to AIDS patients."

In order to begin the process toward ministry to AIDS patients, Bailey urged pastors and church members to agree to talk about the issue. "Get AIDS on the agenda and make it okay to talk about," he said. "Admit you don't have all the answers, but put it on the agenda."

He called Southern Baptists to move forward with AIDS ministry and not wait for others to start or support it. "You see the need, you've been empowered and you're willing. What will stop you from ministering?"

"Don't wait until you get the feeling to serve. You may never feel strong enough, compassionate enough or courageous enough. In the doing you develop the feeling."

Hightower offered three tips for effective ministry to AIDS patients: be well-informed (Bailey can provide resources and book lists on AIDS); learn the art of listening, which is the best tool non-medical people bring to AIDS patients; and become an effective grief counselor, who does not overlook the families of AIDS patients.

From urged churches and church members to provide AIDS patients acceptance and friendship, spiritual counseling, a contact person through an organized buddy system and support services, such as transportation.

For resources and information on ministry to AIDS patients, contact Bailey at P.O. Box 311, Alexandria, LA 71309 and (318) 448-3402.