



BUREAUS

- ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
- DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
- NASHVILLE 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
- RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
- WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

January 25, 1994

94-13

- WASHINGTON -- Church bulletins threatened by new postal regulations.
- MISSOURI -- COMMENTARY: Postal regulations -- and T-shirts?
- WASHINGTON -- Court says RICO applies, hands setback to pro-lifers.
- BELGIUM -- Iranian church leader said to be missing.
- FLORIDA -- SBC officials approve Disney specials for SBC in Orlando.
- FLORIDA -- Child care registration now open for '94 SBC.
- FLORIDA -- Anne Graham Lotz to address SBC Ministers' Wives Luncheon.
- KENTUCKY -- Expectant parents, blizzard stir seminarians to action.
- WEST VIRGINIA -- W.Va. executive director accepts a pastorate.
- MIAMI -- Baptists use 'Jesus' film to reach Cubans for Christ.
- OKLAHOMA CITY -- Faith helps police chief deal with man's inhumanity to man; photo.
- OKLAHOMA CITY -- Police sergeant's shooting tests his faith in Christ.
- TEXAS -- Dilday calls for faithfulness to Jesus Christ, denomination.
- NASHVILLE -- Correction.

Church bulletins threatened
by new postal regulations

Baptist Press
1/25/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Religious Press Association coalition has launched a protest campaign over changes and proposed changes in rates for second- and third-class mail.

Prior to changes enacted in late December, publications with less than 10 percent advertising were mailed at second-class nonprofit rates, explained Bob Terry, editor of the Missouri Baptist Convention's Word & Way newsjournal and postal representative for the coalition.

Organizations -- including most state Baptist newsjournals -- paid for-profit rates only on the amount of advertising that exceeded 10 percent, Terry continued.

Under the new regulations, he noted, second-class mailers pay for-profit rates for the entire portion of the publication that contains advertising.

The greatest danger, Terry said, is in third-class proposals, which would affect most newsletters published by 20,000 or more local Southern Baptist churches.

The proposals require non-profits to use the third-class for-profit rate, not the third-class nonprofit rate, to mail materials that, in any degree, seek to buy, sell, recruit, or promote, Terry explained. Ads need not be paid under the U.S.P.S. definition.

The differences could cost nonprofit mailers using third-class mail an additional 40 percent, Terry said, urging nonprofit mailers to protest the changes before Feb. 9 to Manager, Mailing Standards; Marketing Systems, U.S.P.S.; 475 L'Enfant Plaza West SW; Washington, DC 20260-2419.

Feb. 9 is the last day for public comment on the proposed third-class regulations.

The Religious Press Association coalition includes the Southern Baptist Press Association, Evangelical Press Association, Catholic Press Association and Associated Church Press.

Concerning the third-class regulations, Terry further explained, for example, if in a weekly church bulletin a pastor encouraged attendance at an upcoming annual meeting or asked youth choir members to buy T-shirts for their upcoming missions trip, the bulletin could not be mailed third-class at the nonprofit rate, but only for the for-profit rate, Terry said.

The U.S. Postal Service has adopted a "substantially related" test, Terry explained, under which nonprofits can be charged higher postal rates for any materials whose purposes do not match those for which the organization was founded and granted a non-profit mailing permit.

Terry stated, "For the postal service, the decision means more paperwork and more checking of each third-class mailing submitted by nonprofits since the guidelines propose that each mailing be accompanied by a letter verifying that all advertising in a mailing is substantially related to the purpose of the organization. Does the postal service really need more papers to check, more filing to do? Does the postal service have the excess work capacity in its present work force to absorb these extra tasks? Present compliance with delivery standards indicates the answer to both questions is 'no.'

"Also, what constitutes 'substantially related?' When does an ad cease to be substantially related to the organization's purpose and become only related?" Terry asked. He said the judgment would be left to the mailer "but the postal service will review the letters of substantiation, meaning at some point in the process, it will be a matter of individual judgment. If there is no postal review, then the process of mailer substantiation is meaningless work. It becomes nothing more than another hoop the postal service is forcing churches to jump through in order to mail at the nonprofit rate."

Terry added, "'Substantially related' is as wavy as sifting sand. It changes with every personal opinion. Also, does the postal service wish to get into the matter of determining what is substantially related to the work of a church? It seems to me the postal service is treading on dangerous ground when it seeks to make such determinations. Problems of church-state separation are inevitable."

--30--

Information from National & International Religion Report and reporting by Art Toalston were used in this report.

COMMENTARY

Postal regulations
-- and T-shirts?

By Bob Terry

Baptist Press
1/25/94

If your church mails a church newsletter, you may want to know of proposed changes by the United States Postal Service that could jeopardize the rights of churches to mail at nonprofit rates.

For some unknown reason, the postal service has decided that nonprofit publications cannot contain ads for T-shirts. That does not seem like a problem since most church newsletters don't accept ads anyway.

But the postal service does not define ads as most people do. An ad does not have to be paid for to be an advertisement. Further, anything that seeks to buy, sell or promote services or programs of the publisher is considered an advertisement.

Therefore, if something contained in the church newsletter promotes a program of the church, it is considered advertising.

Now consider the church youth choir which is planning a summer mission tour. Special T-shirts are ordered with the name of the church on them. When they arrive, it is announced in the church mailout the T-shirts are in and the young people should pick them up at the church office.

--more--

When the mailout is delivered to the post office, the mail clerk could look at it and refuse to take it because it contains promotion (or advertisement) of T-shirts.

Or it could be accepted and mailed. Then, some weeks or months later, a statement could arrive at the church saying the mailout was not eligible for nonprofit rates and that the church had to pay for-profit rates on the entire mailing.

Sound ridiculous? It is, but this is the proposed regulation. The postal service wrote, "For example, a religious organization's periodical publication containing advertisements for religious tracts could not qualify if it also contained advertisements for T-shirts."

The postal service is trying to solve the problem of some nonprofit organizations who abuse the privilege of nonprofit mailing rates. We understand the intent. But their effort is going to create confusion in churches across the land.

If you think this proposal is a little far fetched, the postal service has suggested comments be sent to Manager, Mailing Standards; Marketing Systems, U.S.P.S.; 475 L'Enfant Plaza West SW; Washington DC 20260-2419.

--30--

Court says RICO applies,
hands setback to pro-lifers

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
1/25/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ruled anti-abortion protesters could be sued under a law targeted for use against organized crime, thereby dealing another blow to the activist wing of the pro-life movement.

The nine justices agreed in *National Organization for Women v. Scheidler* that the 1970 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act could be applied to social protest organizations such as Operation Rescue and Pro-life Action Network and their leaders.

Overturning lower court rulings, the court said RICO does not require proof of an economic motivation for a suit to be brought under the law.

Three days prior to the Jan. 24 opinion, the Supreme Court agreed to accept another pro-life protest case. In *Madsen v. Women's Health Center*, the court will rule whether a protest-free zone can be established around an abortion clinic.

While the NOW ruling only means pro-abortion groups may use RICO as a weapon in court but may not necessarily win such cases, it serves as a setback to activist efforts by some pro-lifers to shut down abortion clinics. It comes on the verge of what appears to be the certain passage of a law making it a federal offense to block the entrance to an abortion clinic or to use violence or force against a clinic and its employees.

The Senate and House of Representatives passed different versions of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act before adjournment in November. Shortly after reconvening, a conference committee from the two houses is expected to try to work out differences before returning the legislation to both chambers. President Clinton has pledged to sign it.

"It's a good thing Martin Luther King marched and advocated civil disobedience before this ruling or he would have been hit with RICO too," said Joseph Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-life Action League in Chicago.

"I think this is a step toward the downfall of RICO. We are not racketeers, and we are not going to back down from our pro-life activities. If anything, we'll step it up. Social protest is at the heart of what America stands for and has been since the Boston Tea Party," Scheidler said.

--more--

Pamela Maraldo, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said the court "has empowered women and reproductive health care providers with a concrete means of defense against anti-choice terrorism -- a pervasive and most insidious form of organized crime by any standard. But while we welcome the court's decision, it is by no means a solution to clinic violence. Groups like Operation Rescue ... will continue to pose a serious threat to women and providers until they are reined in on all fronts."

She called for passage of the FACE Act.

In the case, NOW and other pro-abortion organizations alleged Scheidler, Operation Rescue founder Randall Terry and others formed a national conspiracy to close abortion clinics through a pattern of racketeering which included extortion. Under RICO, a pattern of racketeering includes at least two incidents of criminal acts, such as murder, arson and extortion. The penalties for RICO include prison sentences of as much as 20 years, large fines and forfeiture of property.

The pro-lifers' argument RICO required economic gain as a motive was rejected by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, whose opinion said nowhere in the law "is there any indication that an economic motive is required."

"The questions of whether the (pro-life protesters) committed the requisite predicate acts, and whether the commission of these acts fell into a pattern, are not before us," Rehnquist said. "We hold only that RICO contains no economic motive requirement."

The ruling was "actually very narrow" and leaves pro-life groups with multiple opportunities to win a lawsuit, said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"The Supreme Court did not make RICO over-broad," Whitehead said. "Congress did, and the court is merely insisting that it is Congress' job to fix it. The entire court took a strict construction approach to the case, refusing to engage in judicial activism or legislating from the bench. If Congress wants to limit RICO claims to cases of economic motive, let Congress amend the law to clearly say so.

"This sword cuts both ways, however," he said. "ACT-UP realizes that its leaders might be sued under RICO for some criminal act committed by one of its members protesting at a church. That is why ACT-UP and other liberal activist groups opposed the application of RICO to pro-life groups. One solution would be for a coalition to form calling for the amendment of RICO to exempt social protest organizations from RICO liability."

The ruling found strict constructionist justices Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, who have voiced opposition to the Roe v. Wade opinion legalizing abortion, in agreement with others on the court who support Roe.

The court's ruling means First Amendment questions about RICO's application to ideological groups are free to be addressed when these cases come to trial.

In a concurring opinion, Associate Justice David Souter warned it is "prudent to notice that RICO actions could deter protected advocacy and to caution courts applying RICO to bear in mind the First Amendment interests that could be at stake."

--30--

Iranian church leader
said to be missing

Baptist Press
1/25/94

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)--A Christian church leader has been reported missing in Iran just days after the government released an evangelist facing execution for converting from Islam.

Haik Hovsepian Mehr, superintendent of the Assemblies of God churches in Iran, reportedly disappeared Jan. 19. No information on his whereabouts has come to light since, according to church leaders in Iran who release information through Iranian Christians in Europe and the United States.

--more--

Assemblies of God churches in Iran held a day of prayer and fasting Jan. 22 on Mehr's behalf.

The Iranian government abruptly released Assemblies of God evangelist Mehdi Dibaj Jan. 16 after keeping him in prison for nine years. Dibaj was tried in December for the crime of apostasy, or turning from the religion of Islam. Later a death sentence was announced for Dibaj. But he was freed following a massive publicity campaign by Iranian Christians that resulted in international appeals for his release.

A pattern of persecution by the Iranian government against Christians has persisted in recent years. Church leaders fear Mehr may have been detained by Iranian authorities. He has been picked up for questioning several times in the past.

--30--

**SBC officials approve Disney
specials for SBC in Orlando**

**Baptist Press
1/25/94**

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--A number of arrangements have been announced for the 1994 session of the Southern Baptist Convention June 14-16 in Orlando, Fla., according to SBC officials, including a special package with the popular Disney World.

The annual meeting is at the Orange County Convention Center. Rooms, especially close to the convention center, are going fast, but there are still plenty of rooms in the area, according to Jack Wilkerson, vice president for business and finance for the SBC Executive Committee and the Orlando convention manager.

However, Wilkerson warned, a World Cup Soccer game, scheduled for the weekend after the SBC meeting in Orlando, is already sold out. He urged people planning vacations at the SBC meeting to do so prior to the June 14-16 meeting.

A "minimal" shuttle service is planned, costing \$1 per person per ride, basically along the main International Boulevard where many of the hotels are located. Although the convention center is expanding and under construction, there still will be parking available in close proximity, about one-quarter mile, with about 5,000 spaces. Parking ranges from \$3-4 per day.

Although no attendance forecast has been made for Orlando, its popularity as a family recreation area has led SBC officials to work out an agreement with Disney World for a special package for Southern Baptists.

SBC officials urged convention-goers and families who plan to enjoy Walt Disney World to arrive early. Special -- only offered to SBC attenders -- two- and three-day passes for all three Disney parks are available. The special tickets will not be available at the gate or to the general public. They are good for admission to the Magic Kingdom, EPCOT Center and/or Disney-MGM Studios.

Ticket order forms are available through Convention Planning Services, Inc., 5422 Carrier Drive, Suite 203, Orlando, FL 32819 or by calling toll-free, 1-800-777-5333.

The special SBC packages for the Orlando meeting are available from June 1 through the 21 but exclude June 14-15, the first two days of the SBC annual meeting.

Earlier, SBC officials had sent a letter of protest to the Walt Disney Corporation over a company subsidiary's advertising on "NYPD Blue," a controversial ABC television program.

Morris H. Chapman, SBC Executive Committee president and chief executive officer, said the SBC had expressed its concern over the matter to Disney corporation officials but also understood that many Southern Baptists will be going to Orlando for vacations and will want to visit the popular attractions in the area.

--30--

**Child care registration
now open for '94 SBC**

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Registration for on-site child care for preschool children of out-of-town messengers to the 1994 Southern Baptist Convention, June 14-16 in Orlando, is now being accepted.

Registration material is available by writing to SBC Preschool Child Care, Shirley Dusek, 4585 Saint Brides Court, Orlando, FL 32812.

The material will include information about child care policies, hours of operation, fees and registration forms.

Child care registration will be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. Parents are urged to write for registration materials immediately.

--30--

**Anne Graham Lotz to address
SBC Ministers' Wives Luncheon**

**Baptist Press
1/25/94**

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Anne Graham Lotz will be the featured speaker for the 1994 Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Luncheon June 14 during the SBC annual meeting in Orlando.

According to Ellen Y. Tanner, president of the SBC Ministers' Wives Conference, Lotz has been the featured speaker at many conferences in this country and internationally. Lotz is the daughter of evangelist Billy Graham.

"Joy in the Journey" is the theme for the luncheon.

Married to a Raleigh, N.C., dentist and the mother of three, Lotz has established AnGel ministries which distributes biblical studies.

Tanner said the luncheon is set for the Peabody Hotel, next to the convention center site of the SBC annual meeting. Tickets, in advance, are \$18 (purchased before May 20) but are \$20 if purchased at the door. Ticket purchase includes a complimentary copy of "Joy in the Journey," a book by Jo Ann Leavell.

Tickets can be purchased by writing Sherry Blankenship, P.O. Box 489, Paris, TX 75461. Blankenship is the conference recording secretary.

Officers of the group include Tanner, president, Edmond, Okla.; Ann Collingsworth, vice president, Orlando, Fla.; Dixie Gray, corresponding secretary, Salt Lake City; and Blankenship.

--30--

**Expectant parents, blizzard
stir seminarians to action**

By Pat Cole

**Baptist Press
1/25/94**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Mark Shelton had just finished shoveling three feet of drifted snow away from his car when he got the wonderful and terrible news: His wife, Jennifer, was going into labor.

Shelton, a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., had to get Jennifer to the hospital amid a blizzard that virtually shut down Louisville for three days. A record 16 inches of snow fell on the city Jan. 17. The severe winter storm was followed by several days of sub-zero temperatures.

Emergency medical personnel told the Sheltons it would be three hours before an ambulance could be dispatched to their home. Shelton, a native of Morganton, N.C., wondered if his car could even make it through the deep snow that had piled up on the streets of his apartment complex.

Word of the Shelton's plight spread among fellow students in Village Manor, an apartment community formerly known as Seminary Village. Eight of them braved the sub-zero temperatures to push the Sheltons' car to the city street. Alex Farc, a student from Romania, volunteered to drive Jennifer to the hospital as Mark followed in a car carrying the couple's son S an and Jennifer's mother.

--more--

"There were times I didn't know if we were going to make it," said Mark. "The snow was really deep." Yet Jennifer arrived safely and a few hours later gave birth to a healthy baby boy, Joshua Caleb.

Mark noted Jennifer stayed calm throughout their adventurous trek. Jennifer, a native of Marion, N.C., admitted, however, she was "nervous in a way. Everybody was excited. They were worried about getting there, but I knew I had some time."

Greg Thornbury, the Sheltons' upstairs neighbor, said he rushed to aid the couple when he "heard a lot of commotion outside."

"I looked out the window and saw Mark trying to push his car out of the parking lot," said Thornbury, a Southern student from Winfield, Pa. "We literally had to push their little red Escort out of the lot."

The students' concern for the Sheltons was but one example of the neighborliness that pervaded the seminary community during the blizzard, said seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. "This experience has certainly demonstrated that Southern Seminary pulls together as a family during times of crisis," he said. "Students cleared snow, delivered food, rescued stranded seminarians and entertained frustrated children."

Thanks to the "heroic efforts of work crews and the commitment of faculty, staff and students, the seminary missed only two days of classes during the storm," Mohler said. "Our goal was to get the seminary on line as soon as possible and that was all the more important since we were in the midst of 'J' term."

Vice President for Academic Administration David S. Dockery explained that canceling one class during the three-week January term was equivalent to missing 3.5 classes during the regular semester. About two-thirds of the students were able to brave the hazardous driving conditions to attend classes, said Dockery, stressing, however, the seminary encouraged students to stay home if their drive to campus posed a great risk. Some classes met for extended periods on Saturday to make up for the lost time.

During the blizzard, maintenance workers were busy keeping the seminary heating system functioning and repairing water lines that burst because of the inordinately frigid temperatures. Seminary buildings sustained some water damage from the storm, mostly due to frozen gutter downspouts that sent the melting snow away from normal drainage patterns, said Mike Besspiata, the seminary's director of facilities management.

Crews worked for three days to clear parking lots and sidewalks so classes could resume, said Besspiata. "Some of them worked nearly around the clock," he added.

--30--

W.Va. executive director
accepts a pastorate

By Rick Hatley

Baptist Press
1/25/94

SCOTT DEPOT, W.Va. (BP)--Don R. Mathis, executive director of the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists, has resigned that position to accept the pastorate of Central Baptist Church in Winchester, Ky.

Mathis was elected to the West Virginia post in November 1991 after serving as pastor of Kentucky Baptist churches 27 years. Central Baptist voted to call Mathis as pastor Jan. 23.

A search committee will be recommended to the convention's executive board by the five-member administrative committee of the convention's elected president, first and second vice presidents and recording secretary and finance committee chairman.

--more--

In sharing with his staff, Mathis said, "I shall always cherish these days in West Virginia. These have been days of God's blessings as we have walked together in the will of God. However, in seeking God's will for my serving him in 1994 and beyond, it has become obvious that my best gifts are those of pastor. At the same time, God has opened the door for me to serve a wonderful congregation which has a history of strong Cooperative Program support and evangelistic zeal. The potential of Central to be used of God to impact its immediate area, as well as reaching out to the world, is unlimited. I regret leaving West Virginia, but I look forward with great excitement to beginning my new ministry."

Mathis will be making the transition in late February.

Mathis, who grew up in Hopkinsville, Ky., led Central Baptist Church in Corbin, Ky., from 1979-91 and previously was pastor of churches in Princeton, Cromwell and Crofton, Ky. He was a trustee of the Baptist Sunday School Board from 1983-91 and was president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and chairman of its executive board from 1985-86.

A graduate of Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tenn., Mathis holds master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

--30--

Baptists use 'Jesus' film
to reach Cubans for Christ

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
1/25/94

MIAMI (BP)--About 75 percent of Cubans who have viewed the "Jesus" film in Baptist churches during the communist nation's "special period" have responded to the gospel, said a visiting Cuban Baptist leader.

Thousands of Cubans have seen the film -- which has become an effective evangelistic tool worldwide -- in churches during the past several years, according to Leoncio Veguilla, executive secretary of the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba.

Veguilla, a pastor in Havana, Cuba's capital, was in the United States during January consulting with Southern Baptist and other evangelical mission leaders. He is vice president of the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship.

What Cubans call the "special period" began after the November 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent collapse of the Soviet bloc, according to news reports. With Cuba's close ties with the former Soviet Union, those events reportedly ended about 70 percent of all Cuban imports.

In 1990 Cuban President Fidel Castro announced Cuba had entered a "special period in time of peace," when the economy would function as if Cuba were at war, according to a U.S. State Department report. The Cuban government began rationing food and other goods. Since then fuel shortages have caused transportation problems and power blackouts.

Castro announced plans last July for economic reforms that included making it legal for Cubans to possess and use U.S. dollars. Legalization of the dollar has devalued the Cuban peso, creating even more economic hardship for those Cubans who don't have access to U.S. currency, reports indicate.

Against that backdrop, Baptists in western Cuba are seeing a response to the gospel "like no other time in our history," said Veguilla in a phone interview while in Miami.

"People are looking for something to place their hope in, and many are looking to the churches as the source of their hope. Many are coming to know the Lord through this experience," he said.

Statistics from the western Baptist convention reflect that response. Baptisms in 1992 numbered 1,052, a 244 percent increase over 306 baptisms in 1989. Statistics for 1993 aren't available, but Veguilla predicts baptisms will exceed 1992 totals. The western convention, which relates to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, is one of four Baptist groups in Cuba.

--more--

Western Cuban Baptists count 117 churches, including seven house churches, and 50 mission congregations. Mission congregations are maturing into churches at a faster rate than ever before, Veguilla said. He cited one congregation that last year was constituted into a church in just six months, a process normally taking a year or more in the western convention.

In some of the convention's churches, use of the "Jesus" film is replacing evangelistic crusades that earlier would have featured a visiting evangelist -- now made difficult because of transportation problems and food shortages. Churches still conduct crusades but usually invite a local pastor as evangelist rather than an out-of-town preacher, Veguilla said.

Other evangelicals and some Roman Catholics in Cuba also have been showing the "Jesus" film, he noted. Among Cubans who have seen it, "most of the comments have been positive, even in government circles," Veguilla said.

In fact, a police official in Havana recently accepted Christ as Savior after watching the film. The official, who now attends one of the city's Baptist churches, is seeking permission to get the film shown elsewhere in Havana, Veguilla said.

Cuban Baptist leaders also are trying to get Cuba's national television to air the movie. Cuban television recently broadcast some films with religious overtones such as "Ben Hur."

Meanwhile, Cuban Baptist leaders show "strong determination to work" in spite of obstacles such as transportation difficulties, said Mark Smith, Southern Baptist missionary to the Caribbean. Smith traveled to Cuba last December to help conduct a Christian education seminar for about 150 pastors and lay leaders in the western convention. Conference leaders also included several other Southern Baptist missionaries, Foreign Mission Board officials and Latin American Baptists.

Smith said he was impressed Cuban Baptist pastors don't display a complaining spirit of "This has just gotten too hard. We just won't do it anymore." Rather, their attitude is "Yes, it's hard, but we're going to continue to do the work (of the church)," Smith said.

--30--

**Faith helps police chief deal
with man's inhumanity to man**

By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
1/25/94

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--For a police officer, dealing with man's inhumanity to man can take a toll. Some become hardened and angry, but for Oklahoma City Police Chief Sam Gonzalez, the answer has been a close relationship with Jesus Christ.

A member of Oklahoma City's Village Baptist Church, Gonzalez sponsored the first annual Chief's Prayer Breakfast there last year. About 250 people attended, including about 100 police officers.

Gonzalez came to Oklahoma City as chief in October 1991, after 28 years with the Dallas Police Department. There he made deputy chief in 1987, assistant chief in 1988 and executive assistant chief in 1990. From August 1990 to March 1991 he was acting chief of the department, which is one of the largest in the country.

The last few years would have been too much stress to handle, Gonzalez said, if it were not for the close walk with God he has had.

"The Dallas Police Department has 3,000 police officers in a city of 3 million people." He said without God's leadership, "I'm not smart enough with my own wisdom to be making decisions there ..."

"But the last six or seven years we have had a really close walk with the Lord. My wife and I decided to be more active Christians, and everything seemed to be smoother.

"There are a lot of problems that face our nation today as a result of our sinful nature," he said. "Our leaders all need to be part of a prayerful America that turns back to God."

--more--

Although his father died when Gonzalez was very young, he said he was raised by a godly mother and has been a Christian most of his life. He had been committed to serving Christ for a long time, but he said one of his biggest decisions had to do with tithing.

He made the decision while he and his wife, Barbara, were members of Shiloh Terrace Baptist Church in Dallas. At the time, both of his children were attending Baylor University.

"We had been tithers for many years, but my salary was such that I felt v ry comfortable about it," he said. "When our pastor preached on tithing, I did not feel guilty. But one Sunday he said if you are giving out of your excess, th Lord can't bless it."

That struck home, so Gonzalez and his wife committed to increase their tithe every year for five years.

Although he said he tries to avoid the message of giving just to get something from God, he said his faithfulness was rewarded every year.

"Every time it came time for us to make that yearly increase, I either got a promotion or a pay increase."

Sticking to his commitment brought him into the closer relationship with God, he said.

"That commitment of our tithe turned into a commitment of day-to-day living for God," he said. "Finances are the first thing we need to give to the Lord, but it is not because the Lord needs my money. It is because he needs my obedience.

"I do it because I love him, not because I have to."

Gonzalez said his personal relationship with Christ is very important in dealing with the pressures of police work.

"I don't know how you can deal with the daily miseries of humanity you see" without that personal relationship, he said. "You may be loading a 5-year-old boy on a stretcher, knowing that you have a 5-year-old like him at home. Then, the next moment you may be out directing traffic.

"There are two ways of dealing with it," he said. "Either the Lord helps you or you turn somewhere else and become cold without any passion or compassion. Th police profession has one of the highest divorce rates of any profession. It is because of all the problems we see.

"If you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, there is no place to take the pent-up emotions and anger."

Gonzalez said he has enjoyed his two years as police chief in Oklahoma City, due in part to the slower pace and the quality of officers.

One thing that helps is the family atmosphere in Oklahoma City, where many officers have fathers and uncles who worked for the department or who have spouses working there now. In Dallas, he estimated that 90 percent of the officers were not even native Texans, whereas about 85 percent of Oklahoma City's police force was born and raised in Oklahoma City.

"Oklahoma City has a very good police department," he said. "We love the city."

--30--

(BP) photo available upon request from the Baptist Press central office.

Police sergeant's shooting
tests his faith in Christ

By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
1/25/94

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--When Sgt. Tony Crawford took the call for three suspicious people in a wealthy Dallas neighborhood Nov. 13, 1991, it seemed like just a routine call.

Little did he know the call would completely and forever change his life.

--more--

Crawford, who has been featured on CBS-TV's "Rescue 911" program, spoke at the first annual Chief's Prayer Breakfast at Village Baptist Church in Oklahoma City last fall. Oklahoma City Police Chief Sam Gonzalez, a member of the church, hosted the meeting.

A Dallas police officer since 1982, Crawford had been promoted to sergeant in 1987, then a year later was asked by Gonzalez, who was then executive assistant chief of the Dallas Police Department, to work for him. When it looked like Gonzalez would be promoted to chief, Crawford volunteered to go back on patrol.

"I liked patrolling," he noted. "I liked to stop people and to take people to jail."

On that night, Crawford recounted, "I was going to take a vacation day, but since Thanksgiving was coming up I thought I'd save it."

Police officers really look forward to their break times so they can relax a little, but as Crawford listened, he realized there were so many calls coming in that no one had time for a break. So, he volunteered to take over while they went on break.

"We got a call of three suspicious men pushing a bicycle in the Lakewood Addition," he said. "The calls kept coming in and we could almost pinpoint the exact direction they were traveling."

After unsuccessfully searching for the men, he drove around to the back of a school. There were two young men there. They did not fit the descriptions being broadcast, so he asked if they had seen the three men. They said no, but when he asked where they were going they gave conflicting answers. So he had them lean against the car while he searched them.

While patting the first teen-ager down, the young man pushed him away. Out of instinct, Crawford looked to his left; the other suspect had a gun aimed at Crawford's head. He pushed the gun away as it fired, then he struggled with the suspect for a few moments. The suspect aimed at the sergeant's chest, but the gun misfired. He fired several more times, but the gun misfired each time.

Finally, as Crawford dove for cover, the suspect shot him once in the back, severing his spine.

"I heard him standing over me, trying to fire his gun at my head," he said. "I pulled my gun out and tried to release the safety. I heard a voice say, 'Don't do that.' Then he took my gun from me and tried to fire it. He couldn't get it to fire, so he started beating me with the gun. I tried to take out a picture of my daughter to say, 'Don't do this to her,' and they turned and ran off."

Another officer drove up and saw his car with the doors open and lights flashing. As she was looking around, she saw a hand waving and found Crawford lying in the street. She called for help and Crawford was rushed to the emergency room; his wife, Pat, was called in, getting there about an hour after the shooting.

"On the way to the hospital I had forgotten who was in charge of my life, (that) my focus was not on God," Crawford said. "Pat is my 'kick in the pants.' I firmly believe the Lord knew what was going to happen to us before the creation of the world, and he provided Pat for me."

"When she got to me, she was too upset to pray. She just started whispering 'Jesus, Jesus' over and over. I got my focus back on him and I was able to sleep."

Doctors told Pat and Tony he would never be able to walk again. He is currently confined to a wheelchair, but Crawford said a vision his wife had leads him to believe he will one day walk again.

Pat had been reading Mark 11:22-26, about faith that can move a mountain. She turned out the lights and when she closed her eyes she saw a yellow light in the form of a cross. That faded into a mountain that began to crumble, then that faded into a scene with Tony, Pat and their daughter walking up the aisle of a church, where he was giving his testimony.

"We believe totally, 100 percent, that I will walk again," Crawford said. "We feel privileged that we have been put into this spot."

Friends and co-workers have remarked on Crawford's good attitude and wonder how he can remain so upbeat.

"My pat answer is, 'When you have faith in Jesus Christ, you can do anything,'" he said.

When the two young men involved in the shooting were caught, Crawford said local TV reporters asked him how he felt. He said he had no ill feelings toward them and hoped they could turn their lives around.

"They asked, 'How can you forgive them?' I said if God has forgiven them, who am I to not forgive them?"

Still a sergeant with the Dallas Police Department, Crawford said he gets strange looks when people see a police officer in a wheelchair.

"When I go out to eat, people probably think I am the guy who writes tickets for handicapped parking violations," he joked.

"I am very proud of my profession," he said. "I like to help people. If I had known that this would happen, I would still be a police officer."

--30--

Dilday calls for faithfulness
to Jesus Christ, denomination

By Bob Murdaugh

Baptist Press
1/25/94

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Faithfulness in ministry must be based on more than flashing emotion, Russell H. Dilday told students during the first week of the spring semester at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Dilday, president of Southwestern, said faithfulness must be based on a deep commitment to Jesus Christ as King of the minister's life.

"We sometimes blatantly accept the world's standards of success and our heroes are too often the ministers who make the headlines, who are highly paid in chief places with lifestyles of the rich and famous. We forget that successful ministers in the Bible are those who are genuinely faithful," Dilday said. "Jesus Christ is looking for ministers who will show lasting endurance, tenacity and unwillingness to give up."

Dilday cited statistics that the average tenure of a minister in a Southern Baptist Convention church today is less than two years. "Someone's not sticking with it," he said.

In addition to remaining faithful to the call, every Baptist minister must be faithful to the denomination's heritage and, above all, to God, Dilday said.

Faithfulness is "like music in the ears of God," he said. Future generations and our returning Lord "will find us out. We are going to be held accountable for how we live, and faithfulness will be the ultimate criteria."

The Baptist denomination's heritage was "secured, preserved and passed on to us as a sacred trust at enormous cost and bloody price," Dilday reminded.

"In order to meet the trend of baby boomers who don't care much about brand names and loyalty to denominational identity, some leaders are suggesting that we ought to give up our Baptist identity, leave Baptist out of our name, and instead adopt a kind of generic form of denominational life," Dilday said. "Let's not forget that even with our denomination's imperfections, we are responsible for distinctives that make Baptist not just a brand name. It represents ideals that are very important and crucial to which we must be faithful."

Dilday addressed the current problem of Christians who, to be politically correct, conceal their faith in Christ as though belief in Christ as the Son of God is somehow unfair to unbelievers.

"Tolerance has been made a virtue, when, in fact, God demands intolerance when it comes to our faith in him," Dilday said. "We are to have no other gods before him."

--30--

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "CLC issues moral framework for health care proposals," dated 1/20/94, please make the following changes: in the 20th paragraph insert the word "necessarily" before "mandating a government-run system, the document says." In the 28th paragraph replace "Southern Seminary" with "Southeastern Seminary."

Thanks,
Baptist Press

BAPTIST PRESS is available on

CompuServe

To order an SBCNet kit call 1-800-458-2772.
For more information contact David Haywood
at 1-800-325-7749, ext. 2895,
or at CompuServe ID 70007,5000.

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37203

Southern Baptist Library and
Archives