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EEOC guidelines may stifle
Christian witness, some warn By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
2/11/94

WASHINGTON (BP)--Christians may face severe hindrances in sharing the gospel in their work place if proposed federal employment guidelines are adopted, evangelical leaders have warned.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency responsible for combating job discrimination, is in the final stages of issuing revised guidelines on harassment, including that based on religion.

The guidelines define harassment as "verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual" because of his or her religion or that of his or her "relatives, friends or associates." The harassment also:

- "Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment;
- "Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, or
- "Otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities."

Harassment includes not only slurs but "threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts," as well as writing or art which "denigrates or shows hostility or aversion" toward a person or group.

Under the guidelines, the employer has a "duty to maintain a working environment free of harassment on any of these bases," including religion.

"We are deeply concerned that the guidelines would have a chilling effect on religious freedom and religious expression in the work place," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "If a person shares his faith with a co-worker on lunch break, the person and his employer might be charged with religious harassment."

Other hypothetical situations which could result in harassment charges under the proposed EEOC guidelines, some attorneys have said, are:

- An employer sharing his testimony, including the message all unbelievers will spend eternity in hell, with a subordinate, who may find the action of his or her boss "intimidating" or may charge it "shows hostility or aversion;"
- An employee having a cross or poster with a gospel message on the office wall, which creates "an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment;"
- A supervisor continually says "Praise the Lord" in the office, which causes an "offensive work environment."

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"If it's clear that the employer is operating his business on faith principles, ... is that a violation?" asked Forest Montgomery, general counsel of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Montgomery hopes the EEOC will meet with evangelical attorneys and respond positively to their concerns, but it is late in the process. The comment period for the guidelines expired in November. Their existence and potential dangers apparently became well known only in recent weeks.

The EEOC could issue the guidelines at any time, an agency spokesperson said. The EEOC has received a large number of comments, she said.

The CLC's Whitehead said, "It is one thing for sexual harassment guidelines to prohibit physical and verbal conduct of a sexual nature which is unwelcome and offensive, but trying to apply the same concept to religion is to mix apples and oranges.

"Religious discrimination is and should be unlawful," he said, "but the new guidelines create the risk of encouraging more and more lawsuits to disrupt and divide the work place along religious lines. Religion should be left out of the guidelines altogether. The agency and courts have enforced the existing law since (the 1964 Civil Rights Act) without such guidelines, and they should continue to do so."

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COMMENTARY

New EEOC regs could lump
Bible with Playboy calendar

By Bill Haynes

Baptist Press
2/11/94

What does sharing your faith, a Bible on your desk or playing Christian music on your radio have in common with telling dirty jokes, having a Playboy calendar or making sexually suggestive remarks to another person have in common? If these are done at work, you could be charged with harassment.

Under new proposed regulations from the EEOC the category of "religious harassment" will be strictly defined in the same manner as sexual harassment.

Religious harassment could be defined as anything that is offensive to another party or that which the other party does not care to hear. However, nowhere in the Constitution of the United States is there a provision that we have a freedom from being offended. If that were the case, Christians could charge harassment every day in some form or another because of the language or images they encounter without their desire or consent.

The proposed regulations were open for "public discussion" from Oct. 1, 1993, until Nov. 30, 1993. The notice indicating the solicitation of comments from the general public was printed in the Federal Register on October 1. The EEOC states that it is currently reviewing the comments made during that period but gave no indication as to what the comments were.

Under these new regulations it has been speculated that an employer who allows a Bible study to take place during lunch or before work hours, but on the business property, could be held liable of religious harassment if someone objected.

A business, such as Chick-fil-A, which has as its corporate statement, "To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us, to have a positive influence on all who come in contact with Chick-fil-A," could be in real trouble. Under these proposed guidelines, if an agnostic or atheist employee felt intimidated by this statement, he could file a complaint with the EEOC and claim religious harassment.

The real danger of these regulations is not so much in the enforcement of them as in the "chilling effect" they may have due to potential liability. This is much the same as the effect that has been brought to bear on public school systems. Praying and meeting for Bible clubs are allowed under the law and have even been upheld in the Supreme Court (see *Mergen's v. Westside School District*, 1991). But many school administrators, fearing complaints from parents or, worse, the ACLU, have simply attempted to bar all religious activity.

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Dudley Rochelle, a Yale Law School graduate who has been a labor attorney in Atlanta 18 years, has issued an opinion on the proposed regulations in which she cites three main problems: 1) The guidelines broaden the definition of religious harassment and extend potential liability beyond the current legal standards; 2) The guidelines, as applied to religious harassment violate the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; and 3) The rights of both the employer and the employee are not protected.

Rochelle, in her conclusion states, "In practical terms, the only sure course for an employer seeking to avoid liability for religious harassment would be to prohibit any discussion or expression of religion in the workplace, i.e., to institute a 'religion-free workplace' The overall effect of these Guidelines would be to infringe on the rights to freedom of speech and free exercise of religion guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The Guidelines also ignore the recent enactment of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which applies a strict scrutiny test to any law that substantially burdens religious practice."

The time for public input is past. The only way that this issue can be dealt with is for congressmen or senators, spurred by concerned citizens, to raise the issue and demand that these proposed regulations be rejected.

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Haynes is pastor of First Baptist Sweetwater in suburban Orlando, Fla.; president of the American Center for Law and Justice-Atlanta; and one of three fellows with the American Center for Law & Justice in Virginia Beach, Va.

FMB trustees vote to increase
volunteers, missions exposure

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press
2/11/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees pass recommendations Feb. 9 to expand opportunities for volunteers to serve overseas and to expose more Southern Baptists to missions.

Meeting Feb. 7-9 in Richmond, Va., trustees also appointed 45 new missionaries -- including seven children of missionaries -- and reappointed four others, bringing the total mission force to 3,958.

The new missionaries include David and Kelly Rogers, who will serve in Spain. He is the son of former Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., a Memphis suburb.

Trustees also heard challenges to raise their spiritual sights to more lofty goals to evangelize the world and honored two veteran staff members retiring at the end of March: John Cheyne, who has led the board's worldwide human needs ministry since 1978, and Minette Drumwright, director of the international prayer strategy office since 1985.

Trustee chairman John Jackson of California also named a five-member search committee, chaired by Bill Sutton of McAllen, Texas, to seek a replacement for another retiring staff member, Alan Compton, who will step down Dec. 31 as vice president of the office of communications. Compton, a 34-year veteran of the mission field and FMB staff, will be 65 in May.

Other search committee members are Stephen Davis of Arkansas, Sam Friend of Washington, Paul Pressler of Texas and Lawson Swearingen of Louisiana.

FMB President Jerry Rankin and Henry Blackaby of the Home Mission Board issued challenges for Southern Baptists to join God's plan to reach the world.

Rankin urged trustees and staff to focus on the denomination's Bold Mission Thrust goals, which he said "were born in the heart of God," and refuse to focus on "trivial issues and secondary concerns."

"I want to affirm as clearly and strongly as I can that these last six years of the century will be given to meeting Bold Mission Thrust," he said. "We will analyze the methods, mobilize the resources, organize the manpower, revitalize the strategies and emphasize God's power in order to evangelize the world now."

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Blackaby, a Southern Baptist leader in spiritual awakening, urged the board to "attempt the impossible" because "nothing is impossible for God."

He warned against reducing God to a comfortable level. If mission planners only tackle what is possible according to physical and human resources, he said, they perform a disservice to God.

Blackaby, director for prayer and spiritual awakening at the Home Mission Board, has agreed to work part time with the Foreign Mission Board and the Sunday School Board as a special assistant to each agency's president in the area of spiritual awakening.

Two FMB trustee actions will widen exposure of Southern Baptists to missions: 1) a decision to hold more board meetings and appointment services outside Richmond, where the board is headquartered, and 2) a policy to expand use of volunteers overseas.

Trustees voted to increase out-of-town meetings from one to three (four in years when they meet in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention). In the process, they would cut overall meetings from six to five, except in years they meet at the convention.

The policy on volunteers grew out of a study by a committee of trustees and staff appointed in October 1992. It reaffirms the priority of career missionaries while acknowledging the importance of volunteers to the board's overall strategy, according to trustee Bob Oxford of Colorado, chairman of the committee. It aims to increase the number of volunteers going overseas through the board and outlines principles for cooperating with Southern Baptist volunteer groups working outside board channels.

"Volunteers are a resource that can impact a lost world," Rankin said. "We need to mobilize that resource and develop the kind of strategy that incorporates volunteers -- working alongside career missionaries -- into all we're trying to accomplish overseas in Jesus' name."

Jim Furgerson, director of the board's volunteers in missions department, added: "The Great Commission wasn't just given to missionaries. It was given to all Southern Baptists . . . This policy will cause Southern Baptists to look seriously at their personal commitment to carrying out the Great Commission." Volunteers can't take the place of missionaries, Furgerson said, but they "can sure hold the board while (missionaries) drive the nails."

Missionaries named at the February meeting included three people whose assignments involve significant work among overseas volunteers. Mike and Kay Norfleet, former missionaries to Taiwan, were reappointed as missionaries to Ukraine, a republic of the former Soviet Union. The Norfleets, from Marlow, Okla., will coordinate the work of short-term volunteers in Ukraine, including volunteers who don't work directly through the Foreign Mission Board.

New missionary Kathy Abshure, of Ringgold, La., will coordinate work among volunteer teams traveling to Central Asia. The work of the Norfleets and Abshure will free up time for other Southern Baptist personnel in those regions to handle their primary assignments.

In separate actions, trustees:

-- Approved a motion by trustee Pat Bullock of Texas to refute comments attributed to former FMB President R. Keith Parks and former vice president Harlan Spurgeon. The two reportedly said that the board has adequate resources to support missionaries if income drops because of increased contributions to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of Southern Baptist moderates. Parks and Spurgeon both retired from the board, citing disagreements with trustees, and now work with the CBF.

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-- Approved, in a related action, a motion by trustee Paul Pressler to attach a letter to the minutes read to the board by trustee Ron Wilson of California. The letter called the statements by Parks and Spurgeon misleading and cited reasons Wilson feels they are wrong. It also asked if Parks was correct when he urged increased giving to the Foreign Mission Board while he was president for 12 years, or if he's correct now. Parks has since stated he was not saying the board should dip into reserve funds for the current budget, but rather that the board has funds to cover emergencies and would be able to support missionaries if the funds dropped.

-- Reversed a decision, reported earlier, to dedicate a new history of the board to Parks and his wife, Helen Jean. Trustees voted to dedicate the book, to be published in connection with the board's 1995 observance of its 150th year, to the 10 men who have served as board president over 150 years. That includes Parks and Rankin.

The decision to change the dedication "is appropriate because we felt it's important to give equal recognition to all 10 presidents because the book (by church historian William R. Estep) is a history of the board" and has chapters on each president, said Bill Hall of Kentucky, who chaired a trustee subcommittee.

-- Heard a clarification about a report published in the January-February 1994 issue of The Commission, the board's magazine, about a recent charismatic movement among Argentine Baptists. Bill Goff, area director for Spanish South America, said he and his staff have monitored the situation since it began in late 1992. He said no missionaries in Argentina were participating in the movement, known in charismatic circles as "slaying in the (Holy) Spirit." The movement in Argentina has roots in the charismatic practices of Florida evangelist Benny Hinn.

Goff said the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Argentina has taken a stance against the activity and has attempted to clarify and publish Baptist doctrine regarding the Holy Spirit. The mission and some national convention leaders have sponsored some conferences designed to help Argentine Baptists and missionaries deal with the issue. He told trustees his staff is trying to make sure that "whatever we do we don't divide the work of the mission."

Trustee Bill Sutton, who chairs both the board's communications committee and the search committee to find a new vice president for communications, commended The Commission for openly and honestly reporting the events in Argentina.

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Burkett adds Clinton impact
to 'Economic Earthquake' By Jeff Hooten

Baptist Press
2/11/94

GAINESVILLE, Ga. (BP)--What would prompt a prominent Christian financial counselor to begin writing books about the entire U.S. economy?

Larry Burkett, a member of First Baptist Church in Gainesville, Ga., says for two years he resisted writing such books. He didn't want to be labeled an alarmist. At one point though, he agreed to gather statistics to help someone else write a book.

"I started gathering the information," he recalls, "and the more I gathered, the more I realized that somebody had to tell the truth about the economy." The result was the 1991 best-seller, "The Coming Economic Earthquake" (Moody), in which Burkett predicted the U.S. economy would face a severe crisis before the decade's end. He said the "earthquake" could be "the greatest economic calamity of the millennium."

Burkett's warning didn't fall on deaf ears. The book has sold more than 540,000 copies to date. Since Earthquake, six other Burkett titles have made Bookstore Journal's best-seller lists.

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Currently, Burkett is wrapping up a new version of "The Coming Economic Earthquake," which has been "updated and expanded for the Clinton agenda." In the book, a March release from Moody, Burkett re-evaluates the nation's economy in light of Clinton's new budget, the North American Free Trade Agreement and the proposed reform of the health care system.

In this interview, Burkett discusses the economy's future.

Q: What's your general economic analysis for the mid- to late '90s?

Burkett: First, I don't think I'm an economic analyst at all. I don't pretend to be. But it doesn't take much economic acumen to figure out there's a problem when a country owes \$4.5 trillion and annually spends \$300 billion to \$400 billion more than it makes.

A family can't forever spend more than it makes, and the same is true at the national level. What we need is a good dose of common sense in national economics, and that's not happening.

Q: In updating "The Coming Economic Earthquake," has your outlook changed since writing the first edition?

Burkett: My part of the (first edition) was actually done in February of 1991. So now I'm trying to look at where we were then, where we are now and whether my analysis was accurate.

Three years should be enough time to determine if I was accurate, and based on what I'm reading right now, I'd say we're probably right on or slightly ahead of the curve in terms of debt and the other factors I presented in the book.

Q: Do the country's problems stem from straying from biblical economic principles?

Burkett: Yes, they do. First, I believe that God's Word is the handbook for operating an economy. It's worked well for thousands of years.

Second, I think that God expresses common sense to people. And when you look at how we're operating, it's not by common sense. For example, Scripture sets patterns for government and individual spending -- one of which involves debt. The Bible doesn't prohibit borrowing, but it does lay down some guidelines. It says debt should never be used frivolously, which government and individuals do regularly.

Also, the Bible prescribes that debt should never be long-term. Seven years was the traditional term of debt in Scripture. Yet now we have debt that's forever. The government has no plan to pay it off. None whatsoever. You've not heard one plan on how we're going to pay the debt back.

We do keep hearing about how to reduce the deficit, but the new budget bill did nothing but reduce the increase in the deficit.

Third, the Bible says not to stand surety for your debt -- with everything you have being risked for every new dollar you borrow. Yet that's what we do. We have a whole country in surety.

When a family is overspending, you don't solve its problems with more money. The family members will just spend it and need more. Until they're willing to discipline themselves, to live within their income -- then make further cuts so they can start repaying debt -- they will never get themselves out of debt.

Apparently, the leadership of our country doesn't have the fortitude to take that kind of a step.

Q: How will the current trend affect the government and the governed?

Burkett: Let me give you an example to put things in perspective. In 1963, Americans saved -- in inflation-adjusted dollars -- twice what they save now. And in '63, the government took about 8 percent of American savings to fund its deficit. Now, we save half what we saved in '63, and the government takes 70 percent of all these savings to fund its deficit.

If this track continues, in three years -- four at the most -- the government will take 100 percent of all the savings in the economy. That means there will be no money available for any business anywhere. And, still running at a deficit, the government will need yet more tax money.

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The money won't be raised by direct tax. It will probably be a value-added tax or loss of deductions, but non theless, more money will be pouring into government. But within five to seven more years, the government will reach a point at which it can't fund itself anymore. It won't be able to raise more tax dollars or borrow any more money. It will simply run out of the ability to fund its deficit because it's not willing to cut spending right now.

Q: What will happen at that point?

Burkett: The government can't default on its debt. If so, the dollar is worthless, and the little old lady living off her treasury bill in Paducah, Ky., won't have any money coming in.

When you can't raise taxes, borrow or default, what do you do? You print money. That's what every government in the past has done.

A severe economic downturn will precede this crisis point, and that creates a need for additional government services -- which means the government will need more money. So the government will start printing it. Then inflation will hit America on a scale we've never seen, not even during the late 1970s.

Q: Just how bad will "the coming economic earthquake" be?

Burkett: We're not facing the apocalypse. It won't be the total collapse of an economy, with everything coming to a stop and everybody starving. That's nonsense.

Seventy percent of all businesses will probably survive, and 75 percent of the jobs will survive. But can you imagine living in an America in which 30 percent of businesses have failed and 25 percent of the people are unemployed?

Other generations have gone through such times because they've made the same mistakes we've made, only ours are larger. But I think people in previous generations had more character. Maybe they had more hope. They understood the source of their strength, God, and they drew from that strength.

In this generation, we've tried to de-Christianize society, to absolutely eliminate God. And when you do that, you pay a price. My question isn't whether we can survive -- we absolutely will survive -- it's how difficult it will be for those who are unprepared. It's going to be tough if you're not prepared.

I have to be realistic and tell you there aren't any silver bullets out there to solve this problem. Families who are in debt are going to have a hard time because what you're in debt for belongs to somebody else. It could easily be lost.

The first advice I give any family is -- if you can -- get out of debt. Some people reading this interview can pay off their homes today. They have the money invested someplace else, but I think they should use it to pay off their homes.

Others can't do that, but they could pay off their cars. Those who can't do this could start by paying off their credit cards and making a commitment to get out of debt and live without charging on credit cards.

People need to start developing some surplus money so that they have a little slack in their budget. That way, if they meet with financial problems, they aren't in financial crisis. Unfortunately, with 90 percent of American families, if they lost one paycheck, they'd be in instant financial crisis.

Also, people should become active in their communities and churches.

The local church should resume doing what it was designed to do: provide aid to people who have temporary needs, help them get their lives back in order, help them make house or rent payments, help them find jobs.

Christians can do this. Perhaps 25 percent of Americans are evangelical Christians, and we can do a lot together.

Finally, get involved in politics. You can't stand on the sidelines anymore because there are no sidelines. You must get politically involved at the local and national levels. If you've elected people to office who aren't doing what they should be doing, get them out. To do this, support the people who are doing the right things. Give them your time and your money, and vote.

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Washington listens to numbers. Those who swing the biggest numbers get the most attention. We know that we've got the right value system. We just haven't organized and promoted it well.

I don't mean that we need to push our individual values on everyone. But this country once ran on Christian principles, and anybody who denies that knows nothing about American history. My goodness, just go to Washington, D.C. and read the inscriptions on the buildings. They tell you of America's heritage. We need to get back to that heritage.

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**Gambling is life-or-death issue
to Mississippi Baptist ethicist**

By Ken Camp

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2/11/94

DALLAS (BP)--Paul Griffin Jones II sees gambling as a life-or-death issue. When Jones fought gambling in Mississippi, he and his family received 64 death threats, and 14 attempts were made to harm them.

Jones, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission, described his experiences and the challenge facing Texans opposed to casinos when he addressed the annual meeting of Texans Against Gambling in Dallas.

"If you get visible, if you get vocal, they'll want you. They'll go after you," he warned the Texas Against Gambling board of directors.

Jones recounted his family's brushes with drive-by shootings, stalkers and vehicular assaults including:

- an attempted assassin with a 9 mm automatic gun shooting 11 holes in the side of his car, including one that missed him by only four inches;
- a stalker who followed his wife from a mall, down a busy highway at high speed and into the parking lot of a police station before realizing where she was leading him; and
- a driver who forced his car off an embankment, doing \$4,000 worth of damage to his car and missing a steep cliff by just half a mile.

Pointing out that some of the death threats and violent acts likely were due to his positions on racial justice and family violence as well as gambling, Jones said any public stand for righteousness carries risks.

"Be paraboloni," he challenged the Texans, citing the New Testament Greek word the Apostle Paul used to describe one who gambled his life and fortune for the sake of what was right.

Among the risks facing Texans Against Gambling is the risk of failure, unless they can overcome the kind of hurdles that hindered anti-gambling forces in Mississippi, Jones said.

Baptists and other conservative Christians in Mississippi were unable to defeat gambling in their state, he said, because of their inability to create alliances across boundaries of theology, politics, economics, gender and race.

"Mississippi lost the fight against gambling in 1619 when the first Africans were brought to what is now the United States and slavery was imposed," he said, noting that the resulting legacy of mistrust between the races in Mississippi made it difficult to build coalitions against gambling.

That division became even more deeply entrenched in the 1950s and 1960s when Southern Baptists failed to stand with African Americans in the struggle for civil rights, he said.

"We came to them when we wanted something from the black community, but we were unwilling to invest ourselves in the African American community," Jones said.

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Likewise, Baptists and other evangelicals failed to relate to the disadvantaged, to women's groups, to public education, to the business community and to mainstream denominations -- until the need arose for coalition-building in the fight against gambling. Then, Jones said, it was too late.

Because conservative Christians were unable to build alliances, there are now 19 casinos operating in Mississippi -- including four in what had been the nation's poorest county -- and pawn shops are the No. 1 growth industry along the state's Gulf Coast, Jones said.

Seventy percent of the money wagered in casinos is bet by Mississippians, he said, pointing out, "That's \$500 million that's not being spent on real goods and services."

Broadening the base of support for Texans Against Gambling -- including providing the organization a more secure financial base -- was a major topic of discussion at the TAG board meeting.

Citing a Gallup poll that revealed two-thirds of Americans see nothing wrong with gambling, Dan Martin, executive director of Texans Against Gambling, pointed out that includes a considerable number of churchgoing people.

"We must find a way to make gambling a front-burner issue again in our churches," Martin said. "And we don't have a year (until the next Texas legislative session) to do it. Now is the time to begin fighting casinos. Now is the time to begin building public opinion."

The multi-million dollar casino industry has "pulled out all the stops" in an effort to gain entry into Texas, he said. But unlike the well-financed casino lobby, Texans Against Gambling is struggling to survive financially.

"The next two to three months will tell the tale of whether this organization will continue to exist as a full-time presence in Austin," Martin said.

In other business, the Texans Against Gambling board:

-- honored Judge Abner McCall, president emeritus of Baylor University, Waco, for his decades of devotion to resisting the growth of legalized gambling in Texas;

-- agreed to consider joining the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission in filing a legal brief urging Attorney General Dan Morales to rule that a statewide constitutional referendum would be required before casino gambling could be legalized in Texas.

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EDITORS' NOTE: In response to a move in Tennessee's legislature to legalize gambling, Tennessee's Baptist and Reflector newsjournal developed this story on the impact of gambling on a Mississippi county.

Casinos bring cash, trouble
to one of poorest U.S. counties By Connie Davis

Baptist Press
2/11/94

TUNICA, Miss. (BP)--Henry Lee of Tunica, Miss., has met them -- tourists from Tennessee and other states visiting his hometown. Until a year ago, a tourist in Tunica was rare. That was before the riverboat-style casinos opened along the nearby Mississippi River about 18 months ago.

Tunica County, Lee's lifelong home, drew more than a million Tennesseans last year -- in addition to the large number of gambling enthusiasts also from Mississippi and nearby Arkansas and Louisiana. Tunica is located 25 miles south of Memphis.

Lee met one man from Covington outside a Tunica supermarket. The man had failed to cash a check in the store and stopped Lee. He explained to Lee he didn't have enough money to get home. Lee loaned him money to buy gasoline.

Another tourist from Tennessee stopped at a Tunica service station owned by Lee's nephew. The man left his car and the title in exchange for \$2,000. Another cash-hungry individual stopped at the station and tried to exchange the battery in his vehicle for cash, Lee said, even though the driver was from out of town.

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So gamblers are suffering at their own hands. But they are leaving a lot of money in one of the poorest counties in the nation, Lee agrees.

Lee, a deacon at Tunica's First Baptist Church, has experienced the quandary of many who study the issue -- economics vs. ethics.

Lee's lumber business has benefitted from the construction boom, but his produce company has not, and he has decided to retire earlier than planned from 55 years as a businessman.

Judge Ted Emanuel of the County Justice Court has viewed the changes Lee has seen.

Emanuel, who also is a deacon at Tunica's First Baptist, said the county has certainly needed the \$600 million investment of some industry. And he added the investment continues to escalate.

But he works with families who are not paying bills because the members are spending incomes at the casinos. "We also know many people are cashing welfare checks to gamble," Emanuel said.

"I do know that crime has risen dramatically. Dope trafficking has increased. Robberies have increased. Theft has increased. Burglaries have increased. And auto accidents, including fatalities have increased," Emanuel said. The caseloads of those in law enforcement have tripled and quadrupled, he added.

These statistics can be explained partially by the increase in the population of the area by 15,000-20,000 people each day. "But there's an element in the gambling crowd that is going to be the criminal element," he said. Emanuel reported before the casinos were opened the county had six law enforcement employees. Now it must employ 22.

Economic stimulus to local business has not occurred, according to Lee. Small, local businesses will not reap many benefits from the gambling industry because tourists don't frequent them, he said.

"The majority of the people who come here don't even stop in Tunica, so it's not any benefit unless they go out there and lose it," referring to losses which are taxed by the county.

Several hundred local residents have been employed by the casinos, Lee and Emanuel reported. But some of them left jobs in Tunica County for the higher salaries paid by the casinos. Local businesses will be forced to raise salaries and thus, prices.

Other cost of living increases are the result of increased property values -- from \$800 an acre to \$50,000 in some instances. Rental and purchase rates on property have risen, Emanuel noted. People who were paying \$100 a month for rent are now being charged \$500-\$600 a month, he said.

Unlike most residents, the casino owners can leave when the profits plateau, noted Paul Jones of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission. Tunica will experience what Colorado and other casino sites have experienced, Jones said. During the first several years the new gambling site will attract crowds that will draw casino operations. Off the banks of Tunica County, which has a population of 8,700, sit five casinos. Thirteen others are licensed or waiting for a gaming license, and many are under construction.

The casino operators are not only greedy, but many have been cited for violation of state law, Jones said.

Splash Casino has been fined for violating gaming codes. And Horseshoe Hotel and Casino, which was denied a riverboat casino license in Louisiana, has applied for the license in Tunica. It was denied a Louisiana license because of questions about a \$1 million fine assessed the company in Nevada and the failure of some executives to pay income taxes. "This is the type of people you get," Jones said.

Both Emanuel and Jones admitted the culture of the Mississippi Delta is more easily seduced by gambling because of the long history of illegal gaming along its banks. But "the panacea of gambling" can't address problems which date from an era when cotton grown there was shipped by boat down the Mississippi River, Jones said.

The gambling is "hurting people," Lee said. After losing savings and even family farms, several have committed suicide, he said.

Emanuel said the industry "won't affect me economically at all. It might effect me negatively simply because of the elements that are going to come with it and affect my way of life."

"To me personally it presents a challenge if you look at it from the Christian viewpoint," said Emanuel. He suggested Christians could use this opportunity to share their faith with people they never would have met except through the gambling industry. Several from the industry had visited First Baptist Church, he noted.

Lee agreed the situation includes opportunities for ministry. He serves with M.C. Johnson, director of missions for the North Delta Baptist Association, on a committee preparing ministry plans in response to the gambling industry. The association's Crisis Pregnancy Center in Clarksdale, Miss., already has had a client who is a casino employee, Johnson reported.

"We're going to try to make the best of it and try to influence them," Lee said.

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Actor turned seminarian came
to Christ through film role

By Michael Dudit

Baptist Press
2/11/94

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--For John McFarland, "Fatal Attraction" was transformed into "Eternal Life."

Now a master of divinity student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., McFarland spent a dozen years as an actor in New York City, where he performed for stage, film, television and radio productions.

McFarland's credits include three Woody Allen films, prime-time TV (including "Law & Order" and "Molly Dodd"), soap operas (with recurring roles on "Guiding Light" and "One Life to Live") and commercials.

As with many actors, one of the greatest frustrations was the work that ended up on the cutting room floor. For example, McFarland had a speaking role in the movie "Crocodile Dundee" but "the whole scene was cut out!"

The same thing happened to his role in the movie "Fatal Attraction," but that experience resulted in a life-changing encounter far more significant than anything Hollywood could produce.

During filming of the feature film in November 1987, he was waiting for his scene -- "drinking Pepsi and eating doughnuts" -- when another actor struck up a conversation about his beliefs.

"He asked me what I thought about Jesus," McFarland recalls. "I told him I grew up Methodist and he's my Savior -- he's everyone's Savior."

The other actor invited McFarland to a Bible study in the neighborhood on Manhattan's Upper West Side where both lived.

McFarland showed up at the Bible study the following Tuesday night and quickly became a regular.

"The simple truths of the Bible were taught," John notes. "I learned the first night that it didn't matter what my legacy was -- that wouldn't help me with God."

As a student at Stetson University a decade before, McFarland couldn't understand why fellow students talked about being born again. "It seemed redundant," he says. But after three months in the Bible study, he experienced new birth himself through a personal commitment to Christ.

His wife, Judy, also began attending the study. With his work as an actor and hers as a stage manager, each often attended while the other worked, but both grew in their faith through the weeknight study and through participation at Calvary Baptist Church, located across the street from Carnegie Hall.

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During a conference at Calvary in January 1991, McFarland sensed a clear call into ministry. "That night I went home and told Judy that I needed to go to seminary."

As a young minister, McFarland initially tried to shun his past experience as an actor. While he's still not proud of some of the films -- like "Fatal Attraction" -- from those times before his conversion, he now recognizes that God wants him to use those experiences, not ignore them.

"It took Southern Seminary to teach me that I should be using those dramatic gifts and experiences," he says. "As a pastor and preacher, I've been able to do that."

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(BP) PHOTO available from Southern Seminary's news office.

Detroit's Doc Lindsey
going to Minn.-Wisc.

By David Williams

Baptist Press
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ROCHESTER, Wisc. (BP)--Detroit director of missions W.D. "Doc" Lindsey has been elected as the new state missions director for the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Convention.

Lindsey, a career home missionary, has served since 1989 in Detroit, where he developed "Operation Lydia," a strategy for indigenous church planting.

The executive board of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Convention voted unanimously Jan. 29 to call Lindsey, who will assume his responsibilities March 1.

MWSBC Executive Director Bill Tinsley praised Lindsey's expertise, adding, "This is but another indication that God is preparing our convention for exciting days ahead."

Lindsey, a graduate of Baylor University, holds master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Before joining the Detroit Baptist Association's staff, Lindsey served the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board for six years in metropolitan evangelism, first as a consultant in Los Angeles and then as associate director of the board's metropolitan evangelism department.

The Lydia church-planting strategy, which includes a two-week prayer calendar, involves starting Bible studies in the homes of unchurched families and their friends with the intention of them becoming saved and eventually starting a church.

A concert pianist, Lindsey also is known for playing piano at several events at Ridgecrest and Glorieta conference centers.

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