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May 11, 1994

94-80

OKLAHOMA CITY -- Oklahomans tally 60 percent in vote defeating lottery.
MISSISSIPPI -- 'New apostolic' churches needed for secular people, author says.
MISSISSIPPI -- Author lists suggestions for reaching secular people.
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Oklahomans tally 60 percent
in vote defeating lottery

By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
5/11/94

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Oklahomans bucked a national trend and fought back a campaign by the state's governor when they resoundingly defeated a state lottery proposal May 10.

With 60 percent of the vote against state-sponsored gambling, Oklahoma became only the second state in the nation to turn down a lottery in a statewide vote. The first was North Dakota.

There are 38 states with lotteries, including Kansas, Missouri and Texas, which border Oklahoma. Arkansas and New Mexico do not have lotteries at this time.

Oklahoma's anti-lottery forces were an unusual mix of 13 different groups, including Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians, Catholics, horse racing interests, business leaders, state legislators and newspapers, from liberal to conservative.

The pro-lottery forces' main spokesman was Gov. David Walters.

Representing Baptist interests in a group called Oklahomans Against the Lottery was Forrest Claunch, a businessman and layman from Country Estates Baptist Church in Midwest City, an Oklahoma City suburb. He was assisted by Neva Hill, a member of Graceway Baptist Church in Oklahoma City.

Although Claunch's only personal involvement with politics previously was an unsuccessful bid for state representative, he went head-to-head against Walters in several debates.

Many observers felt Claunch scored decisive victories in each debate, but he credited God with the victory.

"The Lord just made it possible," he said.

Although 200,000 voters signed initiative petitions to vote on a lottery, the final vote was 417,532 (59.8 percent) to 280,152 against it. It lost in 74 of the state's 77 counties.

Early in the campaign, polls had shown that up to 70 percent of Oklahomans wanted a lottery, but Claunch said he was not surprised by the final result.

"It matched our prayer," he explained. "A 60-40 vote was the very thing we hoped for. We would have accepted any victory, but we wanted a clear mandate from the people."

Walters took the campaign to a personal level, attacking Baptist preachers and even accusing Claunch of lying, but in the last week he shifted his criticism to Remington Park racetrack and what he called "negative ads" against the lottery.

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"I think that was their intention," Claunch said. "They didn't make any political gain by attacking me. By attacking Remington Park they thought they could get church people to wash their hands of the issue."

After the results were in, Democratic Party chairman Mike Turpen accused Baptists and horse racing interests of improprieties.

"I guess tomorrow morning the Baptists and the horseman's association are going to be having a beer together," he joked on an Oklahoma City television station.

Claunch said the remark was "devoid of any humor. He dismissed every Baptist in Oklahoma as being corrupt and he dismissed every horse person as being non-Christian. I am not sure how he's qualified to judge anyone according to their faith."

William G. Tanner, executive director-treasurer for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, called the campaign "a tremendous effort for rightness."

"I am so appreciative of the people in Oklahoma who believe in right and morality and Christian concepts, and that our people have done something about it," he said. "This is the first time in a long time that the forces on the right side have successfully fought a questionable moral issue. This ought to encourage the Oklahoma people."

Tanner said he felt the lottery could be defeated, although the 60 percent margin surprised him.

"I've had a good feeling about it," he said. "I felt like if you presented the facts, informed the people, trusted the Lord and worked hard at it, it could be defeated."

Tanner mentioned one debate three days before the election, where Walters questioned the ethics of Christians, business leaders and horse industry leaders getting together on the lottery issue.

"When something is wrong, it throws all kinds of people together," Claunch responded.

"That was just the perfect answer," Tanner said. "Forrest Claunch is a committed Christian gentleman; he paid the price of time and commitment and he never wavered."

After losing battles in recent decades on liquor-by-the-drink and parimutuel betting, Tanner said the tide may be turning on moral issues.

"God's people can be, in my judgment, a strong, effective, mighty army if we get concerned about the activities of our time," he said.

One key element in Oklahoma's victory over the lottery was the Indian gaming issue. Under the Indian Gaming Act of 1988, a federal law, states may regulate certain types of gambling by Indian tribes. The law specifies that bingo games are Class II gambling; states may regulate bingo games, but they cannot prohibit them.

Lotteries, though, are Class III gambling, the same classification as casino gambling.

In a May 1993 editorial, Baptist Messenger editor Glenn A. Brown pointed out that fact and predicted if Oklahoma passed a lottery, casino gambling would explode on the state's Indian land, which courts have interpreted to be any land owned by Indians.

Brown's predictions have panned out in three states. Alabama, which does not have a lottery, successfully fought casino gambling on Indian land. Kansas and Texas, which have lotteries, lost their cases.

"That came as a result of looking at the fact that tribe after tribe was trying to get the governor to sign a compact on gaming," Brown said. "There seemed to be a trend showing up that when a state voted in a lottery, that cut down that legal barrier. The state then had to negotiate a compact."

Although casinos would be on Indian land, Brown noted the big push is coming from Anglo gambling operations.

"A lot of Anglo people want to take advantage of the fact that Indian tribes would not have the same regulations as states would," he said. "The craze for gambling was growing, the state was looking for more money and the tribes needed money. It was bound to go this direction."

Brown attributed the lottery's defeat to the possibility of casino gambling and because the law was so loosely written it invited corruption.

"People didn't buy the big lie, that it's going to solve the state's money problems," he said. "From the Baptist perspective, a lot of churches began to get interested in it. They were very active locally."

One thing many church members did was to buy ads in their local newspapers. Many ads were signed by all the church members opposed to the lottery.

Brown said he hopes people in other states will look to Oklahoma's example, so they can fight lotteries and other forms of gambling in their states.

Tanner said the vote "gives great encouragement."

"This is a time to rejoice, not just the victory, but the effort," he said. "Our people showed us it can be done."

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'New apostolic' churches needed
for secular people, author says By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
5/11/94

OLIVE BRANCH, Miss. (BP)--Where can you find the No. 1 mission field in the western hemisphere?

The answer, according to Christian author George G. Hunter III, is "right here in the United States of America."

Pointing to Gallup polls conducted in the last two decades which reveal a continuing decline in religious training of Americans, Hunter said a secular mind-set "has been stamped into the American culture more than ever before."

Today, as many as 120 million Americans age 14 and older can be categorized as "secular," Hunter said. He defined the label as representing those who: 1) have not been substantially influenced by Christianity, 2) have no Christian history or "memory," 3) are not "church broke" (don't know how to act in church), 4) have only a superficial exposure to the Christian faith in a "diluted" form, and/or 5) are "inoculated" or "immunized" against Christianity.

Spiritual consciousness in America, he said, "is a lot like the Ganges River -- a mile wide, but not much more than an inch deep in many places."

How has the Christian church responded to this "secularization" of American culture? For the most part, Hunter said, it has "slept" through it.

"Not only are we surprised by the secularization of tens of millions of people in the U.S., but we are engaged in denial, (believing that) what has happened everywhere else in the western world could not possibly happen here," he said.

Hunter, dean of the E. Stanley Jones School of Evangelism and World Mission at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., spoke to state directors of Southern Baptist Sunday school work at the group's May 9-11 meeting in Olive Branch, Miss. Many of the insights he shared with directors were drawn from his book, "How to Reach Secular People."

Most Christian churches, Hunter said, are still operating as if they have the "home field advantage" of early Christendom when everyone knew the basics of the gospel message, whether they believed in them or not.

"The harvest field has changed and we're still employing the methods that gathered the harvest as it used to be," he said, adding previously effective methods such as revivals, Sunday evening services and one-on-one confrontational evangelism "are largely spent forces."

The churches that are reaching large numbers of secular people today are those employing new ministry methods and strategies, Hunter said.

Describing those churches as the "new apostolic congregations," he said they are "willing to be culturally flexible in order to reach people."

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"These churches are dramatizing a truth that mission scholars and strategists have known for decades: that, to reach non-Christian populations, it is as necessary for the church to become as culturally indigenous in Europe and North America's mission fields as it is in any field of mission in Asia, Africa, Latin America or Oceania."

Hunter cited three ways the new apostolic congregations are different from more traditional churches:

1) They are reaching and making faith possible for significant numbers of secular people who lack a Christian memory in America's mission field. (Indeed, they say that is their main business.)

2) They tend to be "on the edge" of their denomination or they have no denominational attachment at all.

3) They make both the conservative and liberal Protestant establishments "anxious" and are often criticized, yet envied, for their capacity to reach unchurched people.

He cited as two examples of this new type of congregation Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago and Saddleback Valley Community Church in Orange County, Calif.

"They are probably the most copied and most criticized churches in the United States and that's unfortunate. They would suggest, 'Don't copy what we're doing, but replicate our process of interviewing enough unchurched people (in your area), finding out what their hang-ups about church are and then designing your worship and outreach with that in mind.

"We're not talking about taking the worship service you've already got and throwing it out, but adding alternate 'seeker' services that will attract the unchurched," Hunter said. Attention should be paid to items such as the type of music included, he said, and terminology and issues used in sermons.

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Author lists suggestions
for reaching secular people

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
5/11/94

OLIVE BRANCH, Miss. (BP)--For churches truly interested in reaching secular people -- those with little or no exposure to Christianity -- a theology dean suggested beginning with "active listening."

Speaking to state Sunday school leaders and managers from the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division meeting at Olive Branch, Miss., George G. Hunter III, dean of the E. Stanley Jones School of Evangelism and World Mission at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., listed eight other suggestions.

- Begin where they are (with their felt needs and at their knowledge level).
- Explain basic Christianity in their language from a reduced canon. For example, part of the Bible, such as portions of the Old Testament, will not be immediately useful. A good place to start is with the gospels, especially Luke.
- Practice the miracle of dialogue. Realize you already have the answers to some of the questions people are asking; you do not have, for now, the answers to others; and you cannot find intellectually satisfying answers to still others (e.g. 'Why does God allow suffering and pain?').
- Understand the principle of cumulative effect. Nobody gets all the message the first time.
- Understand the principle of creative redundancy. Find new ways to share the same message over and over.
- Realize assimilation usually precedes commitment.
- Apply the truth that Christianity is more caught than taught.
- Invite an experiment of faith. Encourage them to try living for a time as if Christianity were true.

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Hunter, author of "How to Reach Secular People," has conducted numerous interviews with secular people and church leaders who are reaching them.

He also discussed several facets of the Christian message that engage the unchurched, such as: "You matter to God;" "You can experience appropriate self-esteem;" "You can make sense of your life;" "You can experience the power of God over addictions;" "You can cooperate with the kingdom of God;" and "You can become the person you were born to be."

For those church leaders who decide to embrace new methods to reach the unchurched, Hunter said managing the change is vital.

"People will resist the loss of the known and the tried. People tend to be uncomfortable with uncertainty. They will agree to embrace the change when they think it is worth the effort, when the new has advantages that they understand and desire."

What will help create commitment to the change effort?

"The more people are involved in decisions that directly affect them, the more they are committed to implementing those decisions. In other words, get people involved in the problem and get them involved in developing a solution."

Hunter said church leaders also must be sure any change is God's will for their congregation.

"Decide what God is calling you to do. Throughout the process, root it in Scripture, bathe it in prayer."

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'Boys next door' to make
semester missionary proud

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
5/11/94

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--When Rock Jones and Wendell Hammond graduate from high school this spring, Mitzi Chong plans to behave like a proud parent.

She'll take dozens of pictures and clap when their names are announced, even though she didn't know the boys a year ago.

The three teen-agers are an unexpected alliance. Chong is a Chinese American who completed a year at Georgetown University. Jones and Hammond are African American basketball players who at one time were not expected to graduate from high school.

They met after Chong, who was majoring in foreign service, dropped out of college. Unsure of her career path, she volunteered to be a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board semester missionary and was assigned to Rachel Sims Baptist Center in New Orleans.

In New Orleans, Chong teaches Bible classes for first and second graders, leads an afternoon preschool and is involved with Teen Club. She works in the center's clothing room and helps with Sunday school and children's programs for the church that meets at the center.

But Chong's enthusiasm peaks when she talks about Jones, Hammond and the other "boys next door." Larry Miguez, home missionary and director of the Baptist center, lives next to the center. Frequently teen-age boys with difficult family situations live with Miguez.

Chong learned Hammond and Jones needed tutoring, and she began helping them with homework every night.

"She don't let us quit until it's done and done right," Hammond said. "Without her, we'd just do good enough to get by."

"I'm going to graduate to make her proud," Jones said.

Last fall Jones made the high school honor roll, even though a year ago his grade point average was 1.1 out of a possible 4.0. Chong measures achievement by improved study habits as well. This spring Hammond started studying for an exam three days early. It was the first time he had not waited until the night before the test to study, Chong said.

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Chong began working at Rachel Sims last fall, but she chose to stay for the spring semester for two reasons: God had not yet given her a new direction and she was committed to the boys next door.

Their relationship extends beyond tutoring. Several of the teens living with Miguez are high school basketball stars, and Chong is such a consistent fan that she earned a team T-shirt. Three of the boys spent last Thanksgiving with her family in Houston, and Chong bakes cakes to celebrate their birthdays.

"We talk a lot about everything, from our very different childhoods to injustices in our society to gross food combinations," Chong said.

They also talk about spiritual issues. "The only Christians they know are missionaries, so they think if you're going to be a Christian you have to be a missionary," Chong said. "Some of them have depended on themselves so long they can't grasp depending on God."

Two semesters at Rachel Sims have been learning experiences for Chong as well. She attended her first funeral which was for a college freshman who had lived with Miguez during high school and was shot and killed in the neighborhood.

Working in an underprivileged area challenged Chong's racial and socioeconomic stereotypes. "I haven't had a personality change, just an attitude change."

It also reshaped her future. Rather than studying foreign service, Chong plans to be a high school counselor "in a neighborhood like the one I'm working in now."

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(BP) photos (horizontal and vertical) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines on SBCNet.

EDITORS' NOTE: The following story on the collapse of top performer Michael English's ministry is offered by Baptist Press as a service to those interested in contemporary Christian music.

Christian music fans, artists
ponder fall of Michael English

Baptist Press
5/11/94

By Ray Waddle & Sandy Smith

NASHVILLE (BP)--After Bruce Springsteen split with his wife and married his pregnant backup singer, no one remotely suggested that his record label drop him like damaged goods.

But when a top Christian music performer like Michael English admits to his own serious character lapse, the reaction is radically different. And swift:

A week after English swept the coveted Dove Awards of the Gospel Music Association, he banishes himself from musical Eden. His label, Warner Alliance, yanks its most profitable franchise.

(His six Dove Awards included Artist and Male Vocalist of the year, Best Contemporary Album and, with Christian music legend Bill Gaither, two awards in Southern Gospel.)

Taken along in English's fall is Marabeth Jordan, a singer with the gospel-jazz group First Call. The two, married to others, had an affair and Jordan is pregnant with English's child, according to the Gospel Music Association's president, Bruce Koblisch.

Neither English nor Jordan has been reachable to confirm the details of these reports. She has been replaced in First Call.

The sudden, sensational fall of Michael English from the contemporary Christian music scene has numbed his fans. But it also points up the profound paradoxes felt every day in the business.

"You have to be in the world, but not of the world," said Mike Smith, a minister at Christ Community Church in Franklin, Tenn., spiritual home to many Christian music professionals.

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"Companies stay in business by selling a product, but artists have a higher calling."

Unlike anything else in the entertainment world, the Bible and the bottom line coexist in the Christian music industry in a strange, uneasy commerce.

But the strong sense that this tinsel, high-stakes business is also a Christian "ministry" pushes professionals to expect a higher standard of public moral behavior from its high-profile performers.

So while Nashville's musical corporate phone lines were choked with talk and speculation about English of recent, no one questioned that his sudden withdrawal from the scene was improper.

"Context is everything. If Michael English had been a secular performer, his indiscretion or whatever would have drawn 50 words in the gossip column," said Dan Daley, a locally based writer on various facets of the Nashville music industry.

Pondering the place of the Christian in the world of entertainment, Daley said, "The question is, 'How do you keep high moral standards in one of the sleaziest businesses around?'"

And there's the rub for the Christian artist.

"It's really hard to walk humbly with your God when people are telling you how great you are," minister Smith said. "They have to recognize daily, hourly, the grace of God."

Christian performers who win vast popularity singing exalted messages about God find themselves in an ironic fix: Their godly success surrounds them with the same fleshly and material temptations pursued by their secular counterparts.

Their ministers worry there are too few people in the industry to help artists keep their moral integrity.

"Especially if you're on the road a lot, if you want to sing and glorify God, you're certainly obligated to live above reproach," said Bob Augsburg, general manager of one of Nashville's religious radio stations.

"When you're gone 40 Sundays a year, that means you're not in church. If you stumble, you're going to cause more harm."

English's minister at Christ Church in Nashville, L.H. Hardwick, met with the singer in a lengthy counseling session May 6.

"I'm distressed and saddened," Hardwick said. "But Christ Church preaches forgiveness -- not cheap forgiveness but when people who have fallen say they're wrong, we do what we can to rebuild them and control the destruction."

Hardwick said he would like to assemble the pastors of several local churches to talk about how to better bring God's "message of purity" to the Christian music industry.

This is an industry where Bible readings and prayers are not uncommon before board meetings and strategy sessions.

Nor is it unusual for a minister to accompany a Christian artist on the road.

Don Finto, minister at Belmont Church, has done just that with several Christian singers over the years, notably Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith.

"Accountability is the key," Finto said.

"I try to alert people to danger. We're a sex-saturated society. We all have to take precautions."

Finto's counsel to performers includes urging them never to put themselves in tempting situations, even lunch alone with the opposite sex, and to have a network of friends or pastors to hold them "spiritually accountable."

"A lot of people in leadership in the Christian music business are not necessarily spiritually mature," he said.

"But greater scrutiny is expected of leaders than ordinary Christians. A lot of people are in the business who probably have no business being in it."

Ironically enough, those higher expectations of morality are accompanied by a vast fund of forgiveness that Christians teach to each other, with many fans of English speaking in terms of feelings of forgiveness for him.

"It's a bold statement to withdraw and say he can't in full integrity espouse the things he sings about," minister Smith said.

Will this disclosure torpedo English's career? Corporate insiders were practically impossible to reach for comment, but Daley, an observer of the scene, speculated English represents too much money to the recording industry to vanish into obscurity.

"He might re-emerge as a chastened, wiser Christian artist or, for all we know, he might come back as a crossover to pop. I don't think you've seen the end of an act that big."

"God has blessed me," English said at the recent Dove Awards, with his moral failure not yet public, "and I hope I'll continue to do what God wants me to do, whatever it is."

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Reprinted by permission of The Tennessean in Nashville. Waddle is religion editor, Smith an entertainment writer for the paper.

**Delayed shipment benefits
Kenians, potentially Rwandans**

**Baptist Press
5/11/94**

By Ken Camp & Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)--Delayed delivery to Kenya of a water well-drilling rig proved to be "God's timing" for helping that drought-plagued East African nation, and it could be a boon to Rwandan refugees, according to leaders of the Texas Baptist Men missions organization.

In 1991, Royal Ambassador youth from around the state gave to support TBM's "Kenya Project." Their offerings, together with a portion of the proceeds from selling prints of the "Gathering of the Father's Family" painting by Ennis, Texas, pastor Dick Moody, provided funds for the purchase of a water purifier and well-drilling equipment.

Around Christmas of 1992, it appeared the machines -- along with two self-contained field kitchens -- were bound for Somali refugee camps in Kenya. At the time, about a half-million Somalis occupied tent cities along the Somalia/Kenya/Ethiopia border.

However, the 8.5-ton container housing the equipment inexplicably was misplaced on the dock in Houston. When it eventually was located and the hardware was shipped to Mombasa, Kenya, delivery was held up by a governmental dispute over tariffs.

This spring, the shipment finally was released. Three Texas Baptist volunteers -- Gary Smith of Midway Road Baptist Church in Dallas; George Singleton of Calvary Baptist Church in Sulphur Springs; and Powell Adams of First Baptist Church in Lubbock -- journeyed to Kenya to set up the equipment and provide training to Southern Baptist missionaries and Kenyan Baptist workers.

"We couldn't understand why the container couldn't get to people who needed it, but it all worked out according to God's timing," said Bob Dixon, executive director of Texas Baptist Men.

"God is always at work around us. The Father never has any surprises. The drought in Kenya is worse now that it was when the shipment was first planned. And it looks as if the equipment intended for Somali refugees now may be used to help refugees from Rwanda."

The water purifier was tested at the Brackenhurst Baptist International Center, about 25 miles from Nairobi. The purifier and the field kitchens were given to the Baptist Mission of Kenya for use in future disaster relief.

Officials at Brackenhurst have been asked by the U.S. Embassy to remain on alert to provide housing for refugees.

The water well-drilling rig was field-tested at Limuru, in northern Kenya, and then set up at Nairobi's Rossalyn Academy, which is attended by about 300 Kenyan national Baptists and missionaries' children.

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"Even in a city like Nairobi with 1.5 million people, there is no reliability when it comes to having available water," Smith said. "But that's a minor inconvenience compared to rural areas where the available water supply is whatever a person can carry from any old polluted stream."

Although Kenya has fertile soil and a year-round growing season, much potentially productive land goes unused due to lack of water. In many areas, however, a plentiful water table rests less than 200 feet below the surface, Smith said.

But as anxious as the Kenyans are to have well water, they are even more anxious to drink from springs of "living water," the Texas volunteers reported.

During their Easter season mission trip to Kenya, the Texas Baptists experienced a slight delay in their work due to a labor shortage resulting from a most-welcomed cause.

"Gary Smith called to tell us that he couldn't find enough workers," Dixon said. "So many Muslims were becoming followers of Christ, and they wouldn't work on Crucifixion Friday or Resurrection Sunday."

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