

Special LLM Update -- 2005

The Burden, the Vision, and the Call of Lighthouse Legal Ministries

- 1. The Burden.** No group of preachers gets into more legal trouble than Independent Baptist preachers, chiefly because no group of preachers is doing more for the Lord. The burden of Pastor John Jones and Attorney Terry Lee Hamilton is to have Independent Baptist attorneys defending the faith of Independent Baptist preachers in the courtrooms of America. Our burden is dramatized by recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions.
- **Door-to-Door Visitation.** In the *Watchtower* decision in 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a governmental attempt to license door-to-door visitation. Praise the Lord! *But do you want your precious First Amendment liberties defended by a team of twelve Jehovah's Witness lawyers or by a conservative Roman Catholic lawyer who doesn't understand your faith?*
 - **School Vouchers.** Independent Baptists Biblically and historically have opposed school vouchers, a form of governmental aid to churches, which will inevitably corrode religious liberty. Yet, in 2002, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of school vouchers. The Supreme Court was aided in its decision by a joint friend of the court (*amicus curiae*) brief filed by the Christian Legal Society, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Family Research Council, and the National Association of Evangelicals. *Do you want those "conservative" Christian groups to be the voice of Independent Baptist churches on such issues as school vouchers?*
 - **Homosexuality.** In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Lawrence v. Texas* that it was unconstitutional to criminalize homosexual behavior. In a blistering dissent, Justice Scalia declared that "the Court has taken sides in the culture war." *Who is the legal voice for Independent Baptists in the "culture wars"?*
 - **The Ten Commandments.** On June 27, 2005, in the conflicting decisions on the Ten Commandments, liberal Supreme Court Justices Stevens and Ginsburg noted in a dissenting opinion that posting the Ten Commandments violates the Establishment Clause "by prescribing a compelled code of conduct from one God, namely a Judeo-Christian God, that is rejected by prominent polytheistic sects, such as Hinduism, as well as nontheistic religions, such as Buddhism." That opinion, elevating diversity above history, cited an *amicus* brief filed by the Hindu American Foundation; no *amicus* brief was filed on behalf of Independent Baptists.

Independent Baptists have a uniquely Biblical and constitutional voice untainted by heresy or greed. Our burden is to defend our Baptist faith in the courtrooms and "culture wars" of America.

- 2. The Vision.** In 1995, God gave Pastor John Jones a vision of a local church ministry dedicated to defending the faith of fellow Independent Baptist churches -- Lighthouse Legal Ministries (LLM).
- LLM is a ministry of Lighthouse Baptist Church.
 - LLM provides legal assistance exclusively to like-minded Independent Baptist churches.
 - LLM receives missionary support exclusively from Independent Baptist churches.
 - LLM is accountable to Lighthouse Baptist Church and LLM's supporting churches.

LLM is headed up by Christian attorney Terry Lee Hamilton, who was a trial attorney for the U.S. government in Washington, DC from 1977 to 1984 and who has over twenty years experience in cases involving separation of church and state. By God's grace and the support of over 150 churches in more than fifteen states, LLM and Attorney Hamilton have provided legal expertise to hundreds of Independent Baptist churches such as yours.

- **Telephone calls.** Terry has handled thousands of telephone calls from Independent Baptist preachers in every state.
- **Legal analysis and briefs.** Terry has written hundreds of letters and briefs analyzing legal and constitutional issues impacting Independent Baptist churches.
- **Courtroom appearances.** Terry has tried numerous cases and argued cases on appeal in numerous state and federal courts on behalf of Independent Baptist preachers.
- **Legal seminars.** Terry has conducted dozens of legal seminars at churches, Bible colleges, *Sword of the Lord* and *Revival Fires!* conferences, etc.

Anyone who knows Terry well knows that Terry does not lack vision. As LLM's workload continues to rise, please consider Terry's vision for expanding LLM to meet the growing legal needs of Independent Baptist churches.

- **Daily response to each telephone call.** When preachers have a question or problem, they want help now. LLM needs another attorney to help Terry with the rising number of legal questions and problems.
- **Legal analysis and briefs.** Terry is buried in legal analysis and briefs right now. His vision is to add to the LLM staff an attorney who can help with the writing workload and with drafting *amicus curiae* briefs explaining the legal viewpoint of Independent Baptists in key constitutional issues in cases around the nation.
- **Courtroom appearances.** Nothing is more draining than courtroom preparation and appearances. Terry's vision is to have another attorney who will help prepare for and conduct trials and appellate arguments.
- **Legal seminars and how-to legal manuals.** Terry is stretched to the limit in preparing legal seminars designed to help keep Independent Baptist preachers up to date on key legal issues and on how to stay out of legal problems. He has a vision of adding more staff to help not only with legal seminars, but also to help prepare long-desired how-to legal manuals on such timely topics as how to start a church, how to start a church school, screening and selecting church workers, reducing risk of child sexual abuse, and much, much more.

Right now, Terry's vision is bigger than LLM's checking account. But our God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Our God can raise up a thousand churches to help Terry carry out his vision for providing expanding legal services for Independent Baptist churches. *Are you beginning to grasp Terry's vision?*

3. The Call. The Lord called Pastor Jones and Attorney Hamilton to start Lighthouse Legal Ministries in 1995. As the Apostle Paul proclaimed in Acts 26:19, they were not "disobedient unto the heavenly vision." LLM's goal is to continue to be a legal help to Independent Baptist preachers as they strive daily to reach their goal expressed so well in II Timothy 4:7: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

But Pastor Jones and Attorney Hamilton have not fought alone. Since 1995, over 150 Independent Baptist churches in fifteen different states have shared LLM's vision and have responded to the call to help defend the faith of Independent Baptist churches by supporting LLM on a monthly basis and with special gifts. Thank you, and God bless you. *Are you beginning to grasp Terry's burden and vision? Is the Lord calling you to help support LLM?*