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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

JUL 11 1996

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July 10, 1996

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Cyberspace, cable TV indecency
head to Supreme Court showdown

By Clay Renick

Baptist Press
7/10/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--Two recent court rulings on indecency -- one involving cyberspace, the other cable TV -- seem headed for a showdown before the U.S. Supreme Court.

A U.S. district court in Pennsylvania supported a challenge to the Communications Decency Act on June 12, thus preventing the government from enforcing the new federal law against indecency in cyberspace.

"As the most participatory form of mass speech yet developed, the Internet deserves the highest protection from governmental intrusion," wrote U.S. District Judge Stewart Dalzell.

"We are not pleased with the ruling," said Will Dodson, legal counsel and director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"I don't think the First Amendment was conceived to protect pornography," he added. "The court has embraced moral relativism."

Congress passed the Communications Decency Act (CDA) in February. President Clinton signed the bill. But the ACLU challenged the section dealing with indecency as too vague and too hard to enforce.

The Supreme Court, meanwhile, reaffirmed its established legal standard for indecency in a Colorado case on June 28, in which private cable operators wanted to screen pornographic material from leased television channels.

"The court explicitly states that the indecency standard is not vague and 'depends on context, degree and time of broadcast,'" explained Donna Rice Hughes with Enough is Enough, a nonprofit group against pornography.

The Supreme Court's Colorado ruling didn't change the earlier court ruling in Philadelphia. But it ensures another decision.

"This is prime material for the Supreme Court," said Laura Corbett Brown with the National Law Center, another nonprofit group active in fighting pornography.

"The question that will be left open (is), How do we regulate this stuff on the Internet?" Brown said.

According to Enough is Enough, indecency is sexual activity that is offensive. Individual communities set that standard. Obscene material, however, is hard-core pornography and, in court rulings, has not been protected under the U.S. Constitution.

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The Philadelphia court blocked the indecency section of the CDA.

Federal law enforcement officials, however, can still prosecute service providers for uploading obscenity, said Maryam Kubasek with the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families.

Those providers are liable if they know about the problem and can control it.

"It's kind of like holding the telephone company responsible for people who make prank calls," said William Giles, a spokesman for the CompuServe online service.

"The individuals who use the medium create the information and post it themselves," he said. "We're just the means through which the information travels."

But that's the problem with the Internet, according to Enough is Enough.

Children can get on the World Wide Web and see pictures of women tortured, group sex and child pornography.

The CDA's indecency law would have provided prison sentences and fines -- up to \$250,000 -- for pornographers. But now they will have to be prosecuted under different "harmful to minors" laws in 50 states.

"Pornographers and pedophiles have never paid any attention to decency standards," Hughes noted, "unless they faced legal liability."

CompuServe plans to use a rating system for pages on the World Wide Web, a system designed by the Recreational Software Advisory Council, a nonprofit group in Cambridge, Mass.

That system assigns a number from one to four for each web site. Parents can then screen and block areas that are offensive. But even that has limitations.

"A web site has to be willing to be rated," explained Giles, with CompuServe.

There are approximately 5 million web sites on the Internet, with another 10,000 added each week, said Steve Hewitt, editor of Christian Computing magazine. Regardless of the blocking efforts, he said, "the temptation is going to be there."

More than 25,000 private computer bulletin boards are active in the United States, with sex-related discussion groups getting the greatest number of contacts from computer users.

The full list of materials available on one adult bulletin board service, for example, is more than 500 pages single-spaced, according to Enough is Enough. The bulletin board includes 25,000 picture files, with 5,000 of those as children.

"Some of the most popular groups are bestiality and bondage," Hughes said.

"Any computer literate child can view pictures of women having sex with animals." So what can you do?

Be aware, said Kubasek, of the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families. Hard core pornography is not protected under the Constitution, she reminded. Report violations to your local U.S. Attorney.

Also, get the facts, said Dee Jepsen with Enough is Enough. There are software blocks like "Rated PG," "NetNanny" and "CyberPatrol."

But each system has limitations. And your child may have access to computers without a safeguard.

Steve Hewitt advised a combination approach. Explain the dangers to your children, he stated. Leave the computer in a family room and check on your child.

"Accountability is a good tool," Hewitt said. "Accountability keeps us from doing wrong."

**New WMU adult organization
stirs excitement in churches**

By Sue Poss

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Talk about Women on Mission and the one word that surfaces is excitement -- excitement not just at something new but at something that is revitalizing interest in missions across the Southern Baptist Convention.

From churches large and small, Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, is hearing of the successful first year of its revamped women's missions program.

At First Baptist Church in Augusta, Ga., WMU director Irene Bennett can talk for hours about the positive effects Women on Mission has had on her church. In Stephenville, Texas, Women on Mission consultant Cynthia Butler talks of the excitement among the 25 churches in Erath County Baptist Association. In Smyrna, Tenn., Kathy Sharp tells how a trip to Poland opened up new avenues of ministry at First Baptist Church, Smyrna. In Louisville, Ky., Laura Morris talks about how Women on Mission has brought former Baptist Young Women together with Baptist Women and with women never before involved with missions at Bethlehem Baptist Church.

"I think when WMU opened up and offered us more options, our women got excited," said Butler, a member of Valley Grove Baptist Church in Stephenville.

Wanting to keep abreast of current trends and adapt its programs to busy lifestyles, WMU started five years ago looking at ways to improve its programs for women. The result: Baptist Women and Baptist Young Women became Women on Mission with greatly expanded and flexible options included in the new magazine, Missions Mosaic.

"As part of the national team, I had a part in developing the new program," said Ann Smith, president of WMU in North Carolina from 1991-95. "I was reluctant at first to change some of the things that were so significant to me like the name Baptist Women and Royal Service. But as we brought the ideas back to our churches I could sense an excitement in doing something different. Our women were excited to have so many options."

Smith is now serving as Women on Mission coordinator at her church, Southeast Baptist in Greensboro. With the flexibility built into the new program, more of her own church members are now actively involved in missions. "We don't have more involvement on an ongoing basis but we have many more people participating in shorter-term projects and that was one of the goals of all of this, to make it easier for people to participate without a long-term commitment."

Women on Mission at Southeast Baptist have held many special workshops on Sunday nights on topics such as AIDS, parenting and bereavement, Smith said. Groups have formed around activities that were already going on, like exercise, co-dependency and First Place diet classes; mobile meals; and a prison ministry. A creative crafts group meets in 12-week sessions to learn quilting, flower arranging or baking holiday foods. Learning about and doing missions is a part of all these programs, Smith said.

In Erath County Baptist Association in Texas, Butler said most of the churches have at least one group using the multifocus missions option, and some are venturing into new areas. Shelley Elston at Morgan Mill Baptist Church realized a group for single mothers would fit into Women on Mission. At Calvary Baptist Church, an established group of quilters realized they could be a Women on Mission group. Other churches in Erath County have formed exercise and crafts groups to complement their prayer and Bible study groups.

What First Baptist Church, Augusta, Ga., has done is turn traditional WMU work into the work of the whole church, said Irene Bennett. For example, a large senior adult group of men and women is led in prayer time each month by Women on Mission. Volunteers for a city-wide soup kitchen once were solely Baptist Women. Now Sunday school classes are volunteering too.

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First Baptist has two church-wide missions coordinators and one is a man. Another man leads the music for a Women on Mission group and is now a member. Another man is project leader for a soup kitchen group. One Sunday each month, a special Missions Moment is featured in morning worship.

All of the former Baptist Women groups found a place to plug in to the new structure and a couple of new groups were started. A leader of members using the individual involvement option helps guide participants who can't come to regular meetings. A group of hospital workers meets from 2-2:30 a.m. in the hospital lobby once a month. A ceramics group works from Labor Day until Thanksgiving making gifts which are delivered to homebound members by a ministry group.

In Smyrna, Tenn., a group of clowning women who got their start in Poland last year now brings cheer to nursing homes and hospitals and even City Hall. Kathy Sharp, the facilitator of Cheerful Hearts, is a former missionary to Spain and Brazil.

Last year, she led a group of Baptist Young Women on a mission trip to Poland. Polish Baptists had asked that they teach clowning, which none of the women knew. "So we set about learning everything we could," Sharp said. In Poland they led workshops and performed.

"We came home and didn't want to stop," she said. This was at about the same time the new material for Women on Mission was being released and Sharp realized there would be a place for her clowning group in the new organization. "We now have nine members, not all the same ones that went to Poland," she said.

They entertain in different places throughout the community once a month. "Our purpose is not just to bring joy but to bring Jesus' joy," Sharp said.

"Our church has come to the realization that we can color outside the lines," she said. "There are different ways to share the gospel."

Encouraged and motivated by the results of the Baptist Young Women trip to Poland in the summer of 1995, the church, always a missions supporter, is now more involved in hands-on mission projects, Sharp said. There are trips planned to Canada, Michigan, Prince Edward Island, Costa Rica and Poland. "We were the first to go and the people got excited and wanted to be a part of it -- to be involved somewhere else in the world," she said.

In Long Run Baptist Association in Louisville, Ky., Laura Morris serves as one of four Women on Mission consultants who has led the churches this year in the changeover to Women on Mission. An association-wide baby shower helped introduce women to the new organization.

"We invited all the women to come to a shower to celebrate the birth of a new baby girl, Women on Mission," Morris recounted. The women brought real baby gifts, which were given to worthy causes in the community, and played games that helped them learn about Women on Mission. Each one also was given a pink bubble gum cigar.

At her own church, Morris participates in a group of young women who started the new Women on Mission program by hosting the former group of Baptist Women for a luncheon. "Our theme was 'Thank you for lighting our way' and we served them completely during the meal. We wanted to thank them for their intense influence on our lives."

As Bethlehem Baptist began gearing up for Women on Mission, Morris said the promotional focus was "something new in missions." At the first meeting, several people never before involved in Baptist Women or BYW were present and have subsequently taken leadership roles.

"Also, we have tried to get away from having one person responsible for the whole year," Morris said. "We have divided up responsibilities for hosting, for leading, for teaching and for directing mission projects so that it is easier to find people willing to do the jobs. They know they are not responsible for doing a job for a whole year."

Concluded Morris: "We changed to Women on Mission and we really blossomed."

For more information on Women on Mission, call WMU Customer Service at 1-800-968-7301.

**Criminal justice ministry
touches lives beyond prison By Charles Willis**

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Prison ministry is being replaced by criminal justice ministry in many communities as churches see the need to work not only with offenders, but also with victims of crime, families of incarcerated people and criminal justice professionals.

Participants in Discipleship and Family Development Week at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center were offered a "School of Criminal Justice Ministry" July 6-12.

Among sessions offered were an introduction to criminal justice ministry (CJM), the biblical basis of crime, victim/offender reconciliation programs, problems and solutions for church involvement, the scriptural basis for such a ministry, ministry to offenders, ministry to victims and how to develop a local CJM.

"Our greatest need as people is for acceptance," said Tom Turner, a Mission Service Corps volunteer in CJM, based in Mars Hill, N.C. But incarceration for a crime takes away acceptance, he said, replacing it with rejection, guilt, shame and helplessness.

"We feel a need to belong," he continued. "Belonging to a group satisfies a very basic need, and it is the source of peer pressure. All sinful behavior is a failed attempt at meeting basic human needs."

CJM is based on the biblical view that crime arises from broken relationships and requires from Christians a response of restoration.

Emmett Solomon, a retired prison chaplain from Huntsville, Texas, is coordinator of CJM for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

He said ministry to offenders includes evangelism, discipleship, mentoring, volunteer chaplaincy and literacy ministry to both juvenile and adult offenders. An additional facet of ministry to offenders is "aftercare," including volunteer chaplaincy with probation and parole processes, congregational sponsorship of an ex-offender, support groups and residential care.

Ministry to victims of crime includes personal counseling, a victim/offender reconciliation program and a victim support group.

Criminal justice professionals may include police, sheriff's department, correctional staff and parole/probation staff chaplaincy. Ministry to those people can take the form of discipleship, recreational and recognition events.

Families of offenders can benefit from ministry in the courtroom, a hospitality visiting room, a hospitality house, family visitor center, organization of public transportation and Christmas gifts for children. Families of victims may be offered counseling and support groups, while families of criminal justice professionals may benefit from chaplaincy services, family counseling or activities, such as picnics.

In establishing a congregational CJM team, Solomon suggested making every effort for the whole congregation to own the ministry, even though only a few people do the actual work.

"Bring prayer requests, testimonies and, when possible, people from the ministry," he said. "Encourage the pastor to speak of the ministry from time to time and provide written materials about the ministry to the congregation. And be ready to minister to any member of the congregation who may suddenly be pulled into this 'mission field.'"

To assess the need for a CJM, he said, churches should determine the number and types of criminal justice agencies and the number of criminal justice professionals in the community, the number of offenders from the community incarcerated in city, county, state or federal facilities, the number of inmates' families in the communities and the organizations and ministries offered to meet the needs of those people. Any organizations or ministries to victims of crimes also should be listed. Assess sources for potential CJM volunteers, leadership and financial support.

Answers to these questions may help church members know if God is directing toward a particular need in the community.

Discipleship and Family Development Week was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division.

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Homesick Chinese workers
understand language of love By Wally & Betty Poor

Baptist Press
7/10/96

BLACK BAY, St. Lucia (BP)--Love. It's a language 55 homesick Chinese young people working in a garment factory understand.

They've heard it from Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries Joe and Helen Prickett, Charles and Mary Love, Lee and Deb Miller and many others in Black Bay, St. Lucia.

"Everyone they have seen in our home has loved them," said Mary Love.

The result? Twenty of the young people have accepted Christ. Nine have been baptized, and others are awaiting baptism. A Chinese-speaking congregation meets on the ground floor of the Millers' house each Sunday morning.

"I knew the Lord meant for our downstairs to be used for something besides hanging out clothes," Deb Miller said.

The Lord placed the Chinese right beside the two missionary residences in Black Bay -- so close you can hear Chinese being spoken through the open windows.

The young people, ages 20 to 30, are on a three-year contract with a factory that makes knit children's clothes for Wal-Mart and Sears.

But time is running out. Most of their contracts with the Chinese-owned factory will terminate this summer. The young people will return to China as new Christians -- most of them the only believers in their family or even their city.

To help these young people become better grounded in their new faith, the St. Lucia missionaries are using MasterLife to disciple them. Two Chinese couples -- missionaries James and Sheila Wang from the Dominican Republic and pastor Timothy Choy and his wife, Eunice, from Trinidad -- visit periodically to give them intensive Bible teaching and discipleship training.

"They will hit a wall of atheism and Buddhism when they return to China," Mary Love said. "The Lord has hand-picked them for some reason. We hope they will continue to grow and find fellowship with other believers -- and even start new churches in China."

The window of opportunity for winning and discipling the Chinese opened in March 1995 when the Pricketts asked their Chinese neighbors if they would like to study English -- the language spoken in St. Lucia. Helen began teaching 15 to 20 in their home.

The Pricketts discovered one of the young ladies was a Christian when she began playing a Christian song on the Pricketts' keyboard. They had given their students gospel tracts, but found it difficult to discuss spiritual matters because the Chinese were so limited in English.

The one Christian in the group said she didn't know of any others who were believers. As a way to witness, Helen began teaching the New Testament in her English class.

Then the Lord used a trip the Pricketts made to the United States in August for him to have cataract surgery. Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., asked Helen what she'd like to see happen in their work.

"We need a Chinese-speaker to communicate the gospel to the Chinese young people," she said.

Elliff told her about 76-year-old Katherine Pih, a Christian immunologist from mainland China now living in Oklahoma City. She had been planning a trip to China with a volunteer group, but that door had closed. So, in November, Pih and the other volunteers went to St. Lucia. They took Bibles, Christian literature and the "Jesus" film in Chinese, which they had gathered for their trip to China.

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"The Chinese respected Dr. Pih because of her age and who she was, so they listened," Joe Prickett said. The volunteers met with the Chinese every evening for 10 days.

"They had never heard about God, Jesus, the Bible, creation ... and they sat on backless benches after spending the day on backless metal stools at the factory," Mary Love added. "God's light came on, and several believed. Three called their families in China and received permission to be baptized."

One of the first to be baptized was a factory supervisor, Gum Sang Cheng, who now translates for the missionaries. Miao Guang, head supervisor at the factory, also was among the first baptized and now plays the organ for the church.

Four months after the first decisions, the Wangs came for Chinese New Year. "One night Pastor Wang asked for a show of hands by all who believed and had received Christ as their Savior. Ten new hands went up!" Mary Love exclaimed.

Now, Choy, a graduate of the Baptist seminary in Taiwan and a businessman in Trinidad, pays his own way about every month and a half to visit the group and serve as their pastor. Charles Love is resident pastor, with Gum Sang as translator.

A new group of Chinese workers will arrive in the fall to replace these when they return home. Gum Sang and Miao Giuang, in their roles as supervisors, have been asked to stay long enough to get the new workers started. They will be able to tell them about Jesus and direct them toward the St. Lucia church.

What will become of the new believers who return to China? What will happen to the Chinese church in St. Lucia?

"God started this work," Mary Love said. "It's in his hands."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed 7/9/96 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline posted in SBCNet News Room.

Healing continues, hope builds
for missionary family to Peru

By Connie Davis

Baptist Press
7/10/96

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Five months after a car accident on a mountain road in Peru, Nancy Watts hasn't given up hope that her healthy family will return to Peru as missionaries.

She bases her hope on her faith and continued answers to prayers.

Marcus, 10, who suffered a head injury, will enter school this fall at his regular grade level. He still has some physical problems, such as the use of his right arm and leg and full recovery of his speech, but he played baseball this summer, his mother proudly reported.

Joshua, 7, will be out of the brace securing his broken leg and ankle in a few weeks. He also played baseball this summer. And Nancy's broken facial bones and hand are nearly mended.

There's also plenty of reason to hope for her husband, Wade, who received a head injury and broken ankle, Watts said. Just recently, he communicated to a therapist with eye motions that he had two children, had a master's degree and had been in a car accident in Peru.

So while Nancy and the boys are visiting Peru for a couple of weeks, they won't be saying any "last goodbyes," she said.

The trip will allow the boys to see neighborhood friends and missionary friends. Nancy and the boys will attend the annual meeting of the Baptist missionaries. And they will attend a prayer meeting for the family hosted by the Peru Baptist Convention.

Nancy is anxious to see their pastor who is president of the convention and his family. "They're real close to our family. It will be good to see the people, too, from around the country," she said.

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And there will be lots to see, Nancy explained, because Wade, as director of missions for the convention, made a lot of friends. "He has a very good rapport with the nationals. He loves them and they love him," she said.

The family has received letters and calls from many of their Peruvian friends, she said. She has heard reports that the Baptist churches in Trujillo, Peru, their hometown, have held a prayer service for the family each Thursday night since the accident.

Also, the churches in Lima, Peru, have held a prayer meeting for the Wattses.

The response from Americans, especially Tennesseans, also has been encouraging, she said. Before the Wattses began their missionary service almost 10 years ago, they were active in Royal Ambassador work, serving as Tennessee RA camp leaders several years.

She has received thousands of cards, many prayergrams and gifts of money from churches. Some of the money gifts went to help her buy a car, she said. The school which Macon Road Baptist Church, Memphis, operates has provided Joshua's tuition and will provide it for the upcoming months. Leawood Baptist Church, Memphis, is providing its missionary home to the family and has given them a food shower.

And Highland Heights Baptist Church, Memphis, which Nancy and Wade consider their home church, held a garage sale, the proceeds of which were a gift.

What has surprised her is that the responses continue, Watts said. "It's very encouraging to me that people are still praying for us and still have us in mind. And I tell Wade that, too."

She visits him every day, only missing a few days since the accident. Although in a comatose state some of the time, he has recovered from pneumonia and other minor infections and his ankle is mended.

"I think he understands everything. He just can't respond verbally yet."

She hopes she will have more time soon to supplement therapy he receives at a skilled nursing care facility in Memphis. Marcus will attend therapy sessions three days a week until school starts when it will provide therapy.

All of her family has been changed by the accident, she said, and during the recovery time in 10 different health-care institutions.

Nancy said Marcus, who was introverted, has become extroverted, which is characteristic of people who suffer head injuries. Joshua has changed the least, except he is responding to the changes in his family. Nancy has adopted the role of "single mom." She said she has learned "you just depend on God. I do a lot more than I did."

"Sometimes I feel like I'm alone, but I just remember that God is with me."

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(BP) photos available upon request from the Baptist & Reflector, Tennessee Baptist newsjournal.

Lewis: New work essential
to reach America for Christ

By Eddy G. Oliver

Baptist Press
7/10/96

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Starting something new must always be a priority with God's people, according to Larry L. Lewis, Home Mission Board president.

Speaking during an annual home missions conference, Lewis outlined the next two years' "Start Something New" theme, which emphasizes church starting for 1997 and ministry in 1998.

"The only successful strategy for reaching America for Jesus is establishing vibrant, viable, ministering and witnessing congregations," Lewis said. "I don't think we can look at the dire needs in today's society and say we don't need new churches today."

Examples of starting something new also include beginning a Sunday school class or starting a congregation at a housing project.

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"We shouldn't start something new just so we can say we've reached our goals," Lewis said. Referring to John 4:31-35, he said Christians are in the business of finishing the work that Jesus began.

In the final years of the millennium, Start Something New should be the heartbeat of Southern Baptists, Lewis said. Coupled with an effort to share Christ with every person in the nation, he said it should be woven into the fabric of the new North American Mission Board.

"If I'm remembered for anything during my presidency, I hope it will be for putting a major emphasis on the importance of establishing new churches," he said. The NAMB will be formed following next year's annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, merging the work of the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission.

Lewis said he believes the reorganization will allow more missionaries to be on the field with significant cost savings. "I concur with the rationale of forming a new agency so efforts can be focused more directly on evangelism, church planting and ministry."

This is the last Home Mission Board-sponsored home missions conference. It was Lewis' 19th time to speak on a Sunday morning service during the week.

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At 92, she's still
at the keyboard

By Don Kirkland

Baptist Press
7/10/96

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--"It doesn't look like I can retire," Inez Croft said matter-of-factly. Then, with a smile suddenly appearing, she added, "I may have to play for my own funeral because there isn't anybody else."

Not that Inez Croft is thinking about retiring. Not even with her 93rd birthday coming in October. She wants to keep doing what she's done for the past 45 years -- play the piano at Pine Bluff Baptist Church in Columbia, S.C.

"They depend on me," she said of her fellow church members. And they will honor her on July 28, when she will present a special concert of her favorite hymns.

Croft began playing for her home church, Double Pond Baptist in Blackville, when she was 12 or 13. "I played the pump organ," she said, "but I wouldn't play unless Mama sat on the bench beside me. I was bashful."

Her family moved to Columbia in 1943, joining Pine Bluff a couple of months later. She took enough lessons to learn to read music, but "I got most of what I know from the singing schools we used to have -- sometimes lasting three weeks."

Croft worked in textiles 23 years, quitting at age 62 on doctor's orders. Now she likes to "sit around the house and sew a little bit."

She lives in the home of her daughter, Camilla Chavis. She and her late husband, Ernest Croft, had five children. She has 18 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren, and seven great-great-grandchildren.

Croft still has a zest for life, and her effervescence occasionally spills over at the keyboard when she's playing a favorite hymn. "I can jazz them up and make people want to shake their feet," she said.

She vows to "keep on playing as long as I'm able."

"But," she confessed, "I don't practice like I used to."

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Having the mind of Christ
is possible, author says

By Charles Willis

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Searching for, understanding and having the mind of Christ is the goal of a biblical study that even the writer thought might be presumptuous. After all, who would be so bold to attempt to analyze the mind-set and lifestyle of a man without sin?

T.W. Hunt, writer and teacher from Spring, Texas, taught "The Mind of Christ" during Discipleship and Family Development Week at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center and admitted there was a time when he wondered "how a mortal, finite man could know the mind of Christ. There are facets of the mind of Christ mortals cannot know. For example, we will never be all-wise.

"The things I was so frightened of concerned the divine side of Christ. But he was not only divine, he was also human," he said. "I came to realize Scripture tells us we are made in the image of God, so there must be things in the original nature of God which enabled him to become man."

Hunt said Christ had human qualities that are noble, and "he wants us to be noble like that. We are predestined to be conformed to the ways of Christ," he said, citing Romans 8:29. "We can have the mind-set of Christ."

Hunt's pilgrimage to learn about the mind of Christ began as a personal one.

"In the mid-1950s I made career my god," Hunt admitted. "I was in music, and I was very successful. But in 1959 the Holy Spirit confronted me with my sin. I was really serving myself. I had a very life-changing renewal experience that was much like judgment. With all my heart I cried out to the Lord and said, 'From now on, you're going to be the Lord of my life.'

"Almost immediately, the Lord took me to the cross. I wanted to know what it meant to be crucified with Christ. I began to study the crucifixion. The cross became the center point of my life, and it continues today to be the center point of my life."

Over the years, Hunt prayed and thought about the true nature of the humanity and mind of Christ. In the course of what he considered a personal study, he filled 19 notebooks with material over a 16-year period.

"This was just for me," Hunt emphasized. "Once I broke through freedom from bondage to self, I was memorizing a lot of Scripture. God was really speaking to me, and I was beginning to apply what I was memorizing to my life. He set me free."

Living in Fort Worth, Texas, in the mid-1970s, Hunt was asked to teach a weekly Bible class for the regular teacher for a six-week period. To that small class, he taught some of what he had learned about the mind of Christ. One person in the class, living in another city, encouraged her pastor to invite Hunt to teach the material in her church. Another pastor heard about the study, and extended an invitation. Soon, the invitations came in so quickly that Hunt said the experience was "bewildering."

The sudden attention gave Hunt pause.

"I am not a preacher or a speaker; I am a layman. I prayed a long time and very fervently, asking God if I should teach this."

Early one morning Hunt said he was reading in Hebrews 2, and when he got to verses 10-12, the Holy Spirit spoke to him, saying he had given him a message to share.

Since that time, he has taught "The Mind of Christ" in North and South America, Europe and Africa. Soon, he will teach the study in Korea and Japan. In 1994, the discipleship course was published by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division, and the hardback book published by the BSSB's Broadman & Holman Publishers followed in 1995.

"The Holy Spirit led me to write it," Hunt reflected. "The Lord never let me teach any of the principles until they were well-tested in my life. It had to be a part of my experience."

Today, Hunt gets telephone calls and mail from people who have studied his materials, and he attempts to answer each letter, typing responses to questions himself.

"It is such a high and holy privilege that I just remain overwhelmed that God chose me to teach it. I feel very unworthy. I know my history; I know myself.

"But when I got permission to teach it, that was a freedom, because I had felt so reluctant to teach it. It still amazes me that it changes lives."

Hunt sees areas of bondage from which people need to extricate themselves by learning and using the mind-set of Christ. Freedom comes, for example, in moving from self-seeking to seeking the kingdom of God, from careless habits to Spirit-ruled habits, from scattered loyalties to prayerful loyalties.

Indications of growth toward the goal of having the mind of Christ, Hunt said, include:

- a stronger desire not to sin;
- being more conscious of God throughout the day;
- learning new things as a Christian which strengthen and confirm the earlier, more basic concept with which one began;
- being more humble before God and men;
- being less ambitious for self, more ambitious for the kingdom of God;
- recognizing the hand of God in one's life more readily;
- having more Scripture stored in one's mind;
- finding the Word of God is more operative in one's thoughts;
- having a greater thirst for God;
- believing God more fully;
- sharing Christ's life more fully produces his virtues and compassion;
- finding the joy and peace of Christ are replacing fleshly joys and mental conflicts; and
- feeling more excited about the return of the Lord.

Discipleship and Family Development Week, July 6-12, was sponsored by the BSSB discipleship and family development division.

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