

December 5, 1966

## Baptist Youth Find Concern For Human Need in Poverty

By Gainer E. Bryan Jr.  
for the Baptist Press

TOWNSON, Md. (BP)--A compassionate church that wanted to cultivate concern for human need in its youth recently led a party of a dozen young people to one of the ten poorest counties in the United States to help a family in dire physical need.

The effect that the trip had upon the teenagers has spread through practically the entire congregation of Calvary Baptist Church in Townson, a suburb of Baltimore, increasing the member's social concern, the pastor said.

It all started when the pastor, Leland Higginbotham, and the associate pastor, James W. King, felt that the ideal way for the youth to understand human need would be to take a trip to the heart of Appalachia to view poverty first-hand.

Both Higginbotham and King had at one time served at the First Baptist Church of Dayton, Ohio, where they knew Mrs. LeVena Derickson who had recently gone as a War on Poverty VISTA volunteer to the village of Sneedville, Tenn., in northeastern Tennessee.

King led the party of 12 young people on the 1,270-mile round trip from Baltimore to Appalachia where they lived for several days with Mrs. Derickson and helped with the VISTA effort.

The girls slept in an old house which Mrs. Derickson had rented and fixed up for herself and other VISTAS. The boys slept nearby in sleeping bags.

The supervisor of the VISTA program in Hancock County, Elmer Turner, suggested that the Maryland visitors might help a specific family in a community with the picturesque name of Vardy Valley. Call them the Johnson family, although this is not their real name.

Johnson is a widower with seven children. He has poor health and seems to lack the basic skills to earn a living. But let the Maryland church youth describe the situation:

"When we were first shown the house in which Mr. Johnson lived with his children, I was shocked, to say the least," commented Greg Helms, one of the Maryland youth.

"The 'house' had no running water or electricity. There were flies and wasps flying all over the place. The furniture consisted of a double bed, a sofa, a roll-away bed, a large bureau and a half-dozen straight-back chairs.

"This family, everyone, perpetually had a look of want and sorrow on their faces," young Helms said.

James Price added to the picture: "The cracks in the walls were obvious. The floorboards also had huge gaps between them. A pot-bellied stove was the means of heat (the flue caused a fire last winter). The field 'up past the pig sty' was the only toilet."

The 12-year-old Johnson boy, Roger, had never heard of baseball, a fact that impressed the youths from the city of the World Series-winning Baltimore Orioles.

The associate pastor, King, told what his crew did for the Johnsons, with the help of some youthful volunteers from Vardy Valley who joined the visitors to make it a local project.

"Our young people decided to insulate the walls with cardboard," King said. "We also panelled the walls with one-quarter-inch plywood. Murals were painted on the walls--a donkey, a large sunflower, a picture of the house and a life-size painting of the father.

"The cost of materials was absorbed by the kids themselves. The keen talents and imagination of a few and the ambition and enthusiasm of all the kids brought our task to a speedy conclusion (two days of labor)."

Turner, the county VISTA worker, described the results as "most remarkable." He said that they had a prayer of benediction on the day the Maryland youth left in the Johnson's front yard.

December 6, 1966

2

Baptist Press Feature

"The 'Johnsons' all had tears in their eyes," he said. "Their goodbyes to the people from Maryland were touching and real.

"This was the most impressive group of young people that ever came into this section since I've been working here," said Turner. "They gave up their time and allowances. In the two days they spent on this project, they got closer to those people than I had in six years."

Mrs. Derickson was high in her praise of the visiting young people. "They gave me an uplift," she said.

The pastor and associate pastor of the church, which is affiliated with both the Southern and American Baptist Conventions, believe the experiment accomplished its purpose, and more.

King compiled a booklet of testimonials, headed by this one from one of the participants. "I will never forget the trip to Tennessee as long as I live. This is the first time in my life that I can say that I did something to feel proud of."

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Gainer Bryan, former editor of the Maryland Baptist, is deputy director of public affairs for the Southeast Region of the Office of Economic Opportunity, with offices in Atlanta, Ga.



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**Kentucky Board Votes Down  
Ransom Fund Implementation**

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BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD Lynn M. Davis Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203,  
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BAGDAD, Ky. (BP)--The Executive Board of the Kentucky Baptist Convention voted to hold in abeyance any implementation of a motion adopted by the full convention earlier to raise \$37,000 in ransom money to try to free two Baptist missionaries imprisoned in Cuba.

Meeting at Cedarmore Baptist Assembly near here, the board did not rescind the action of the convention, but in effect said it would not be implemented.

The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, which is responsible for Baptist work in Cuba, issued a statement a few days following the convention saying the action was in direct contradiction to its request not to consider any such ransom proposal.

The ransom was aimed at buying the freedom of Baptist Missionaries Herbert Caudill and David Fite, imprisoned since April of 1965 in Havana on illegal currency exchange convictions. They were also accused of espionage.

Since the Kentucky Convention action, however, Caudill has been granted "conditional release" from the Havana prison in order to seek medical attention for failing eyesight. Caudill, 63, was given permission to move about in Havana, but is not allowed to leave Cuba. Fite remains in prison.

In addition to tabling the convention action on the ransom fund, the Kentucky Board also in effect re-affirmed the November convention action which gives to the trustees of Baptist institutions in Kentucky the authority to decide on the acceptance of federal loans.

By an estimated five to one margin, the board here voted down a motion which would have reminded the trustees of the convictions expressed against federal loans by a special called convention in June of 1966 to deal with the financial crisis in Kentucky Baptist schools.

Joe A. Carrico, Baptist pastor from Russellville, Ky., made the motion asking the board's executive secretary to write to the trustees of Kentucky Baptist institutions, reminding them of the action forbidding government loans by the June convention.

The convention in November, however, overwhelmingly approved a motion to re-affirm a 1949 policy placing operation of the institutions in the hands of the trustees. When the motion was made by Georgetown College President Robert L. Mills, he stated his trustees would consider accepting government loans if the motion was approved.

In other actions, the board voted to purchase a 309-acre farm for \$40,000 to expand the facilities of the Cedarmore Assembly, where the board meeting was held. The action brings total acreage of the assembly to 1,352 acres.

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Southwestern Seminary  
Slates New York Studies

12/6/66

PAWLING, New York (BP)--A mid-winter retreat and continuing theological studies program will be held here Jan. 19-21, co-sponsored by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Tex., and the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association.

Three professors on the Southwestern faculty will direct the sessions, designed to provide intensive study in specific fields, Christian ethics, theological studies, and pastoral care.

Leading the studies will be Professors C. W. Brister, pastoral ministry; Milton Ferguson, theology; and William Pinson, Christian ethics.

Invitations are being extended to Baptist pastors and laymen in the New England, Central New York, New York, and Frontier Baptist Associations, seminary officials said.

Sessions will be held at the Holiday Hills YMCA Assembly near Pawling, about 70 miles from New York City.

Southwestern Seminary faculty members have participated previously in two other such programs in Denver, Colo., and in Chicago, Ill.

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Fire Destroys Oklahoma  
Church In \$470,000 Loss

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (BP)--A three-alarm fire roared through the Northwest Baptist Church here, causing an estimated \$470,000 loss of the church sanctuary and two educational buildings.

First report of the blaze was turned in at 1:05 a.m., on Dec. 5. Within minutes most of the building had been engulfed and an estimated 190 firemen were battling the flames.

When flames hit the 150-foot steeple, it became a huge torch illuminating the fog-filled sky and the neighborhood.

The auditorium and two educational plants were a total loss. Preliminary findings indicated that the fire was caused by a short in the electrical wiring in an elevator shaft.

Only sections of the brick walls and a part of the steeple were left standing. One of the church's three educational buildings was saved by a fire wall.

Despite the loss of property, outlook among the members seemed to be generally optimistic. The loss was totally covered by insurance.

Charles Burba, a member of the church whose insurance company carried the church's policy, said that coverage matched almost penny-for-penny the total loss of the auditorium. Losses of the two educational buildings were also covered by insurance.

Burba, who saw a \$10,000 organ which he had presented to the church now only charred bits of materials, commented that the church would probably "come out better than it had been before."

"I believe that all things work together for good," he said. "The church is people-- not a building," he added.

Pastor of the 2,600-member church is Newman McLarry, former associate in the evangelism division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta.

Two Oklahoma City churches and a local business offered the use of their facilities to the stricken church, but McLarry favored meeting in the church's own gymnasium.

Architects estimate that replacement value of the property will be about \$600,000. About \$450,000 will come from insurance, and the church had previously negotiated a \$300,000 loan to build new educational space, which will be used instead to replace the fire losses.