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Church Vocations Prospects
Encouraging, Report Says

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NASHVILLE (BP)--A two-year study surveying the prospects for church vocations volunteers projected through 1975 in the Southern Baptist Convention looks encouraging, the staff project director for the study said here in a report to the SBC Executive Committee.

Lloyd Householder, director of the program of vocational guidance for the SBC Sunday School Board Training Union department, told the Executive Committee he was "optimistic" about the number of church vocations volunteers in relations to SBC vacancies through 1975.

"We wish we could have given you X-number of vacancies and X-number of people to fill these vacancies, but we could not get it down to that fine a point," Householder said.

He indicated, however, that the projected needs for pastors, religious education, music, and other church staff positions, plus home and foreign missions volunteers and denominational workers, indicated a total of about 20,000 persons desired between now and 1975.

At present, the total number of seminary students, church vocation volunteers in colleges and universities, and high school students who have indicated a decision for church vocations total about 29,000.

Thus, he said, we have actually more volunteers than we anticipate vacancies, but it is not really that simple. "But we are encouraged," he said.

The study was made because of a growing concern about an apparent decline in the number of young people entering church vocations, and a decline in seminary enrollments.

"The natural and warrantable assumption has been that if the decline increases or even remains at the present rate, there will be shortages of personnel for the churches and convention agencies," Householder's report said. "However, this assumption has been made without benefit of a comprehensive study of the total picture of supply and demand within the convention."

On the basis of the just-completed study, Householder observed that the SBC is in better shape with regards to the number of church vocations volunteers than it has been in several years.

Although the statistics do show that there is a decrease in the number of church vocations volunteers, the pool of youth who have made decisions to enter some church vocation "is very heartening," he said.

Brunt of the burden lies on pastors and churches as they express interest in youth in follow-through of decisions that are expressed, he indicated.

"The pastor is still the most important influence on decisions and follow-through for church vocations," the report said.

Statistically, however, the report indicated that the majority of the pastors surveyed said they spent less than 30 minutes per year talking to church vocation volunteers, and a two-to-one majority indicated they gave "negative advice" about church vocations, pointing out the hardships of such work, the sacrifice element, and difficulty of the work.

The survey also indicated that youth who are actively involved in the organizations of a church are most likely to follow through on their decision to enter a church vocation.

Although the largest number (38 per cent) of the decisions to enter a church vocation were made at a Baptist assembly or encampment, the highest group still holding to their decisions and followed through on these decisions were made in a home church service or at college where there was some period of time to think about it, said the report.

Other primary factors influencing youth in church vocation decisions were the home, and the influence of high school counselors.

Another encouraging factor disclosed by the study, said Householder, is the fact that the over-all drop-out rate (attrition) among Southern Baptists currently holding church vocations is only 8.4 per cent.

"The drop-out rate of present church vocations workers does not appear to be extensive or alarming," concluded the report.

It also indicated, however, that interest in church vocations as a lifetime career is rather casual among Southern Baptist college students.

The statistics also indicated that the ^{percentage} of church vocations volunteers enrolled in non-Baptist colleges and universities is steadily rising; while the percentage of church vocations volunteers enrolled in Baptist colleges is slowly declining.

Householder said that enrollments in Southern Baptist seminaries seem to have reached a leveling plateau, although enrollments are still gradually declining. "The sharp deceleration of several years ago appears to have leveled," he said.

A 40-year study of seminary enrollments shows fluctuating patterns indicating world conditions, but a leveling trend over the past three years is evident, he said.

Ordinations of new ministers also appears to be up, although statistics were not available over a long period of years. There was a 7.3 per cent increase from 1964 to 1965 in the number of ordinations, with 1,906 persons ordained to the ministry in 1965. The ordinations seemed to be concentrated in open country churches and churches with 300 members or less, the report said.

The problem of church vocations is complicated by a wide diversity of thought concerning the theology of "the call" to service, the report said. "There is a general lack of solidarity of understanding concerning the call and its implications for church vocations in the Southern Baptist Convention," the report said.

"There is need to understand the New Testament teaching concerning the call with greater clarity, in order that it can be communicated to young Christians who are confronting life's decisions," the report stated.

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5-Man Group Named To
Operate Texas Loan Board

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DALLAS (BP)--A special five-man committee, headed by a Fort Worth real estate man, J. T. Luther, has been appointed to operate the Church Loan Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The church agency's investment policies have caused criticism in some Baptist circles. A special "Committee of 100," composed of 50 Baptist laymen and 50 pastors, has been looking into the affairs of the agency.

W. M. Shamburger of Tyler, chairman of the convention's Executive Board, announced Luther's selection along with three other laymen and one pastor.

The others include Tom Joseph of Austin, a banker; W. J. McDuffie of El Paso, a savings and loan executive; Don Singletary of Fort Worth, also a banker, and Joseph Weldon Bailey of Waco, pastor of the Columbus Avenue Baptist Church.

Executive Board members in their September meeting voted to request the special committee's appointment. A. B. White, executive secretary of the loan board, revealed that his agency has been under criticism and requested the special committee.

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Miss Slater Named
To College Position

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BELTON, Tex. (BP)--Miss Estelle Slater of Carrollton, Mo., will become dean of students at Mary Hardin-Baylor College, effective Oct. 15, President Leonard L. Holloway has announced.

She replaces Miss Mary Jane Nethery, who has resigned to accept a position as executive secretary of the Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union.

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Northeast Fellowship
Splits In Two Groups

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BOSTON, Mass. (BP)--A reported 25 per cent church membership increase prompted the Northeastern Baptist Fellowship meeting here to adopt a resolution providing for the dissolution of the larger fellowship and the creation of two smaller area fellowships.

Adding further impetus to the division was a predicted continuous optimistic potential for Southern Baptist churches in the area which includes New York, northern New Jersey and the six New England states.

In contrast to last year when 92 churches and chapels reported a total of 8,233 members, 108 churches and chapels this year reported a membership of 10,554--a gain of 2,321 members in one year's time.

The 10,554 figure is in excess of the minimum requirements for financial assistance from SBC agencies in the establishment of a new state convention--70 congregations with 10,000 members.

However, those present voted to separate into two smaller fellowships rather than further unify into one multi-state convention.

There are real possibilities for the formation of two conventions in the near future, according to Wendell Belew, secretary of the SBC Home Mission Board's department of pioneer missions.

In view of the added emphasis being placed upon the area by the board's Project 500 and the Northeast Coordinating Committee, it is anticipated that even more rapid growth will be experienced in the next few months, Belew said.

According to the most recent census, New Jersey is the most densely populated of the 50 states; New York claims the second largest population.

David Morgan, pastor of First Baptist Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., was elected chairman of the new fellowship for New York-New Jersey.

A fellowship steering committee will include J. T. Davis of Rome, N.Y., vice chairman and program committee chairman; Curtis Porter of Buffalo, N.Y., secretary-treasurer, as well as area missionaries, association moderators and one member-at-large from each association.

This committee will meet in early December.

The New England group will formulate their plans and elect leaders at their annual meeting Oct. 6 in Brunswick, Maine.

Belew said that complete harmony prevailed among the more than 200 in attendance and that the division of areas was initiated for the good of the churches concerned.

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Five Mission Day Speakers
Slated At SBC Seminary

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LOUISVILLE (BP)--Stephen Neill, professor of missions and ecumenical theology at the University of Hamburg, Germany, for the past five years, will be the first of five missionary day speakers at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary during the 1967-68 session.

A former Bishop of South India, Neill will be on the Southern campus during Mission Emphasis Week, Oct. 10-13.

Neill is the author of more than twenty books and editor of several others. In addition to his missionary work in South India, Neill has been assistant to the Archbishop of Canterbury and chaplain of Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated.

Others who will be appearing as featured mission day speakers are:

William Crook, director of VISTA, the domestic peace corps, on the changing political-religious climate, Nov. 7.

Paul Caudill, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., will speak Dec. 5, on foreign missions.

Hermond Westmoreland, pastor of the South Main Baptist Church in Houston, who has had extensive experience with inner-city mission work, Feb. 13.

Hugo Culpepper, head of the mission division of the SBC Home Mission Board and former professor of missions at Southern Seminary, March 19.

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Group Dynamics Advocated
For Church Sex Education

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NASHVILLE (BP)--A proposed plan for the use of small group discussions in sex education through Baptist churches was outlined here during the Southern Baptist Counseling and Guidance Conference.

"The church must seek to be creative in establishing an effective sex education program," said Roy Woodruff, director of clinical pastoral education for Bryce Hospital in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Woodruff outlined a creative plan utilizing the principles of group therapy and group counseling in a church sex education program.

He advocated a small-group approach, with eight to twelve young people in group discussion sessions led by trained lay leaders, including perhaps a physician or psychiatrist.

"I think this method has many advantages over a teacher-centered approach which does not provide opportunity for group participation," said Woodruff. "However, it is not the simplest method, and it has problems which would have to be dealt with first."

A key problem, he said, is obtaining qualified leaders. The pastor is often too busy to lead several groups at the same time, and it would take numerous groups to be effective. "I would be more in favor of trained lay leadership," he said, with the pastor helping to train laymen to lead such sex education programs.

Another problem may be the parents of the youth, he said. "The idea of having their children in a group where sex is openly discussed may be horrifying to them."

Woodruff added, however, that it is imperative for the church to seek to overcome the problems in seeking to project a creative program of sex education.

"We make a mistake when we say that the church has not had a sex education program," he added. "It definitely has. However, it has been a program dominated by negative attitudes, fears, and non-verbal communication."

Too many times the church has presented the concepts that the flesh is evil and the spirit is good, setting up narrow concepts and negative restrictions, he said.

"It has majored on the minor issues of dancing, mixed bathing, and wearing shorts, while refusing to discuss seriously the major issues of sexual development and normal needs and drives," Woodruff observed.

"Realizing that it is sitting on a powder keg, churches have attempted to keep the lid tightly nailed down on the subject of sex," he declared.

"This is certainly a departure from the Biblical view which sees sex as good, created by God, not as a source of shame, but as a source of joy and satisfaction. It was seen as a natural part of man's nature, a part that was essentially spiritual and religious," he added.

The church, he stated, should provide sex education that emphasizes freedom, acceptance, understanding, and responsibility.

He debunked, however, the "distorted sexual freedom of the Playboy philosophy," which he said is not freedom, but is slavery to self.

"Christianity proclaims the true freedom of the individual," he said. "It gives him freedom to be creative, to fulfill his potential, to make his own decisions."

The church also needs to provide sex education within the context of acceptance, so that the participants can accept their drives and feelings through talking about them in a group context, and to accept the thoughts and feelings of others. This also involves understanding, he said.

Woodruff condemned an attitude on the part of some youth who think "as long as no one else is hurt, it's okay."

"This is basically a negative attitude toward sex," he said. "It degrades sex to mere animal instinct and destroys its positive sacramental quality."

"True responsibility is a creative, life affirming, relationship-sustaining use of sex. Instead of being a matter of no one getting hurt, it is a matter of both partners receiving mutual lasting benefit. For the benefit to be lasting, a covenant is required for the context of sexual activity," he declared.

In conclusion, Woodruff said he saw no reason why, with careful planning and proper groundwork, the group methodology approach in sex education could not be effectively carried out by a local church.

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