

(BP)---FEATURES

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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"Good News" Television Show
Reaches Texas Youth On Issues

By Robert O'Brien

SAN ANTONIO (BP)--Suddenly the color television screen is filled with young faces, belting out the "Good News" theme.

The scene fades to Jimmy R. Allen, pastor of the First Baptist Church of San Antonio, who glances at a brief reminder written on his palm, and then sets the scene for 30 minutes of unique television programming.

Religious folk songs and conversation with teenagers are not unusual, but the way they've been combined in this joint production of WOAI-TV and the First Baptist Church here is rare in TV programming.

Through the songs and candid, lively, no-holds-barred dialogue between Allen and the teenagers, the Christian outlook is brought to bear on topics ranging from "peace of mind" to the hard realities of drugs, drinking, Vietnam, race relations, cheating, the generation gap, alienated persons and other problems confronting today's youth.

Sometimes playlets or guest panelists are used as a change of pace. Almost always, it's different from the usual type church-sponsored television show.

Allen and the church's teenagers have been involved in this program--"Good News"--for about nine months. Already, positive results have surfaced.

A former member of the studio crew, through contact with Allen and the "Good News Kids", sensed an unfilled need in his life. Before long, Allen said, he accepted Christianity and joined First Baptist Church.

Results in the community have been harder to access. But one day Allen was in a restaurant where a waitress, who identified herself as a Roman Catholic, recognized him.

"My husband teases me," she said, "because I always go to the six a. m. mass, come home and work in the garden, come inside at 8:30 and watch your program, and then go back to the garden."

One of the most noticeable results, Allen observed, has been with the "Good News" kids --the church's teenagers who come down on Saturday night (and that's a date night) to film the program to be shown at 8:30 on Sunday morning.

Molly Reddell, a 17-year-old high school senior, admits: "I didn't have definite views on some issues. But Dr. Allen, in the discussion, always manages to get across a point of view that's worth thinking about."

In fact, Allen's goal is to generate "creative tensions" in the discussions which will lead the group and the audience to crystallize Christian principles. "Not only do we talk about issues," he explained, "but we also try to arrive at something youngsters can do about them."

Allen set out to disprove the misconception that teenagers skim only along the surface and fail to think deeply about issues.

A perceptive summation of the value of the "Good News" program by one of his group indicates Allen is right:

"You know," the teenager said, "this show has helped us know each other better, and it's made us more sensitive to the needs of others. We learned, for example, that maybe we shouldn't ignore or laugh at 'loners' and people of other races, but try to be kind and treat them as Christians should."

Skipper Allen, the pastor's 15-year-old son, is closer to the situation than almost anyone else. He's the fellow who has to live with it. He rides home with his father after the show and their conversation--or perhaps even spirited debates--continue.

But Skipper's found a positive result, too. "You know, my father's a pretty good guy," he said.

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February 3, 1969

2

Baptist Press Feature

Apparently, the other youth in the church, as well as the crew at the television station agree.

One Saturday night at the video-taping session, this sign, erected by the studio crew member who had become a Christian, greeted the pastor:

"Welcome Dr. Jimmy Allen, Swinging Rev. of Bapt. One."

That groovy title meant one thing. Allen, the former secretary of the Texas Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, and his church ("Bapt. One") had been accepted.

What more can a fellow ask?

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February 3, 1969

**Baptists Urged To Support
Missouri Public Schools**

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Southern Baptists in Missouri were urged here to pledge support for an expanded public school system despite increased costs to taxpayers, if and when Catholic parochial schools in the state are closed down.

An editorial in *The Word and Way*, weekly newspaper of the Missouri Baptist Convention, urged positive support of public school education, but did not urge specific opposition to Catholic pleas for tax support for their schools.

The editorial, written by Editor W. Ross Edwards, was entitled, "Education for All: Let's Be Positive."

During the month of January, four Catholic bishops in Missouri issued a joint statement announcing an all-out drive to obtain tax funds from state officials to help pay for the mounting costs of the Catholic parochial school system.

A few days later, the Catholic school board of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese voted 12-1 to recommend that their 54 schools with 23,000 students be closed on September 1 unless at least half of the system's operating costs are borne out of state tax funds.

The bishop of the Kansas City-St. Joseph Diocese, Charles H. Helmsing, rejected the proposal, however, saying it was too drastic.

Instead, the bishop outlined a three-year plan to consolidate some Catholic elementary schools, give more help to inner city schools and assist religious education on the campuses, and seek "tax rebates and/or state aid, thereby assuring the continuance of Catholic education in Missouri."

Bishop Helmsing was one of the four Catholic bishops in the state signing the statement calling for an all-out drive to obtain tax funds from the state legislature.

The editorial in the Baptist state paper did not condemn Catholic plans to seek state financial aid, but emphasized: "Let's be positive" in supporting public school education.

"Since the state and federal constitutions forbid the use of tax funds for sectarian schools," the editorial stated, "we urge our citizens to make all necessary preparations for welcoming the additional students in areas that will be affected if the church schools are closed."

Editor Edwards suggested that Baptist readers write to Gov. Warren E. Hearnes, the senators, and representatives "pledging to them your support of public education."

"The additional students would doubtless cost taxpayers more money," the editorial added. But it pointed out that all forms of education are expensive, and "the cost over a long period of time would very likely be no greater than supporting multiple school systems."

While closing the Catholic schools would be painful to some, the editorial said, it is nothing really new. "At one time Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and other denominations operated sectarian high schools in Missouri. As public education grew, these schools were gradually phased out."

The editor wrote that it would be a great boost to the spirit of good will to have students from all denominations in the same school system. "This experience can mean much to our children, to us, to our churches, and to the cause of Christ and to our country."

The editorial also argued that public education is one of the greatest supporters of democracy, that it would be easier to secure approval of bond issues for public education, that public education could take a giant step forward with broad support from all parents, and that the greatest benefits would go to the students.

In the same issue, The Word and Way reprinted an editorial appearing in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch opposing the use of tax funds for parochial schools.

"We cannot agree that it is right or fair to use public funds, obtained by taxation of people profession various religions or no religion at all, to support the religious institutions of a part of the people," said the St. Louis newspaper editorial.

"What the state government ought to do now, it seems to us, is to take seriously the rumblings from Catholic authorities and begin to prepare the public school system to accomodate the growing demands that may be made upon it," said the Post-Dispatch editorial.

There are about 140,000 students (16 per cent of the total school population) attending Catholic schools in Missouri. The system costs about \$75 million a year.

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TV New Commentator Predicts
Upswing in Church Attendance

(2-3-69)

DALLAS (BP)--Television news commentator John Cameron Swayze, praising the basic goodness of America and its people, predicted here an upswing in church attendance.

Swayze made the forecast during an address to the Founder's Day Banquet of the North Texas Baylor Club, an organization of ex-students and supporters of Baylor University, a Baptist school in Waco, Tex.

Swayze, who currently is radio-television spokesman for the four major U. S. corporations, skimmed over several gloomy aspects of the world situation, including war, plane hi-jackings, and the credibility gap.

Then he swerved into his main theme of optimism, speaking warmly of the general honesty and industriousness of the American people, hopes for the new administration in Washington, and the predicted upswing in church attendance.

In an interview, Swayze commended Christian education institutions, such as Baylor University, for thier important role in the overall educational resources of the nation, and praised modern religious news reporting.

He commended some religious denominations for treating religious affairs "as hard news and not some kind of side show" and pointed out that the wire services, major networks and newspapers already cover many religious events and projects as straight news. "When religious news is written as straight news, I read it and enjoy it; when it is not, well..."

Swayze, one of the first television news commentators, has received numerous professional awards, and was once described by Esquire Magazine as "unknockable--one of the few celebrities in America that nobody hates."

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Wilson Named Executive
Director At SBC Hospital

(2-3-69)

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The board of directors of Southern Baptist Hospital, Inc., here, has promoted Raymond C. Wilson from administrator to the newly created post of executive director, and has named three others to new administrative posts.

Wilson's new duties cover leadership of all operations of the Southern Baptist Hospital and related facilities in the New Orleans area.

In a realignment of responsibility, the board also created three new adminsitratve positions and named persons to fill them.

J. D. Stoudenmier was named fiscal affairs administrator; Edward Clarkson was elected health care administrator, and Fred H. Willie, property services administrator. All will work under Wilson as executive director.

Hardy M. Harrell is executive secretary-treasurer of Southern Baptist Hospitals, Inc., which operates both the New Orleans hospital, and Baptist Memorial Hospital in Jacksonville, Fla. The new appointments apply only to the New Orleans hospital.

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