

April 10, 1969

Missouri Family Teaches
Bible With Puppet Shows

By James Evans McReynolds

FENTON, Mo. (BP)--How does a teacher communicate with children, and maintain the child's interest in Bible study?

Don and Ella Avery, members of the First Baptist Church of Fenton, Mo., have sought to answer this question with the use of puppets.

For the past nine years, the Avery family has been teaching the Bible with puppetry before hundreds of church Sunday Schools, youth groups, Sunday worshippers, and associational and state Baptist groups.

Their puppet ministry started the day their television set went on the blink. Unable to use the TV as a family activity, they decided to make puppets.

"Originally the puppets were simple cloth tubes stuffed with cotton and tiny weights. They were created as a family activity, nothing more," Don Avery said.

"We enjoyed it so much that we decided to share a performance with neighborhood families. Then one day our pastor asked us to plan a program for our church.

"We were amazed at the interest and attention shown by both children and adults in the congregation," Avery added.

From that beginning, the Avery family became enthused with the possibilities for using puppetry in religious education. Avery sent a letter expressing willingness to present a puppet show to 51 churches.

"I anticipated minimal response, but it was overwhelming," he said. "We did puppet plays for the next 17 Sundays, sometimes as many as three a day, and we've been doing them ever since."

The Averys have presented puppetry for Girls Auxiliary groups, Royal Ambassador chapters, Vacation Bible Schools, institutions such as nursing homes, jails, schools and other groups. Traveling to each engagement by station wagon, the Averys carry all their materials with them.

"It's almost unbelievable to think that the six by twelve foot stage and all our puppets can be dismantled and packed into the back of our station wagon," Avery said.

During most performances Don and Ella work the puppets themselves, but at associational, state convention, or other large gatherings, their four children--Russell, Dawn, Arlene and Bonnie get in the act.

Puppetry is often used during a large gathering such as a conference or associational meeting, Avery said. "While adults are listening to the sermons, hearing reports, and worshipping in their group, the children can be entertained and taught Christian truth by a puppet show in another location. This frees the parents to participate more fully in their meeting and insures an enjoyable learning experience for the children.

"From verses of the Bible and words of hymns we have developed some plays. We have created various characters, added music and sound effects. Often the program results in persons making decisions for Christ," he added.

"Many parents who won't come to church otherwise will bring their children to see the puppets. Puppetry is something to watch, a visual aid with movement. It's like reading a story and seeing it," he said.

For the Averys, puppetry provided the answer to their question concerning communicating the gospel to children. As they say, "Our puppets are puppets with a purpose, controlled by the Ruler of heaven and earth."

April 10, 1969

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Another in a series)

ONE-ISSUE CHRISTIANS

By T. B. Maston

Retired Professor of Christian Ethics
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

There are one-issue voters. There are also one-issue Christians. The former is unfortunate. The latter is more unfortunate:

The one-issue Christian may judge his own life on the basis of one particular issue. From his perspective he is right on that issue; and, hence, he considers himself to be a good Christian.

More frequently the one-issue Christian judges other Christians on the basis of one issue. This issue usually a pet subject of his and one on which he considers himself to be right.

For some the one issue will be in the area of personal morality. For others it will be some phase of social morality. For still others the one issue will be a particular theological doctrine or perspective. Regardless of other things one is considered a good Christian if he is "right" on that doctrine or regarding the perspective.

Those who select an issue in the area of personal morality may be negative or positive in their approach but more frequently the former than the latter. If negative, the issue may be swearing, smoking, drinking, or some other comparable issue. If one is free of that habit or "vice" he is good; if not he is bad.

For others the one issue may be in the area of positive personal morality. For example, if one is "honest in his business," "a man of integrity," "a good neighbor," "Generous," "kind and considerate," he is judged to be a good man. Whatever the virtue it is a pet idea of the one-issue Christian. For him if one is "right" regarding that issue or virtue, he is considered a good Christian.

In the contemporary period the one-issue Christian will frequently concentrate on some particular social issue. The goodness or badness of a Christian will be judged upon the basis of his attitude regarding this one issue.

The issue may be capital punishment, divorce, Communism, foreign aid, poverty, race, Red China, unemployment, United Nations, or war. The one-issue Christian judges other Christians on the basis of their position regarding a particular one of these issues. If they are wrong from his perspective on the issue then they are wrong. If they agree with his position then they are right and, hence, are good Christians.

It needs to be emphasized over and over again that there is no single issue that is an adequate test of the genuineness and vitality of one's Christian faith. The ultimate test is how much we are like the living Christ. This means, among other things, that a Christian's life should be judged by the totality of its impact.

One may be right, at least from our perspective, on one issue and yet be entirely wrong on equally important issues. We need to remember that the same thing may be true of us. We all have our blind spots. Let us in this area as elsewhere do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us also remember that one may differ with us on what we consider to be the supreme issue or test of the Christian life, and yet over all he may be a better Christian than we are.



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April 10, 1969

**Conference Urges Creative
Social Work in the Church**

FORT WORTH (BP)--More than 125 participants in the first social work conference at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here were urged to consider relevant answers to the question, "Do Christian people in social work have something to say to this world?"

The question was posed in the closing address to a conference on "Creative Social Work in the Church" by Ed Carter, secretary of the department of Christian social ministries for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

Carter said that many people in Baptist churches "wring their hands about problems they are facing within their communities, while driving around and through the very environments which produce many of the problems."

Carter stated that Christians in social work must go where the action is to witness to people where they are and in accordance with their needs.

He listed six points to remember in reaching people through the area of social work: (1) the work focuses on people; (2) people must be confronted with helpful, meaningful, growth-producing relationships; (3) people will respond to witnessing if we are first significant to them; (4) most people will respond only when there is some promise of personal value, (5) when we share our message we multiply the value of it; and (6) people grow through love.

"Throughout this conference," said Carter, "we have been reminded that we live in a changing world. There are increasing numbers of people in America who believe there is nothing sacred about anything."

Several speakers expounded on the areas of Christian social work relating both to the individual and to the church.

Fernando G. Torgerson, dean of the School of Social Work for University of Texas at nearby Arlington, Tex., and Fred Moseley, assistant executive secretary for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, spoke on the individuals involved in social work.

Moseley discussed the needs for more people to enter this particular vocation, and Torgerson related recent trends in helping individuals through modern skills and techniques.

John W. Drakeford, professor of psychology at Southwestern Seminary, told of a somewhat new branch of psychology called "Integrity Therapy" which emphasizes the value of group interaction. Drakeford is author of a book on that subject.

Other speakers who probed areas of group social work were Sallie Churchill, professor at the University of Michigan School of Social Work, in Ann Arbor, Mich.; A. Donald Bell, professor at Southwestern Seminary here, and Carter.

Other facets of the conference included a drama presented by a local church youth group, a sound seminar tape entitled "How People Change," by Margaret Mead of Columbia University, panel discussions and small group meetings.

Designed to increase awareness of the possibilities of creative social work in the church, it was the first such conference at Southwestern Seminary here. It was also scheduled as the annual emphasis of the seminary's School of Religious Education.

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**Architects Learn of SBC
Church Building Needs**

(4-10-69)

NASHVILLE (BP)--"A (church) building declares to the passerby what the program is," James L. Sullivan, executive secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, told 166 architects here.

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The architects, from across the nation and one foreign country, attended the fifth regular Triennial Architects Conference sponsored by the board's church architecture department.

Architects attending the meetings included those with whom the board has worked and those to whom the staff of the church architecture department wishes to interpret the desires of Southern Baptist churches concerning their buildings, said W. A. Harrell, secretary of the board's church architecture department.

Sullivan, speaking in a general meeting of all the attending architects, also cited "the challenges of the decade ahead."

"We call many things about the church eternal. The church is dramatically affected by the facts of time," said Sullivan. "While we are anchored to the rock, we must be geared to the times."

"Baptist churches are not what they were and they will not be what they are," continued Sullivan.

Forty-nine exhibits were judged by a jury headed by Paul M. Johnson, the department's acting chief architect. Awards were presented at an awards banquet held at Nashville's Sheraton Motor Inn.

Six architectural firms won top "honor" awards for their work on six churches and one state convention building. Earl Swensson & Associates, won two honor awards for its design of Brook Hollow Baptist Church in Nashville, and the Tennessee Baptist Convention building.

The church architecture department staff seeks through such meetings, held regularly every three years, to learn of the needs of churches and to train architects to meet these needs.

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Ten Girls Win Creative
Writing Contest Honors

(4-10-69)

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Ten girls from nine states have won recognition in a creative writing contest sponsored by Tell, monthly missions magazine published for girls by the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Seven awards were given for poetry and three for articles. Winning entries will appear in the November, 1969, issue of Tell.

Poetry entries were judged in categories according to age of the authors. Winners are Linda Barker, 9, Enid, Okla.; Paula Mallory, 10, Covington, Ky.; Tracie Watson, 11, Miami, Fla.; Julie Taylor, 12, Greensboro, N.C.; Trudy Moody, 13, Charleston, S.C.; Rhonda Tankersley, 14, Gainesville, Ga.; Sandra Wayand, 15, Fredericktown, Mo.

Girls writing winning articles are Janet Skinner, 9, Waco, Tex.; Renee Gollehon, 12, Kingsport, Tenn.; Rita Long, 14, Concord, N. C.

This is the first year Tell has sponsored a writing contest, according to Miss Betty Jo Corum, director of editorial services for the Woman's Missionary Union. It will be conducted again next year.

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