

(BP)---FEATURES

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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produced by Baptist Press

December 4, 1969

Palm Beach Popfest Told "Take A Trip With Jesus"

by John D. Carter *
Baptist Press Staff Writer

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (BP)--Palm Beach County was an armed camp. Kids were getting into the Pop Festival near here with counterfeit tickets. It rained. Traffic jammed on the only highway leading into the site. The promoter's used car lot was firebombed. The governor of Florida came to gawk.

The festival chaplain held a worship service on the main stage. More than 200 youth were witnessing for Christ on the 144-acre preserve. And Jess Moody, flamboyant pastor of the First Baptist Church here, had to leave the scene to dedicate a mastodon.

Some of the usual pop festival sights, like ones seen at Woodstock, N.Y., Monterey, Calif. and Lewisville, Tex., were also evident.

There were bearded boys and braless girls. Volkswagen campers filled with marijuana smoke. Peace symbols. Bumper stickers. Cut feet, pneumonia, and bad trips. Signs featuring obscene and four-letter words.

Most of all, there was groovy, ear-bustin' music.

Moody, the ebullient Baptist pastor here, led an enthusiastic contingent of 200 youth out to the festival grounds for a witnessing campaign.

When Moody was away, such as the time he had to leave to supervise a ceremony at Palm Beach Atlantic College dedicating a collection of fossils, the operation was led by Fenton Moorhead, an associate in Moody's church who carries the label, "minister to the generation gap."

For the first time, a coordinated effort to provide a well-organized, continuing evangelistic campaign at an acid-rock pop festival was made. And it worked.

First, the promoter agreed to place Arthur Blessitt, a Baptist evangelist billed as the "minister to Sunset Strip," on the official festival program. Blessitt was given freedom to take the mike on main stage and speak to the thousands of young people at any time that rock groups were not performing.

In essence, the California minister became the official chaplain of the music and drug marathon.

Second, Moody and Moorhead arranged for the witnesses to have a tent--a location along the rows of concession stands that would give them an inside base of operations. Food, soft drinks and gospel tracts were passed out at the front of the tent and the inside was set up as a counselling area.

Third, a dedicated and versatile team of young people were assigned to witness. The young evangelists ranged from straight kids, young married and pre-ministerial students to ex-drug addicts and ex-hippies who had found a new life in Christ.

Thus, the team was able to provide an appropriate counsellor for almost any situation that came up.

Politics can create strange liaisons and no stranger symbiotic relationship seemed to exist than that between festival promoter Dave Rupp, interested in saving his investment, and the Baptist witnessing teams, interested in saving the souls of 50,000 young men and women.

On the first day, when rain and mud threatened to wash out the entertainment and Rupp was harassed by county law enforcement authorities, health officials and ultimately Florida Governor Claude Kirk, prospects were gloomy as the grey overcast above.

But Blessitt and his team, along with members of Campus Crusade for Christ and students from Palm Beach Atlantic College pitched in and directed traffic, acted as volunteer security personnel, answered phones, gave directions and helped make the popfest a reality.

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"Rupp has really caught it from all sides," Moody explained. "His used car lot was burned, and it was obviously a case of arson. And several elements in this town have worked against him, trying to make this festival fail.

"But we from the church would like to be mediators in this thing--I believe that this is one of the key roles a church can perform in a community," Moody said.

The Palm Beach pastor also commented, "The reason we are interested in making this thing go is that the pop festival phenomenon is providing Christians with the greatest audience for witnessing in our time.

"These are people that we could never get inside a church, but they are very receptive to us here. No one is being turned off. They take our tracts and they are keeping them, not throwing them away," Moody observed.

There were some discouraging words, such as the young man who termed the gospel tent "an invasion of privacy." But there was also the young girl, whose eyes were liquid with tears as she testified, "I took Christ into my life earlier, but it's so hard...I drifted off...I came in here tonight and I put it all back together."

She was later seen handing out gospel tracts to passersby.

It is hard to assess the impact of Blessitt's messages on stage. Between the driving, hard-rock sounds of the Rolling Stones, Jefferson Airplane, Steppenwolf, Janis Joplin and Johnny Winter, Blessitt testified before the thousands of Hippies, college and high school students, begging them to "take a trip with Jesus."

His work was given an unexpected lift when Glen Schwartz, lead guitarist for a group dubbed, "Pacific Gas and Electric Company," told the multitude of "the revolution that took place in me when I was saved through Jesus Christ," at Blessitt's California coffee house last year. He then called the 29-year old evangelist out to join him on the stage.

The young men and women worked constantly, many slept only one or two hours. One said: "We can sleep later. Right now the fields are white unto harvest. We're here because we feel that Christ would be here.

"He wouldn't condone what is here, the drugs, sex and general atmosphere of amorality, but he would be here," said a young ministerial student.

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John D. Carter is press representative for the Baptist General Convention of Texas and a staff writer for the Dallas Bureau of Baptist Press. He previously covered the Popfest at Lewisville, Tex., for Baptist Press.

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6 BP PHOTOS mailed to Baptist state paper editors from Dallas regional office. Available to other media on request from Dallas office.



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BUREAU

Sherman Says Baptists Should Learn From Black Power Incident
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NASHVILLE (BP)--A North Carolina Baptist pastor told the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission here that a confrontation between black racists and white racists in Asheville, N.C., has polarized the city and closed down the schools for a week "under black mail."

Cecil Sherman, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C., said that the incident had taught some lessons that he felt Baptists and society should learn.

The incident started last spring and summer when a small group of black militants began attending city council, school board, and poverty program public meetings, disrupting them with obscenities and demands, Sherman said.

When the city's high school fully integrated this fall, several of these black militants pushed for a confrontation, and succeeded when one black student was told to go home because he refused to wear shoes and socks to school.

The black students met, made a list of demands, walked out of class, and fought with police outside the school's doors. Eight students and nine policemen were "battered," every window in one section of the school was smashed, and several autos damaged.

Later several businesses were burned out, Sherman recounted. For four days, the schools were closed, and a public hearing on the issue was dominated by black militants, nearly all very young and very obscene, Sherman said.

Sherman called together the next day all the ministers of the city to try to determine what they could do about the issue. The meeting "turned out to be not much more than a quarrell between white and black ministers," he lamented.

After giving this background, Sherman told the commission meeting in annual session what he had learned about blacks, about whites, about the church, about himself, and what he felt the implications of the incident and the entire black power movement meant to the commission.

"Black self-consciousness is very deep," he said. So deep that black students who did not go along with the demands listed by the others were declared "white" and virtually ousted in disgrace.

The incident indicates that "many blacks have given up on white acceptance." Sherman listed cited three possible reasons: (1) because some blacks can't compete; (2) because the sharp blacks who can compete want black separatism instead of white acceptance; and (3) because black people who have sought a place in a white world on white standards have been denied acceptance.

Black leadership today is poorly defined, and black ministers are often "out of it," Sherman observed. Today, black leadership seems to be attached by flaunting or berating whites. The majority of black people are afraid and silent, he added.

Violence has become a means of threatening whites to give what they've refused to give in the past. "Frequently--over and over again--I heard, 'If you do not give us what we demand we will burn this town down.' And I believe some of these threats,"

Turning to what he'd learned about whites, Sherman said that most whites only grudgingly integrated, and repeated, "I told you so" when the incident happened. Latent white racism hardened into hostility and hatred.

Those who have "what I call the Wallace mentality" who had been "submerged" previously suddenly began to "pop to the surface like corks," and both sides polarized, Sherman said.

In the whole thing, the "classical white liberal was a pathetic figure," he added. They would wring their hands and say, "My God, my God, what are we going to do," and then do nothing. "That's Mickey Mouse stuff," he chided.

About the church, Sherman said the incident had taught him that the church is "too soft" for the black militant today. "No self-respecting black can consider close contact with the white church now."

Another thing that tells you a lot about the church is that the average white clergyman in most of the Asheville churches made no comment about the incident from their pulpits, he said.

Personally, Sherman said he had learned that he is very middle class, that he does not respond well to obscenities, that he is establishmentarianism, that he is white, and that there is a sizable amount of racism in his own life.

Citing a long-time personal effort to work for racial equality in the city, Sherman said that he found himself rejected by white racists in his church and city because he had identified with black causes and black people; yet he was also rejected by the black people because he could not accept their ridiculous demands.

"I'm white," Sherman said. "I wish to be a man, simply a man; but I can't be a man in that kind of environment. Nobody is a man. He is white man, or a black man. In confrontation and in violence, you have no choice. To a black extremist or a white extremist, there are no classroom or philosophical distinctions between black people and white people."

As a result, Sherman said he had concluded that Christian people must work hard at eliminating both white racism and the different kind of black racism, while they are in a latent stage, rather than in a hardened stage as in the time of violence and confrontation.

"We must get a reconciliation again," he said. "White and blacks (in Asheville) seemed to be resorting to power and pressure;" but the Christian must restore "credibility in Christian ideals and Christian methods."

The Baptist pastor drew four implications from the incident, applying them to the situation facing the SBC Christian Life Commission, the denomination's social action agency:

1. "Biblical definitions must prevail in our society," Sherman urged the commission to communicate effectively the fact that "the Bible offers us the best objective source and the most idealistic source for defining the terms justice, love, brotherhood, mercy, righteousness, judgment."

He added that all men are blinded by their heritage, color and station. The Bible however, is objective, and "it is biased only as the interpreter is trapped in his past."

2. "We must seriously consider a biblical estimate of the nature of man." Sherman said to believe in "original sin" is not to be old fashioned or pessimistic, but to acknowledge that human beings are flawed, and need to be mended by God.

3. "Biblical methods must come from churchmen," and New Testament methods as well as ideals must be followed. Sherman added that the church and Christians must be willing to die and to take the dangerous step of practicing what they preach.

"Too much preaching comes out of me, and too many tracts come out of the Christian Life Commission," he quipped. "But we've got to get the preachments and methods matched up before there is any sting, any cut, any edge."

"My church (in Asheville) has the survival instinct that is beyond that of a cat. My church will not die to live as Christ did. My church wants a money-back guarantee on tomorrow," he said.

4. "Biblical timetables may have to be adopted." Sherman said that the problem of racism and poverty will not be solved "in my lifetime," and "we better gear up for the long pull."

That's hard for mortal men to accept, for they are trapped in time, and God is infinite. "But it is not my glory to bring in the Kingdom of God; it is my glory to be a part of such a grand scheme," Sherman concluded.

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Home Mission Board Adopts
\$14½ Million 1970 Budget

12/4/69

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, ending a year that majored on projects, adopted a \$14½ million 1970 budget aimed at strengthening the ongoing work of its 12 programs throughout the nation.

The agency's funds support the work of 2,185 homeland missionaries and an Atlanta-based staff or of 87 consultants and program leaders.

Budgeted items for 1970 reveal a growing emphasis on the missionary and on field programs such as work with language groups, and efforts at creative urban ministry.

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"Smaller total allocations are being made for mission property in order to release more funds for the employment of missionaries and the support of field programs," said Executive Secretary Arthur B. Rutledge in his report to the 69-member board.

Last year, the special effort to establish new churches known as Project 500 and the giant Crusade of the Americas absorbed much of the attention of home missions personnel, though not a large part of the budget.

Largest chunk of the 1970 budget--\$8.6 million--goes to the division of missions, which includes nine of the mission agency's 12 programs of work: establishing new churches and church-type missions, associational administration service, pioneer missions, rural-urban missions, metropolitan missions, language missions, work with National Baptists, Christian social ministries, and work related to non-evangelicals.

Nearly \$3 million of that figure is designated for language missions, the program that is seeking in 1970 to start 85 new missions and churches among some 10 language-culture groups.

Christian social ministries, which includes work with alcoholics and drug addicts, ministries to prisoners and ex-prisoners, children and family services, literacy missions, work with migrants, disaster relief, and mission centers, accounts for another \$1.2 million.

Pioneer missions, the major thrust of Southern Baptists in the Northern and Western area of the nation, will spend nearly \$1.2 million.

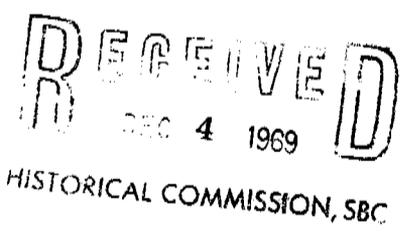
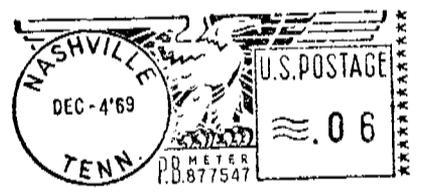
Comparisons with last year's budget reports are misleading, since the 1969 budget included estimates of receipts from mission property and Project 500-designated gifts for the last two months of the year, Rutledge said.

This year, to avoid confusion, the budget does not include funds from these two sources that will come in during the month of December.



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