



BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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25 Profess Faith At Kent State
During Anniversary of Shootings

KENT, Ohio (BP)--During the anniversary observances of the killing of four Kent State University students one year ago, about 500 students, hippies and yippies attended a Jesus Festival of Love here led by Hollywood Baptist Evangelist Arthur Blessitt.

About 25 persons made decisions "to accept Christ as Lord and Savior" after Blessitt had spoken on "peace," and a "Jesus rock group" from Chicago had played, according to Lee Birdson, the Baptist Student Union director for Kent State, who planned the meeting.

Birdson said the response to the Jesus Rally was "an answer to prayer," and that it helped to "keep things cool" on the Kent State campus during four tense days when the students observed the anniversary of the tragedy on May 4, 1970.

On the final day of the anniversary, Kent State closed a building housing ROTC offices after several hundred students staged a sit-in blocking its doors. Numerous activities were staged during the four-day observance of the anniversary.

Birdson said that attendance was cut at the Jesus Festival by one of the rallies. While Blessitt was speaking at the Stump Theater in the Speech and Fine Arts Building, black comedian Dick Gregory was addressing a rally at the Memorial Gymnasium.

Birdson described Blessitt's message as "strictly evangelistic," with a strong emphasis on "peace."

His presentation was so dynamic that it moved many of the students to tears, Birdson said. He added that following Blessitt's presentation, there was a spirit of reverence, awe, and radiance that seemed to pervade among those present.

Blessitt, a Southern Baptist native of Mississippi, received national attention last year after walking from California to Washington, D.C., pulling a 10-foot cross and conducting an evangelistic rally in the nation's capital in July. Several years ago, Blessitt chained himself to a cross on Sunset Strip in Hollywood after he had been evicted from the building where he held a Christian night spot called "His Place."

Though attendance was cut by the conflicting rally, Birdson said he felt it was significant that 500 turned out. He observed that there are only about 12 or 13 members of the Baptist Student Union at Kent, and that no Christian organization on the campus has more than 25 to 30 members. "It's a pagan culture here," he said.

Of the 22,000 students at Kent State, only about 5,000 profess to be church members, and probably the majority of these are not active, Birdsong said.

Both the Crimson Bridge, a Jesus Rock group from Chicago, and Blessitt came to the festival at their own expense, said Birdsong, but since they accepted the invitation, several individuals offered contribute enough to pay their expenses.

Birdsong said that the festival had the backing of the administration, and that the entire rally was "an answer to prayer."

Immediately after the festival, Blessitt left for Belfast, Ireland, where he planned to seek to be a minister of reconciliation between warring Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland.

Blessitt said he planned to erect a cross made of wood supplied by both Protestants and Catholics at a mile-long, barb-wire fence in Belfast's no-man's land. He added he would fast and pray for spiritual awakening in Ireland that would draw Protestants and Catholics together in love.

Blessitt said he did not know how long he would be in Ireland, nor what would happen as a result. Asked what prompted his concern, Blessitt replied: "I became burdened about Catholics and Protestants killing each other, and the Lord just got a hold of my heart."

After he returns to the United States, Blessitt plans to spend three months in New York City, witnessing at the corner of 49th and Broadway in Times Square.

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Sunday School Department Name
Changed to "Bible Teaching"

5/7/71

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Sunday School department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board here has changed its name, effective Oct. 1.

On that date, it will become the Bible teaching department, according to Charles Livingstone, director of the board's church program organizations group.

The name change for the department will be implemented at the same time a new internal arrangement for the department becomes effective.

Livingstone pointed out that the change in the name of the board's department is not an effort to change the name of the Sunday School organizations in Baptist churches across the country. "Sunday School's name should be perpetuated," he said.

The new name will reflect the Bible teaching department's work in ten areas other than Sunday School, Livingstone said.

The areas are: Vacation Bible School, Bible study fellowships, correspondence Bible study, weekday Bible study, Bible study courses, Bible conferences, family Bible study, new Sunday Schools and work with exceptional persons.

"Sunday School will continue to be a large part of the department's work," said Livingstone. "This new name, however, will encourage the department to provide Bible study materials for the churches' expanded needs."

The department will include seven sections: preschool, children, youth, young adult, adult, general officers and special projects.

The renaming of the department is not meant to encourage state conventions to alter their departments' names, nor is it an effort to change the organizational name of Sunday School, said Livingstone.

"Our purpose in this change is to better provide materials for Sunday School and other Bible-teaching projects in the church," he said.

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