

July 10, 1972

## Unique Chapel Stresses Service of Handicapped

By David A. Risinger

FT. WORTH (BP)--A sign planted in front of a small church here makes plain its intention: "A church where the handicapped can grow and serve."

Crusaders Chapel is one of two Southern Baptist supported congregations in Texas which minister exclusively to the handicapped. The other is Bartimaeus Temple in Dallas.

Liebert Armour, who served as pastor of Crusaders Chapel for five years until he recently accepted another church, commented on the church's motto:

"We really put emphasis on service in the chapel. We have had people come to visit us and marvel that these poor handicapped people have gotten out and come to church.

"Yet they don't think anything of them going to work five mornings a week. So, why shouldn't they be expected at church on Sunday?"

The chapel was organized by Sagamore Hill Baptist Church in January 1956. It had its beginning through Ronald Ballard who was paralyzed from his neck down in a car tragedy in 1952.

He related, "As I lay waiting for the ambulance to arrive, I accepted Christ for the first time. I attended Sagamore Hill but felt out of place because I could not participate in all the programs.

"In 1955, I attended a club for the physically handicapped and for the first time since my wreck, felt at ease and able to enjoy myself."

He mentioned to his pastor's wife, Mrs. Fred Swank, that he felt a need existed for a church for the handicapped; a church free of psychological and architectural barriers.

Mrs. Swank took the idea to the church and Tarrant Baptist Association for support.

Today, the church's 50 members meet in an especially-designed building. Nine years ago, a 15-year loan was taken on the \$20,000 structure. The members proudly announce that only \$330 is left to pay on the note.

All the doors of the chapel are extra wide, making entrance easy for persons confined to wheelchairs. The entrance and the podium are ramped and empty spaces are situated among the rows of moveable chairs for wheelchairs.

Armour said the congregation is made up of one-third people in wheelchairs, one-third who are otherwise physically handicapped and one-third able-bodied persons who are family or close friends of the others.

A further look at the chapel's members reveals no one under the age of 15, most being between 25 and 45. Many hold professional positions.

Services are scheduled for Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. A monthly fellowship affords members an opportunity to invite other

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handicapped in the area to visit and see "what they're all about."

Armour, who began pastoring a mission in Columbus, Ohio, in early June, said the church tried several new things this year including a radio show, several cantatas and a retreat at Tarrant Association encampment.

The 15-minute radio show was begun last December and ran for three months.

Former disc jockey Jim Grey, a member of the congregation and son of a Christian Church minister hosted the show.

Features included music, a bulletin board telling what was happening in the world of the handicapped and a five-minute devotion.

Grey is not the only non-Baptist member.

Armour explained that although financial support comes from Sagamore Hill Baptist Church and through the Texas Baptist Cooperative Program, no mention of "Baptist" is made in the chapel's study literature and active members are derived from other denominations.

Another new facet this summer was a mini-revival. Services began on Sunday and ran Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights closing the following Sunday. This was due to transportation problems and fatigue of the members.

Ballard, still active in the chapel, said he is still not fully satisfied.

"Tarrant County has approximately 82,000 physically and mentally handicapped people. We are not equipped to work with the mentally retarded. But that still leaves 20,000 persons to be reached. So, there's still a lot to be done."

He concluded. "The chapel fills my need. It is a place of worship where I love and am loved and where I am needed."

David Risinger is a staff writer for the BAPTIST STANDARD, Dallas.



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July 10, 1972

### SBC Cooperative Program, Designated Gifts Show Increase

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Cooperative Program receipts for the first six months of 1972--bolstered by a strong showing in June--increased \$938,559, or 6.23 percent, over the same period last year.

But designated giving for the same period took the biggest jump, increasing \$2,185,476, or 10.02 percent, over last year.

Cooperative Program gifts through Southern Baptist churches rose from \$15,061,505 for the first half of 1971 to \$16,000,064 for the first half of 1972, according to figures released by John Williams, financial planning secretary for the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee.

The designated gifts increased from \$21,808,749 for the first half of 1971 to \$23,994,225 this year.

Combined Cooperative Program and designated offerings rose 8.47 percent, increasing from \$36,870,254 for the first half of 1971 to \$39,994,289 for the first six months of 1972.

A 19.05 percent jump in June Cooperative Program giving, 1972 over 1971, played a major role in the increase. Receipts of \$2,245,102 last June rose \$427,681 to \$2,672,783 this June.

Designated gifts for the same two months increased from \$1,468,604 last June to \$1,609,349 this June. That's an increase of \$140,745, or 9.58 percent.

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**CORRECTION:** The sherriff quoted in the story about the slain missionaries' son (pages 3 and 4, BP mailing of 7/7/72) should be identified as James Tom Farrow, not James Fowler. Please correct references to him in paragraphs 4,5 and 9 of the story headlined, "Missionaries' Son Found, Apparently Slain, in Alabama."

Edge Forms Renewal  
Center in Louisville

7/10/72

By Walker Knight

LOUISVILLE, KY. (BP)--The eight-year dream of Professor Findley B. Edge for a renewal institution took form here recently as the Vineyard Conference Center.

Edge, professor of religious education at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has led renewal conferences since the early 1960's.

The conferences of 40 or fewer participants have brought clergy and laity together to revitalize their spiritual lives.

Edge sought to equip them to break out of the inwardness and overconcern for the institution which he feels is choking the vitality of churches.

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His understanding of this need came through a major study of the process of institutionalization, and he published his findings in a book, A Quest For Vitality in Religion.

Not content to analyze, Edge sought ways to turn the process around.

He first attempted large conferences with nationally famous resource guests, without much success.

Next he took sabbatical leave to investigate Europe's evangelical lay academies, from which he borrowed concepts for the three or four renewal conferences he sponsored each year.

For one thing, he insisted that pastors and laity come together for the conferences, and he started using the small group discussion technique within a larger group of not more than 40.

All the while he dreamed of one day establishing a renewal center with facilities and staff for year-round conferences.

For that center he sought to raise \$100,000 to insure a three-year start.

He missed out on raising the \$100,000 but he feels "the hand of God" brought about the realization of a new, more flexible concept.

Volunteers are helping staff the center now, and he hopes to announce permanent staff members soon.

Facilities became available through the seminary's Center for Continuing Theological Education, which he rents as needed. No official connection exists between the center and the seminary.

He also plans regional conferences to get his ideas and methods to more people.

The Vineyard has incorporated with a board of directors reflecting both Protestant and Roman Catholic groups. However, Edge expects most of his work to be with Southern Baptists.

He says the Vineyard is dedicated to help individuals and churches discover, at increasingly deeper levels, the life to which God is calling all His people.

The center will sponsor separate conferences for pastors and church staffs, seminary students and their wives, the laity in vocational areas such as medical ethics and additional conferences of general appeal.

The present schedule of conferences includes about one per month through May, with such renewal movement leaders as Gordon Cosby, Elton Trueblood, Lyman Coleman and Reuel Howe.

Edge, author of a new volume The Greening of The Church, exhibits a strong commitment to the local congregation and especially wants to "bridge the gap between the conference center and the church."

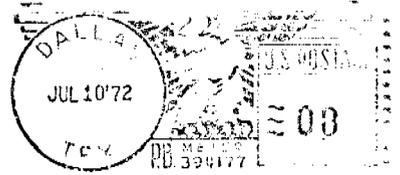
He has seen individuals "turn on" at conferences, then go back to their churches and become more dissatisfied than ever because nothing happens.

Many become professional conference attenders, Edge says, "but the action is in the local congregation and I want to help individuals and churches find ways of being the people of God where they are."



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