



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

---FEATURES

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New Town Conference
Studies New Ministry

By Tim Nicholas

COLUMBIA, Md. (BP)--Although it is not Utopia, Columbia--located halfway between Baltimore and Washington, D.C.--has become a model for the 100-plus planned cities which are now on the drawing board, or under construction, across the country.

These new towns are supposed to be self-supportive, not leaning on the economy of adjacent towns. Ideally, people live, work, learn, and worship all in the new town. But worship is one facet of the plan left out by most developers.

For that reason, 50 Southern Baptist denominational leaders and pastors with varied levels of interest in planned cities met here to investigate strategies for congregational development in other new towns.

Warren Rust, metropolitan missions director for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, and organizer of the New Town Conference, said: "To put church development in the new town scene is really a problem to mission designers and mission leaders.

"You can't force it or promote it or manipulate it, but we still have a commission," Rust said. We have a task to be witnesses of God. Whatever that means in terms of forms is what we need to struggle with."

Southern Baptists have some real problems in thinking in terms of relating in a structured way to other religious groups--even religious oriented groups like the Y.M.C.A., Rust added.

"We're accustomed to going into a city where we see seven church buildings within six city blocks--one for Baptists, one for Methodists, and one for Catholics," Rust said. "We have big blocks of land, all tax exempt, and we continue to set up a competitive system."

Built into the concept of the new towns, however, is planning by the city for an appropriate use of land. "This is a whole new ball game for Baptists," Rust observed.

Columbia is the headquarters of James Hamblen, recently appointed by the SBC Home Mission Board and the Maryland Baptist Convention as new town consultant, providing data concerning relationships, alternatives, and potentials for ministry for Southern Baptist involvement in new towns.

As part of this role, Hamblen will serve as the Southern Baptist Convention representative on the Joint Strategies and Action Committee, and interreligious coalition of new town planners. His work will also include being superintendent of missions for Howard County where Columbia is located.

Because Columbia incorporates some of the best alternatives to disorderly urban growth, she became the model.

There is an architectural review program (including tree preservation procedures,) a covenant on the land, package recreation program, interfaith centers, a model school program, and community health care program.

As Hamblen said, "It'll cost you a few bills, but your needs will be cared for."

Actually the median income for Columbians is more than \$15,000 per year, but with the cost of living being higher, it takes it.

The covenant on the land is part of developer Jim Rouse's plan for optimum land use and is tied to the Interfaith Center's operation.

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The current cost of industrial land (including church sites) is \$55,000 for membership, costs \$10,000 per acre.

"CRFC is just a holding corporation--no religious guidelines--its a bricks and mortar landlord," said Hamblen. "They build a facility and lease it to several congregations. They take care of maintenance, insurance, and furnishings."

CRFC was formed by the Columbia Cooperative Ministry which is a Protestant ecumenical venture made up of 13 mainline Protestant denominations and nine local congregations, created to "develop a total ministry to a total community."

The Cooperative Ministry leases space in the Interfaith Center at Wilde Lake, one of seven villages which will make up Columbia when it is completed in the early 1980's.

The Interfaith Center at Wilde Lake will be joined by Interfaith Centers at the other six villages as the villages are built. Since each village has its own unique design, each Interfaith Center will have the same.

The planning team which will tell the CRFC what to build and how, is the Columbia Interfaith Planning Council (CIPC), made up of seven members of the Columbia Cooperative Ministry, seven Roman Catholics, and potentially seven associates (four now including Southern Baptists.)

Hamblen, among other things, has been pastor of the Southern Baptist congregation which meets in a Lutheran Church.

Columbia Baptist Fellowship has 110 members, and holds its worship services at 1:00 on Sunday afternoons. "It's a real test of faith when the Orioles or the Colts are in town," commented Hamblen.

Hamblen is also a member of an organization called Friendship Exchange. "It's a 24-hour emergency service that does everything from walk your dog to deliver food and clothing," he explained.

Hamblen, who began his work in Columbia in 1970, also serves on the Board of Governors of the Urban Life Center, an interdisciplinary group called together by developer Rouse to discuss the total aspects of community development.

Columbia doesn't pretend to be a Utopia. Perhaps it is more like B.F. Skinner's Walden Two, where behavior is consciously modified. The people who moved to Columbia didn't leave their problems in their old communities.

There's a drug problem, some racial tension, and the crime rate is increasing faster than the population rate. No honest attempt at low income housing has been made other than the interfaith housing which has little relationship to low income housing on the outside.

Interfaith Housing was begun by American Baptists and Roman Catholics, who put up \$50,000 seed money because "the developer was not about to build low to moderate income housing.

"We have ghetto-ized those people who live in Interfaith Housing," Hamblen claimed. "I don't think they'll ever get away from the human problems--selfishness, jealousy, pride, envy, strife."

"But I don't want the new town to answer all the problems. I want it to provide an accessible arena into which all the concerns of life can be fed," Hamblen stated.

"In the new towns, we need guys who are very theologically aware. If I had to take my choice between a guy who had a good theology and knew what he believed versus a guy who know how to organize a perfect church organization, I'd take the former," said Hamblen.

"The new towns pare away all your peripheral values--it strips you bare where you have to go back and ask, 'now what is the real mission of the church?'"

Only Dumb, Ignorant Mess
With Drugs, Mercer Told

MACON, Ga. (BP)--"You've got to be dumb and ignorant to mess around with drugs and alcohol," comedian and anti-war activist Dick Gregory told students at Mercer University here.

"The use of reefers and alcohol can turn a healthy body into a sick, degenerated, weak body," Gregory declared. "It is just like borrowing money from the bank--one day you have to pay it back."

Gregory, who spoke at the Baptist school during Mercer's "Insight" lecture series, drew numerous rounds of applause and standing ovations during the two-hour speech.

He complimented the students, and all today's college youth, describing them as "the most morally honest, ethical group of people in this country.

"Today's youth have dared to question the morality of the war, and because of youth's protests, the war is ending," he claimed.

Gregory said he felt Kissinger's "peace with honor" is more like "a peace of exhaustion, of compromise and necessity.

Violence is not the answer now, nor has it ever been," the black comedian said. Instead, young people ought to be out "campaigning against the conditions which cause war--poverty, hunger, ignorance," he emphasized.

Gregory's declarations on the war and other issues were interspersed with humor. He said he plans to continue his two-year long self-imposed fast until all prisoners of war have returned, despite the fact "that my stomach tried to insist that I only said I'd fast until the war ended."

Although he has had no solid food in two years, Gregory made no commitments about similar protests against possible future wars. "If Rhodesia attacks Harlem, I ain't going to give up eating again."

The now thin man who once weighed 288 pounds quipped that his pants have been altered so much that his right pocket is now on the left side.

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Louisiana Baptist Home
Receives \$200,000 Gift

2/2/73

MONROE, La. (BP)--Louisiana Baptist Children's Home has received a gift of \$100,000 from a Northwest Louisiana family to be used for building a new cottage on its campus here.

The family wishes to remain anonymous, said children home superintendent Wade B. East in announcing the gift.

One of the home's goals is construction of five new cottages to replace older buildings, East said. The children's home was established in 1899.

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History of Nashville Church
Wins National History Award

2/2/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--A book that chronicles the 150-year history of the First Baptist Church of Nashville has won a national certificate of commendation from the American Association for State and Local History.

The book, entitled The First Baptist Church of Nashville, Tennessee, 1820-1970, was written by Lynn E. May Jr., executive secretary of the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. The American Association for State and Local History is a non-profit educational agency dedicated to advancing knowledge, understanding and appreciation of localized history in the United States.

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