

July 24, 1974

Church of the Exceptional
Meets Special Needs

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MACON, Ga. (BP)--A special kind of church here, aided in part by students from nearby Mercer University, a Baptist school, has become Guideposts Magazine's Church of the Year and has been featured on the NBC Today Show.

The Church of the Exceptional, which has an average attendance of 45, is an inter-denominational Christian congregation for the handicapped and mentally retarded in the Macon area.

Founded three years ago by its present pastor, Cliff Wallace, a Methodist, the church is designed to meet the special religious needs of the handicapped.

Wallace, then a department manager for the J.C. Penny Co., was influenced to begin the project after seeing the reactions of a group of mentally retarded children to a revival service. He began with nothing but faith but was encouraged by believing friends and the pastor of his church.

After acquiring a vacated church building in Macon, generous financial support from area churches and charities and his license to preach from the United Methodist Church, he started the church, aided in part by students from Mercer University, a school operated by Southern Baptists in Georgia.

Tim Estes, one of the first Mercer students to become involved with the church, now serves as its associate pastor and choir director. A junior from Deland, Fla., Tim is an ordained Baptist minister and has helped involve other Mercer students with the church.

"These people just demand that you love them--there is no way that you can refuse that," said Tim, who has done everything for the church from sweeping the floors and chopping down trees to preaching the Sunday morning sermon.

"The difference in working with these people is that they are completely honest with their feelings. If they feel like yawning during a service, they will, but also if they appreciate something you do for them, they will not hesitate to say so," Tim said.

Marilyn Skinner, a Macon resident and Mercer junior, began working with the church when it first opened its doors in September, 1971. Then a senior in high school, Marilyn learned of the special ministry when her church, Mulberry Methodist, was asked for a \$25 contribution.

"When I heard about it, I just felt like that's where I was supposed to be," said Marilyn. She now serves as the lead teacher of the children's class, the hardest to deal with because its members include blind, deaf, brain-damaged and hyperactive children from 4 to 10 years old. Marilyn and her two teaching assistants use puppets and audio-visual equipment to enhance their flexible lesson plans.

"We just want to let them know that we love them and that God loves them," Marilyn said.

Eddie Chancy of Blakely, Ga., and David Peace of Columbus, Ga., also juniors, work regularly with the church as assistant teachers in the adult class where Estes is the lead teacher. They fill in as lead teacher when Tim preaches at the 11 o'clock service.

Eddie's parents have also become involved with the church. Mrs. Chancy brings cakes for everyone who has a birthday that month when they come from Blakely one Sunday each month. She also supplies the refreshments for that Sunday.

Mike Phillips, a freshman pitcher for Mercer's baseball team, has been the assistant teacher in both the teen and young adult classes.

Sunday morning activities, with ages ranging from 6 to 55, usually last from 9:30 to 12:30 including three services and Sunday school classes. The services are conducted informally with repetition and participation as very important parts of the ritual. The sermon is usually no longer than 10 minutes.

The church also sponsors "reach out ministries" to supplement its program. It offers support for the "Saturday Play" program for exceptional children, sends 17 exceptional underprivileged children to Cross Roads summer camp and furnishes literature and guidance to groups desiring to establish exceptional ministries.

When the church received the Guideposts award this year, Norman Vincent Peal came to Macon to present it at a special ceremony held at the Macon coliseum. Georgia Gov. and Mrs. Jimmy Carter, active Baptists, also attended the service.

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Graham Calls for Prayer
On Situation in Cyprus

7/24/74

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham called here for prayer that the trouble on Cyprus not result in a third world war.

Graham, speaking at a special public meeting to a primarily Swiss audience and more than 3,000 participants in the International Congress on World Evangelization, said "We can't know how bad the situation is" or "where it's going to lead. My prayer is that it not end in a third world war."

The evangelist then called for a moment of silence as the audience stood for prayer. About 600 persons responded to a subsequent invitation to make decisions for Christ.

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Sullivan Probes SBC
Structure in Lectures

7/24/74

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"In our lifetime, unless we can reverse the trend, we'll see the day when the churches will pay taxes on everything, sanctuaries included," predicted James L. Sullivan, outgoing president of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The warning came at a session of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's annual Pastors' Conference conducted here.

Fielding a question from the floor about the Sunday School Board's tax problems, Sullivan commented: "If government can tax, it can destroy you." He discussed a recent ruling of the Tennessee Supreme Court which outlined what areas of the Sunday School Board's operation are and are not taxable. The board has filed for a rehearing to clarify what it feels are "uncertain and confusing areas of the decision."

In a four-part series of lectures on his reflections on the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Sullivan dissected the structure of the SBC, probed the denomination's strengths and problems and stressed the "absolute imperative" of religious education.

Commenting on the organization of the SBC, Sullivan told the audience of over 150 pastors: "We don't need any more machinery than we've already got--you don't grind coffee in a concrete mixer!"

He also noted that nothing is more misunderstood by Southern Baptists than the concept of organization. "I've heard more sermons preached against organization than against sin," the former preacher declared.

Good organization, he continued, is like a good digestive system. "If it's working, you're not aware you've got one. If it's not, you're not aware of anything else."

Diagramming the structure of the SBC, he pointed out that there are no inferior or superior Baptist bodies. Instead, Sullivan said, the local church tops the structure. It is the local

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church that elects the messengers who make up the other bodies--the associations, the state conventions and the SBC. And each agency, he emphasized, is directly accountable to the Southern Baptist Convention.

He then enumerated eight strengths of the convention:

--Youthfulness: "We're hardly out of our junior years as a convention."

--Lay emphasis: "Most denominations are run by and for preachers. We're a grassroots lay movement."

--Ability to change.

--Checks and balances within the denomination, created by the interdependence between the associations, state conventions and SBC.

--Trustee system for SBC institutions: "The trustees furnish objectivity; the administration, subjectivity."

--Diversity: "We're not all alike--thank the Lord!"

--Flexibility.

--Voluntariness, as expressed by the Cooperative Program unified budget.

Declaring that there is no perfect system, Sullivan zeroed in on one of the biggest problems facing Southern Baptists today: communication.

To get the facts across so that people will understand them, the board uses what Sullivan termed a "vacuum approach." He explained: "Causes are sucked forward by in-direction, not by direction." The opposite approach, he said, is the coercive "bulldozer" one, which results in fragmentation and backlash.

Another communication problem stems from the paradoxical Baptist view of oral and written freedom. "We encourage freedom of expression," he declared, "as long as it is oral... We've got to find some way to have debates in print like we have on the platform of the convention."

Sullivan cited the balance on trustee boards as another problem. "We are overweighted ministerially in our leadership positions," he noted, pointing out that 85 per cent of registered SBC messengers and 66 per cent of all board members are pastors.

He also outlined the difficulty of maintaining theodemocratic, rather than democratic, principles; the SBC's tendency to assume trustee responsibilities; prejudice against the SBC due to size, particularly in the Baptist World Alliance; the problem of distinguishing between appearance and reality in denominational controversies; the one-way criticism of leadership ("When you're under attack, you're disqualified from response"); dilemmas caused by federal laws; and the difficulty of handling the number of resolutions and motions presented to the SBC.

Turning to religious education--the main thrust of Sunday School Board work--the 21-year veteran of the board pointed out that, although facts change rapidly from one era to the next, truth does not.

Educators, therefore, must teach pupils how to think, not how to memorize facts, he stated. "If we do not relate truth properly to the modern-day learner," he warned, "he's going to be at a total loss to know how to deal with the facts around him."

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Estate Leaves Richmond
School \$755,000

7/24/74

RICHMOND (BP)--The estates of a University of Richmond graduate and his wife will provide the Baptist school with \$755,000.

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David J. Carver of Baltimore died in 1969, leaving a bequest of \$155,000, and Mrs. Carver, the former Hally Council of Warrenton, Va., died in December, 1973, leaving a \$600,000 unitrust.

Carver, a Baptist deacon and Chinese art importer, graduate from the University of Richmond in 1905, and his wife graduated from the school's Women's College the same year.

The Carvers, over the years, also gave liberally to other causes, including Baptist work in Maryland, the Hong Kong Baptist College building fund and Carver School of Missions, now merged with Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

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Pint -Size Donors Inspired
To Give Money for 'Steeple'

7/24/74

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Sometimes a window can inspire a spire.

Take the case of Melissa, 8, and Jason, 11, children of Bill Rogers, a new professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The budding entrepreneurs, who had raised approximately \$60 at a carport sale in Virginia prior to their move to New Orleans in June, looked out of a window at their new home and spied a steepleless chapel.

When their father brought home a brochure on fund-raising for the spire on Leavell Chapel, the children asked him if the seminary had enough money to put up the spire.

"Not yet," the professor replied.

The next day, without their father's knowledge, the Rogers offspring presented Russell McIntire, director of development, with two \$5 bills enclosed in an envelope marked "Money for the Steple" (sic).

"I really think they wanted to give money for the spire so they can see it out of their windows," Rogers said with a laugh.

Whatever the reason, it's a sure bet that Jason and Melissa will someday show their children "the spire that we built."

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