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480 James Robertson Parkway  
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(615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor  
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

April 23, 1975

75-64

**Texas Church Has Genuine  
Cross-Cultural Ministry**

By Jim Newton

SAN ANTONIO, Tex. (BP)--Haggard and unshaven, Joe (that's not his real name) crawled out of his sleeping spot beneath a concrete bridge over the scenic San Antonio River. He picked up an empty bottle and tried to drain one last drop of cheap wine.

It was 6:15 a.m. He had to hurry. He did not want to be late at the church.

At 6:30 on the dot, the doors of West Hall at the 8,000-member, inner-city First Baptist Church, opened and about 15 men filed inside. Hot coffee and donuts were waiting.

Three hours later more than 50 men had been served, and the crowd picked up by 9:30.

There were all kinds of people in the room--an 85-year old lady on welfare, several young street people, a few blacks, a number of Chicanos, but mostly white, middle-aged winos.

Promptly at 9:30, Bill Heard arrived with the sandwiches. Bologna and cheese today. No soup. Maybe tomorrow.

By 11:00, most of the people had gone. In walked a well-dressed businessman wearing \$50 shoes. He took two sandwiches and a cup of coffee and sat alone at one side. No wine, this man. He was a used car salesman from down the street, living only on a commission, and his sales had hit rock bottom.

Later, some of the group stayed, or came back, for the Bible study program. But there was no hassle, no pressure for them to stay in order to eat.

Upstairs in another part of the church, Pastor Jimmy Allen was placing a call to a city official, trying to set up a meeting to discuss the need for a housing project that would bring upper and middle-class people back into the downtown area to live.

By noon, another crowd had gathered across the street at the church-sponsored Fourth Street Inn Spaghetti House.

Most were middle class, white collar workers, including a number of employees of the nearby telephone company, television station, and newspaper.

The waiters and waitresses were amiable, joking with the customers as they stopped to talk. Somehow, in non-verbal communication, they tried to tell the customers that they cared.

When the pace slowed and the tables were served, a few even sat down to talk to friends they had made during weeks of steady service.

At 2:00 p.m., Ron Willis turned over the dishwashing chores at the Spaghetti House to a volunteer and went upstairs for an appointment.

A prostitute was there for counseling and possible help in straightening out her life.

Across the hall, Bob Sandole, manager of the Spaghetti House, was counseling a captain in the Air Force who needed help with family problems.

Each of the elements in the scenario above were part of a comprehensive cross-cultural ministry to the people of downtown San Antonio.

The free coffee and doughnuts at 6:30 were provided at the suggestion of the San Antonio police department. They were concerned because so many winos were loitering in the area just waiting for the sandwiches at 9:30.

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The church's ministries include a referral service for people needing help. Ministries include a refined literacy program, extensive summer missions program, ministry to Internationals, ministries in juvenile rehabilitation, to shut-ins, television, the street ministry, a day care and nursery program, mobile recreation unit, deaf ministry, and others.

In it all, evangelism is primary, Allen said. The church led Texas Baptists in baptisms the past two years, with 553 baptisms last year and 436 the previous year, he noted.

The free feeding program, which provides 1000 calories a day for more than 200 people, is aimed primarily at street people and the elderly who live on fixed incomes and cannot afford to eat. It is the only free food program in the city.

The Spaghetti House, with its Christian waiters and waitress who serve at no pay, is a ministry to the middle-class workers of the city. There is no nearby restaurant of comparable price and quality, according to Sandole, the manager.

The restaurant also serves as a point of contact for the free counseling service, the only such program in the city.

One woman, who came for counseling because of the contact through the restaurant, told Sandole, "I've heard about Christ all my life, but because of this restaurant, I've been able to touch him."

On Friday and Saturday evenings, the Fourth Street Inn opens the Spaghetti House for the evening meal, and Willis provides live entertainment.

Operating at a more leisurely pace, the waiters and waitresses sit down at the tables to talk, and the chef, Rudi Filippone with his characteristic culinary hat, also mingles with the customers.

Financially, the profits help pay the costs of the other phases of the program--the free food for street people and the counseling services.

Fourth Street Inn operates as a self-supporting program, undergirded by a grant from the Hogg Foundation, established by the family of former Texas Governor Jim Hogg.

It is operated by a nine-member board of directors called Street Ministries, Inc.

The board, elected by the church, includes three staff members of First Baptist Church, Allen, Willis, and Luke Williams, director of church activities.

Willis, the church's street minister and former Home Mission Board worker in San Francisco and Bangor, Maine, coordinates the program.

Sandole manages the restaurant, and Roy Nickell directs the counseling program.

When Willis came to First Baptist 2 1/2 years ago, he first tried to set up a training program for people in the church to get involved in witnessing to street people.

"A street person is anyone who does not have a functional relationship with a home," Willis explains. "I'm not talking about winos or hippies, and that's what most people think of when they hear the word 'street person.'"

"A street person may be a businessman who spends five to eight hours a day after work in a cocktail lounge and just goes 'home' to sleep, or a workaholic who is addicted to his job."

A few dedicated volunteers in the church committed themselves to the ministry, and Willis trained them in what he calls initial contact counseling.

Volunteers such as Clark Rounds would go into the bars and lounges, meet the employees, order Cokes, and talk to people about their problems.

Most people, says Willis, drink because of community, because they are lonely, and often after a few drinks, they will open up and tell their problems to anyone who will listen.

With the new program at Fourth Street Inn, Willis only occasionally will visit the bars now.

"It's a matter of time and energy," he confesses.

The street ministry has changed, evolved into more professional counseling, and a long-range effort at rehabilitation.

Willis has a five-step long-range plan, hoping to move to a residence program for street people, and ending up with a foster-parent program using Christians to provide a home for street people.

The whole process, he says, may take three to five years to prepare the street person for re-entry into society.

Willis says he sees the Holy Spirit working in the lives of the people the church touches through the street ministry, even though the process is painfully slow.

"We are careful not to hustle the spirit, not to exploit the people. We're not doing this for any honor or glory." Our sole purpose is our commitment to Christ, who told us to give a cup of cold water in his name, to feed the hungry, to care for the poor," Willis says.

"We are looking for Christ in the lives of people, and the danger is we will miss him," Willis adds.

"That's what Matthew 25 means when Christ said, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.'"

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High Court Hears Arguments  
In Topless Dancing Case

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--Officials from a New York town asked the Supreme Court here to rule that local municipalities may constitutionally prohibit topless dancing.

The high court also heard the attorney for three bars in North Hempstead, N. Y., argue that dancing is a form of expression protected by the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

The case, *Doran v. Salem Inn, Inc.*, came to the Supreme Court on appeal from the town officials. They had lost decisions in both a U. S. district court and the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Those courts declared that a North Hempstead statute was "overbroad on its face" and therefore unconstitutional.

In June 1973, a local law was enacted in North Hempstead, a city of 242,000 located adjacent to the borough of Queens, prohibiting in "all public places" the appearance of any person "with breasts or the lower part of the torso uncovered."

Three local bars which featured topless dancing as entertainment then ceased the practice and sought an order restraining the enforcement of the law in U. S. district court, where the request was denied.

Shortly thereafter, however, the same court held the town law to be unconstitutional, a judgment which was subsequently upheld by the court of appeals.

In his oral arguments before the Supreme Court, the town attorney held that the local law in question did not challenge speech or the communication of ideas, but undesirable actions which "preserve public peace and good order" and "safeguard the health, safety, welfare and morals" of the community.

He also contended that topless dancing constitutes a form of hard-core obscenity.

Attorney Herbert S. Kessner of New York City, who represents the bars' owners, argued that the First Amendment protects "a great deal more than the spoken word," including all forms of expression. He then cited the Supreme Court's recent ruling that the musical production of "Hair," a controversial play which includes four-letter words and a nude scene, comes within the scope of First Amendment protection.

In his written brief presented to the high court, Kessner expressed agreement with the lower courts' holding that the North Hempstead ordinance was too broad. "This overbreadth," he wrote, "places a chill on the exercise of First Amendment rights that cannot be tolerated."

He also underscored his view, both in oral argument and in the brief, that the ordinance prohibited not only topless dancing, but might well affect other forms of entertainment such as the ballet and theater.

Although the high court is being asked to decide the case on the basis of the constitutional argument, it is not obligated to do so. The justices may choose instead to dispose of the case on procedural grounds, an option which the present court, under the leadership of Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, has often preferred.

In a related case, the high court reversed a decision of the Florida Supreme Court in a case involving allegedly obscene comic-strips in an underground newspaper (*Bucolo v. Florida*).

The reversal action means that the Supreme Court agreed with the publisher of the Florida Free Press that the state's obscenity law is unconstitutional in that it denies freedom of speech.

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460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

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