



--- FEATURES

produced by Baptist Press

SBC Executive Committee
480 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor
75-109

Wayside Preschool: A
Miami Phenomenon

By Toby Druin

MIAMI (BP)--One day last spring a young mother walked into the office of Luther Dyer, pastor of Wayside Baptist Church in South Miami and asked how she could become a Christian.

It's not unusual for a person to make such an inquiry of Baptist preachers. But how many have come as a result of their four-year-old daughter?

The woman's inquiry of the pastor is not unusual at Wayside Baptist Church, and the reason for it is the remarkable Wayside Baptist preschool which annually leads some 50 families into membership in the church--many of them after making professions of faith in Christ.

The preschool unapologetically operates as an outreach program of the church. Each Thursday morning some 30-40 persons from the church visit in homes in the community and many of their prospect cards are the products of contacts made through the preschool.

Director--and heart of the program according to everyone connected with it--is Wanda Dyer, the pastor's wife, a vivacious strawberry blonde who can call every child's name and who knows most of the parents personally.

The Dyers came to Wayside in 1971 from Missouri where he was director of evangelism for the Missouri Baptist Convention. Mrs. Dyer had been teaching at Lincoln University and planned to teach in Miami public schools, she says. But the teaching positions already were filled.

But the Wayside preschool--then more of a day care center than preschool--was ready to open the day after Labor Day with 25-30 students, one teacher and no director. Wanda Dyer filled the vacuum.

The preschool was an instant success, especially in pointing parents to the church. "At the end of the first year we were aware that many people had come to us wanting to know more about our church," Mrs. Dyer says. "It dawned on us that this was our biggest outreach. We realized that we had a gold mine."

So Mrs. Dyer, instead of going back to the public schools to teach, has remained as director of the preschool. In the six years since, it has grown from a budget of \$3,835 to \$130,000 and from one teacher and a teacher-director to a staff of 16 teachers, four aides, a full-time secretary and the director. Enrollment is up to 278 and there is a waiting list.

Recently the school was accredited by Florida Christian Accrediting Bureau and the school philosophy, written for the accreditation process, states that "first and foremost, the philosophy of Wayside Baptist Preschool is focused upon a ministry of love."

The preschool is directed by a six-member early education committee, headed by nationally-known Arnold Cheyney, professor of education and director of teacher training at the University of Miami. The five others either are educators or are trained in child development.

As Cheyney describes it, the preschool is interested in educating the children as opposed to just providing a day care facility. The high regard most Miami public schools in the area hold for it indicates its success, Mrs. Dyer says.

The low pupil-teacher ratio--14 or 16 to 1--enables the teachers to get to know their pupils almost on a one-to-one basis. They can minister to individual needs.

When a pupil enrolls for the preschool, the teacher visits in his or her home to both get to know the pupil better and to meet the parents and see the home environment.

An inevitable question is asked of all of them--"What is your church affiliation?" and then later, "Are you a Christian?"--because that is what the preschool is all about. It's intended to open doors for witnessing.

-more-

The church is now almost completed with a building project that will move them into a \$1.1 million sanctuary, gymnasium, and education space, and they have dedicated the new facilities to outreach.

The potential is enormous. The church, in South Miami, is surrounded by young couples with young families. Many of them are Jewish and about 50 of the children who attend the preschool are Jewish. Another 50 or so are Roman Catholic.

"We make it clear to the parents that the children will receive religious instruction," says Mrs. Dyer. "Not Baptist doctrine, but the Bible. We use both the Old Testament and New Testament."

Friday is specifically given to religious instruction but it's a part of the educational process in stories and handicrafts.

"Every child's favorite song is Jesus Loves Me," says Mrs. Dyer.

All the children participate in the preschool Christmas program. Last year the three shepherds who heard the Good News of the birth of Christ were authentic Jews.

Dr. Mark Yaffey, a Miami Beach dentist, said he brought his son to the preschool because many of his friends brought their children and recommended it and because the preschool will take a two-year-old before he is "potty-trained."

He praised the school for the education his son has received and as to his being influenced by Christianity: "If any of your religion can rub off on him--great!"

Most of the teachers in the preschool are members of the church, although it is not required, and many of them were introduced to the church through the ministry of the preschool when they enrolled their own children.

Sue Tallis teaches in the preschool and the church's Sunday School where she has a class of 22 three-year-olds. Baptized at 16 in a Baptist church, she married a Jew and almost converted to Judaism, she says.

When she and her husband and family moved to Miami she was "an unhappy person--as lonely as a person can be."

Three years ago, she called to inquire about enrolling her 5-year-old son only to find the preschool was full.

"But they told me to come down and they would see what they could do. They took my child, anyway," she recalls. "I couldn't believe it. Their genuine warmth and love overwhelmed me. I needed someone to befriend me and found it here, especially in Wanda Dyer. I am a completely different person, all because of the warmth I received here."

No racial barriers exist in the school. Classes may have blacks, Orientals, Cubans, Germans, Jews, or any number of youngsters from other countries of the world.

Expansion of the preschool into elementary levels and beyond is a possibility, but it would be done only if it did not detract from the worship atmosphere of the church, Mrs. Dyer says. That comes first.

The preschool operates completely separate from the church and on a self-sustaining, non-profit basis. "The Lord has blessed us" because it has remained non-profit and thus considerably lower in tuition than many other preschools in the area, Mrs. Dyer says.

As an added feature, the preschool offers a series of courses through the church at the Church Training hour. Cheyney has taught classes in child development and others have been offered in marriage and family planning. More are contemplated.

All work together to point children and families to Jesus Christ and Wayside Baptist Church.



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996

MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 254-5461

RICHMOND Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

July 18, 1975

75-109

Russian Baptists Disagree
On Religious Freedom

STOCKHOLM (BP)--Russian dissident Baptist emigrants, now living in West Germany, and officially-recognized Baptists from the Soviet Union openly disagreed about religious freedom in an informal confrontation here.

The discussion came after a meeting of the Study Commission on Religious Liberty and Human Rights of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) had adjourned. One of five BWA commissions, it met in conjunction with the 13th Baptist World Congress.

The disagreement developed when David Klassen, a spokesman for emigrants from dissident, unregistered "Initiative" Baptists in the Soviet Union, outlined reported persecution. Representatives of the Soviet government-recognized Russian Baptist group, which holds BWA membership, disagreed.

Outgoing BWA President V. Carney Hargroves later explained to the BWA General Council, with members of the officially-recognized Soviet Baptists present, that the BWA had not scheduled the appearance of the dissident Baptists. He said it occurred informally after the commission had adjourned.

The dissident emigrants from the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB), at the Congress as observers, had agreed not to speak during the meetings here, according to reports.

Before the discussion began, Gardner Taylor, black pastor of Concord Baptist Church, Brooklyn, N. Y., and chairman of the commission, told those who remained to listen: "I have a longer record of . . . (being oppressed) than any one of you, and I am ready to hear anyone. I demand order and courtesy." He reportedly had not allowed the dissidents to interrupt the meeting's regular agenda.

Klassen outlined a history of religious oppression in Russian going back to Ivan the Terrible and Stalin, and then told of imprisonment of his grandfather, father, uncle, himself four times and members of his congregation because of their religious practices.

"I have no hate for the Russian government," he said, calling for prayer for persecuted and persecutors. "We should not hate the Communists, but hate their evil works. We must love them."

Jakov Dukhonchenkow, superintendent of Baptists in the Zaporozhe region of the Ukraine, contended that Klassen could not speak for the Ukraine because he has been in exile for a year. Dukhonchenkow told of conditions where new churches are being registered, of 60 baptisms in Kiev and 3,500 in the Ukraine during the past year.

In an appeal to the Initiatives, who refuse to register with the government as Russian law requires, he said, "We must not destroy the spirit of our Russian brotherhood. We preach Christ crucified."

Alexei Bichkov, general secretary of the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians Baptists (AUCECB) of the USSR, whose churches are registered, declared, "We came here as witnesses of the great Christian activity in our country, as true ambassadors representing one-half million Christians." He then spoke of the growth of the Baptists in USSR in recent times, including many baptisms and the opening of new churches.

-more-

He charged that some of his Baptist brethren "exploit what has happened in the past."

Bichkov told the audience that "churches must obey the laws that exist in all countries." The authorities of the government of USSR, he reported, affirm that "our church is a living organism."

He said that he had appealed to the government to release members of the Initiatives who had been imprisoned and that 60 of them have been released as a result. He spoke of two women who had organized an illegal printing business and were imprisoned. They are now free, he said.

"We have more opportunity than before to witness to Jesus Christ", he said. He added that "hostile demonstration produces only harm to Jesus Christ."

At a session of the Baptist World Congress later, delegates passed a resolution on religious liberty unaware of the informal session. It reaffirmed "our belief in full religious liberty for all persons" and called for freedom to profess, proclaim and teach religious beliefs.

The resolution acknowledged that "many of our brothers and sisters have lost their freedoms and in some cases their lives while resisting government restrictions." It did not identify countries lacking religious freedom.

On human rights, the resolutions committee said all persons are entitled to "access to life, liberty, food, clothing, shelter, health, education, the right to work, and pursuit of happiness, including a quality of life that allows for adequate development of human potentialities."

The report, under a section on world peace, said, "We are encouraged by some contemporary improvements in international relations." It added that in "the face of world hunger and massive human need on every hand, we call upon governments to abandon the evil acceleration of the fantastically costly armaments race." There also was an appeal for "removal of economic and political incentives to war."

-30-

Underwood Awarded
For Work with BWA

Baptist Press
7/18/75

STOCKHOLM (BP)--Joseph B. Underwood, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board consultant on evangelism, received an award for his work with the World Mission of Reconciliation Through Jesus Christ (WMRJC) at the meeting of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) here.

The award, for his "tireless efforts toward bringing about reconciliation between men and God and men with men," was presented before more than 9,600 delegates from all parts of the world.

For the past five years, Underwood's work as chairman of the BWA-sponsored WMRJC has taken him to over 40 nations where he encouraged, planned and participated in evangelistic meetings.

The ideals of the WMRJC are spiritual renewal, rediscovery and involvement of the laity, cooperative and diversified evangelistic witnessing, and social ministries. Examples of ministries of reconciliation include fellowship meetings between various races and groups, counseling in Christian home building and education, and joint relief projects.

Although the official mission is over, the next five-year theme will be "New persons in Jesus Christ." Underwood sees reconciliation as a permanent mission and the new theme a continuation of the old one.

Before assuming his present responsibilities, he was the board's associate secretary for promotion for nearly two years. Previously he promoted stewardship and evangelism for the Baptist Convention of New Mexico, served as missionary to Brazil from 1943 to 1956, and was pastor of churches in Albuquerque and Clovis, N. M.

-30-