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Church Spotlights Christ Via  
Informal Prime-time TV Spots

By Bonita Sparrow

SHREVEPORT, La. (BP)--When Baptist minister Charles E. Harvey began searching for ways to share the Christian message outside the stained glass window setting, he looked at television.

The result is two one-minute televised spot announcements that only briefly identify Harvey and Sunset Acres Baptist Church, which he serves as pastor. Seeking new church members by advertising the church is not his intent.

The intent is evangelistic--"to reach more people with the gospel," he said. "We recognized that television was the medium for reaching people but there was no place in Shreveport for us to present our Sunday morning worship service on television.

"Other churches were already doing that here, and doing a fine job of it. Sunset Acres didn't want to duplicate their efforts just to say we were on television.

"And we didn't want to give a 'Come to our church' competitive attitude. There's too much of that in the world today. We just wanted to share the gospel with people who wouldn't, or couldn't, come to church. And we wanted to show God as a part of everyday life, not just something you unwrap on Sundays."

That was accomplished by moving away from the pulpit to informal settings.

In one, on a tennis court, Harvey reminds his viewers, "Tennis is a great recreation, but it would be frustrating to try to play tennis with a racket which had no strings."

Once the bait is out, Harvey ably reels the catch in. "God can give you purpose, significance, and fullness of life. Don't be like a tennis racket without any strings and try to live your life without God."

In the other one-minute sermon, Harvey is seen with his golf bag "in the rough" of his favorite course.

"This is where I seem to spend most of my golf game," he remarks somewhat ruefully. "That's also the way it is in life. God never promised Christians would be exempt from rough spots in life. But he did say, 'My grace is sufficient'."

In both spots listeners are urged to receive Jesus Christ "and let him help with the rough places of life."

Harvey, who is in his second term as president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, and his church deacons were most interested with the possibilities for television evangelism than in identifying the church or the denomination.

"But when TimeRite, Inc., (a subsidiary of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission) produced the spots for us they told us that Federal Communications Commission regulations require identification," Harvey said. "So we flashed, briefly, my name and the church name on the screen during the body of the message."

When the spots were ready for marketing, TimeRite purchased the time on local television for the church. During the summer the spots ran in prime newscast time and during golf and tennis matches. For the next 15 weeks (through December) people watching the Monday night NFL game of the week will see them on Shreveport's Channel 3.

Harvey reports a lot of non-solicited positive response from viewers--Baptists as well as other Christians.

"It's almost impossible to really evaluate the results of this type of effort," he said. "But people began to call the church to compliment us on the spots. No one in Shreveport had gone this route before and people were impressed with the real life, down-to-earth situations. They also were impressed that it was the message we wanted to get across, not the denomination.

"One man, an avid tennis buff, told me he was surprised when he realized he was seeing a religious commentary. He said the message hit home and he told his wife they were getting back into church. They've since gotten involved in their own church, in another denomination.

"Another man called about the golf spots. He said he had been active in church but after many problems, had become bitter and dropped away. He said the spot reminded him his Christianity didn't exempt him from trouble and he was going back to his church, also in another denomination."

Harvey calls the whole experience "a rewarding one. I cannot say that the spots have been responsible for this, but we have had the best summer in the 23-year-history of our church, with the largest crowds, people coming from all over Shreveport, and additions every Sunday."

Sunset Acres Baptist Church has 2,000 members with about 600 in Sunday School and worship services running about 1,000. "During the summer months it was so full in the sanctuary the deacons are considering having two Sunday morning services," Harvey said.

"Through July we had \$22,000 over and above our budget receipts as compared to the same last year. We really would like to believe the spots made the difference, although we can't honestly prove it.

"But then the purpose of the spots wasn't to make that kind of difference, but to share the good news. We wanted to send out a program of faith.

"We've learned that this is the way to go. If other churches would join forces and run spots as a combined evangelistic effort--not a competitive one--it would be a wonderful way to get the word out.

"We've already made plans to produce and air others like this."

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#### Bahamas Commemorates Baptist Woman on Stamp

NASSAU, Bahamas (BP)--Mrs. Rowena Rand, a Baptist woman, is depicted on one of the International Women's Year commemorative stamps of the Bahamas.

Mrs. Rand is a member of Bethel Baptist Church here. During her early years in the Bahamas, she visited people in the hospital, prison and isolation wards. Later she started house-to-house visitation.

Nineteen years ago, Mrs. Rand says God called her to be an evangelist. Since that time, she has been going to other islands to witness or help in whatever way she can, according to Antonina Canzoneri, Southern Baptist missionary.

The stamp includes Mrs. Rand's picture and the words, "Rowena Rand--mother, farmer, evangelist."

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'Prophetic Voices Vital  
To Society, the Church'

NASHVILLE (BP)--A Southern Baptist seminary professor and New Testament scholar called here for prophetic voices to "stir the consciences" of government, industry and wealth--including the church--for failure to take decisive and stronger stands on amnesty for Vietnam War draft resisters, food for the world's hungry, penal reform and other issues.

Frank Stagg, professor of New Testament interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, warned members of the SBC Christian Life Commission; at their annual meeting, to beware of "false prophets" who "fail to be the conscience of state, society, church or the individual--becoming instead their advocate."

Prophetic ministry, Stagg noted, is that of "judging the justice and humaneness of the social order and pointing to the changes required. . . . The prophetic role includes calling all ministries to judgment--priestly, pastoral, governance and the prophetic itself. It must be critical and self-critical," otherwise it "ceases to be prophetic."

Stagg, a former pastor, singled out several issues he sees as pertinent to the church and society in general and feels need attention drawn to them by prophetic preaching and ministry.

He called for strong voices from within the church to "come out for amnesty, to say to the draft resisters to come home. We should not ask them to apologize to us," said Stagg, "we are to apologize to them . . . ."

Confronting the issue of poverty and hunger, Stagg admonished: It is the "business of prophetic inquiry to expose . . . and of prophetic ministry to break this vicious circle of poverty . . . provoked by hoarded wealth, exploitation and class domination . . . Bread for myself is a material problem; bread for other people is a spiritual problem."

"Hunger, disease and early death are so massive in the world today as to appear almost hopeless . . . . Some sincere experts are convinced that we simply could not cope with hunger even if we wanted to . . . I for one protest that we must first seriously try before we resign ourselves to this as a ghastly reality . . . . It is an ugly scandal that the world falls into two camps: weight watchers and the starving . . . . We have grain for Russia but little for Africa."

Stagg called it an "obscenity" that 15 percent of the people in the world control 85 percent of its wealth and noted, "The New Testament warns against hoarded wealth . . . . Wealth is to us not a scandal to explain; it is a credential within the church."

The penal system is another area needing prophetic voices, Stagg said, pleading for a radical reform in approaches to crime and penal systems and concern about "first, the safety of society and then the cure of the criminal."

"No human society would tolerate the treatment of animals the way human beings are treated every day in our penal institutions. Young people and first offenders are thrown into cells with hardened criminals. Young men are gang-raped . . . . Most penal systems almost guarantee a worsening of crime and not its prevention . . . . It is sheer stupidity to persist in a system which is failing . . . ."

Stagg suggested, instead of a system of punishment for offenders, that "therapy for the criminal is to the interest of both the criminal and society . . . . If one has a communicable disease, he is put in quarantine for the duration of his infectious period. He is not arbitrarily sentenced to so many days, weeks, months or years . . . ."

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Force is "a reality in the world and will remain so," he said, "but it should be made to work for good, for a humane society."

He cautioned that a vicious circle of alienation confronts us in racial, cultural, religious and other patterns . . . It is the unending task of the prophetic voice to call people from alienation to reconciliation, from their aloneness to God and to others.

"The modern threat is that of man to nature, not of nature to man," he continued. "Religion has had its part in the despising of God's good earth and the resultant ecological irresponsibility of man . . . The prophetic voices must call man back to his original commission to have a creative dominion over all things made . . . to care for God's good earth and enjoy it, but he is not to despise it, deplete it, or pollute it."

Stagg attacked the problem of "senselessness and Godforsakenness," which he termed "the problem of the inner life." The hardest freedom to win and most easily lost, Stagg said, "seems to be that of freedom within. . . Fear, lust, greed, envy, jealousy, prejudice, hate and their like remain the monstrous tyrants which daily threaten to enslave us all.

"Meaning, or the lack of it, is the unsolved problem for millions . . . Redemption must include the redemption of the inner life," Stagg said.

Being the church in the world today involves more than just church attendance, Stagg said. "Some of us have been 'going to church all our lives.' I am solidly on the side of church attendance. But that is not enough. That, in itself, may become just one more example of doing a religious thing in a meaningless way . . . The church professes to believe in God, but it is all too content with the world as it is.

"Despite bold talk about another world soon to arrive," the New Testament scholar noted, "the church is so establishment-oriented and so at peace with this world that its apocalyptic is not credible to the world about us."

"Prophetic ministry today must get its orientation from Jesus himself," Stagg stressed. "In all that he (Jesus) did and said we may find direction for life and ministry."

"It is strange," he said, "that what should be the prophetic voices of the church are sometimes silent even though some from within the world's structures are boldly speaking out."

"Christ's concern was that we (the church) be in the world but not of it," Stagg noted . . . "If we are the church, we are . . . always and everywhere. The true church is the church in the world."

The Baptist theologian and educator cited the "irony" of Marxists offering a new world without God and the church professing God, yet all too content with the same old unchanged world of alienation, war, disease, wealth amidst poverty and economical ruin.

"Christian life and ministry takes place in the work-a-day world of history, flesh and blood," Stagg said. The problem is that "we prefer the gentle Jesus embalmed in stained glass windows or the tamed and domesticated Jesus who does not disturb the church of the structures of our world, content to prepare souls for eternity but leaving the present virtually unchanged."

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Georgia Baptists Adopt  
Record \$9 Million Budget

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ATLANTA (BP)--The Georgia Baptist Convention will be asked in November to adopt a record 1976 state Cooperative Program unified budget of \$9 million--a budget which includes a major restructuring to cover debt retirement on the new Georgia Baptist Administrative Center in Atlanta.

The proposed budget, approved by the convention's Executive Committee, represents an increase of \$1.5 million over the 1975 budget of \$7,475,000. Georgia causes would get 42.73 percent of the operating budget with Southern Baptist causes getting the same amount. But \$500,000 for debt retirement on the new Georgia Baptist center will be put in the support ministries division of the budget. The \$9 million budget includes a \$1.3 million challenge budget which would be divided equally between Georgia and SBC causes. Half of the Georgia total would apply toward debts on the new Georgia Baptist center.

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Searcy S. Garrison, executive secretary-treasurer of the Georgia Convention, said the new \$6 million Baptist center will be ready for occupancy about November 1. The Georgia Baptist Convention vacated its long-used offices in downtown Atlanta in May, 1974, and has been meeting in temporary quarters near Mercer University in Atlanta on the northeast edge of the city for 17 months. The new Baptist center is contiguous to the Mercer University in Atlanta campus.

In another significant action, the Georgia Baptist Convention Executive Committee reaffirmed the Statement of Baptist Faith and Message, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1961, as "a theological basis and guideline" for Executive Committee employees and for others serving convention agencies and institutions. The action came after several convention employees had received questionnaires from Baptists wanting to know their belief about various biblical teachings.

The Georgia Executive Committee also set up guidelines for implementing a disaster relief program to help churches and communities recover from such natural tragedies as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods or earthquakes.

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Senate Panel Rejects  
Abortion Amendments

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By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--Anti-abortion and so-called "pro-life" groups were handed a major setback in their campaign to push through Congress a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court's historic 1973 decision permitting legal abortions.

A U.S. Senate subcommittee voted here not to propose to the Judiciary Committee adoption of such an amendment. Had both the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments and the full Judiciary Committee approved one of several proposed amendments, the full Senate would have been forced to vote on the measure.

The subcommittee's action comes after 18 months of public hearings during which 84 witnesses were heard, and it virtually kills chances in the present Congress for passage of an abortion amendment.

Sen. Birch Bayh (D-Ind.), the panel's chairman, said that he feels it "highly unlikely" that the full Judiciary Committee, of which his subcommittee is a part, would vote to report to the full Senate such an amendment in defiance of the subcommittee action.

The panel's action is in harmony with positions taken by both the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs here.

The SBC adopted a resolution at its 1971 meeting in St. Louis urging Southern Baptists "to work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental and physical health of the mother."

That SBC position was reaffirmed in 1974 at the convention's annual meeting in Dallas.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, refusing to take a position for or against abortion as such, did instruct its staff in 1973 to oppose all proposed constitutional amendments on abortion. The committee felt that a controversial moral issue, such as abortion, should not be the subject of a constitutional amendment.

In addition, the committee felt that civil and religious liberties would be restricted by such proposed amendments to the Constitution.

Hearings before the subcommittee focused on three proposals, two of them introduced last year by Sen. James L. Buckley (Cons-R-N.Y.), and the other by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). The panel voted 5-2 not to report any of the three to the full Judiciary Committee.

In addition, the panel rejected three separate attempts by Sen. William L. Scott (R-Va.) to report out his own "states' rights" amendment, which would have left policy decisions on abortion to each state legislature. A similar proposal by Sen. Quentin N. Burdick (D-N.C.), the so-called Noonan Amendment, was also turned aside.

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Speaking to reporters after the subcommittee reached its decision, Bayh said that "this has been a very difficult period of a year and a half for me." He then said that he had voted against all proposals before the panel to report out an amendment.

He reiterated an often-made statement that his panel had been fair to both sides on the abortion issue. "I defy anybody," he said, "to say the effort to be even-handed was not made."

Bayh also said that he had "sympathy" for the anti-abortion forces and that "I share their view that we're talking about life." Nevertheless, he said that "to suggest that everybody ought to concur with that view runs contrary to democratic principles."

Asked whether his position might damage his presidential aspirations, the Indiana senator said, "It's a free country. I've been as fair to those folks as I know how."

Bayh also announced that he is introducing a package of legislation designed to provide what he called an "alternative to abortion." Among his proposals is one which would seek to encourage expectant women wishing to terminate their pregnancies to consider instead having their children and then putting them up for adoption. "A prospective mother," he said, "should be given more than one choice."