

**FEATURES**

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'Shower Attention on Older People,' Says Young Baptist

By Robert LaFavre

MARIETTA, Ga. (BP)--Miss Betty Crow is a young woman who believes Baptist churches should shower as much attention on their older members as they do on younger people.

Miss Crow, in her early 20s, came by her conviction honestly and through experience as a US-2 missionary (two-year program for college graduates) with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Her work with "mature adults" (a term she prefers) has caused her to realize that churches need specialists in work with older persons as much or more than youths.

Miss Crow, a North Carolina native, accepted a position with First Baptist Church in Marietta, under the Home Mission Board's sponsorship, following her graduation from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., in 1973.

From the outset of her two-year ministry, she sought to impress upon those senior citizens with whom she worked that "from life you never retire nor from God's service. There is a purpose for your being here," she told her older friends.

Her two-year ministry has possibly blossomed into a career for the young single Baptist. Now manager of an adult day care center for the Marietta-Cobb County Service Center, Miss Crow says, "While churches strive hard to eliminate petty jealousy, rivalry and cliquishness among young people, so they must work just as diligently to develop among their oldest members a feeling of being a closely-knit segment of the church."

She notes there are groups in local churches--Sunday School classes, mission circles and others--that meet the needs of many older persons, but a feeling of belonging to the broader spectrum of older members needs to be cultivated.

"Every age group has special needs," she says, "Our older members need someone to help them reclaim themselves, gain their self-worth. Then they will have a positive effect on the rest of the church program."

She recognized that many senior adults felt left out when one of her "charges" confided that the Marietta church's senior adult program had "restored my faith in the church." Many elders feel the churches are more interested in young people, she notes.

At First Baptist in Marietta, there was a children's worker, a youth minister and a minister of music, but no one who devoted their time to ministering to older members.

"The response to my initial efforts (with 'mature adults') was slow," Miss Crow says. "This was a combination of their apathy and my 'greenness'" in that phase of ministry, she recalls.

"These mature adults," she continues, "had lost sight of their potential. They become resigned to accepting a minor role in their church's life.

She formed a Mature Adult Committee. Then she and they set out to study what the community offered, later plugging in with other groups working with senior adults. A nearby high rise apartment building for retired persons provided the backdrop for adult Vacation Bible School.

Senior citizens from the church and throughout the community began to be involved in parties, fellowships, crafts and travel to distant places. The "sometimes forgotten folks" began their own visitation program as church participants and members.

"As they become more comfortable and interested," Miss Crow says, "they started putting in their own ideas and carrying them out."

Tragically, Miss Crow notes, many senior persons "feel they have become obsolete due to compulsory retirement and other social pressures. They are not (obsolete), and all they need (in many instances) is an opportunity to prove it."

Television Spot--'Let
Christ's Freedom Ring'

DALLAS (BP)--Baptists are going to "Let Christ's Freedom Ring" during the nation's Bicentennial observance through a 30-second television spot announcement featuring music, color and animation.

The Bicentennial spot, paid for by their state Baptist conventions, has already been mailed to 119 television stations in Texas, Missouri, Georgia and Mississippi.

It is being prepared for distribution in Tennessee and Alabama. "And we've submitted copies to the state convention offices in Arizona and Arkansas," said W. C. Woody, president of TimeRite, Inc., Dallas, which produced the Bicentennial Freedom spot. TimeRite is a subsidiary of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

Woody said the Bicentennial Freedom spot is "an open end production. This means that local state Baptist conventions, associations, or individual churches who want to observe the Bicentennial with a religious message, can distribute the spot to television stations in their state or area, and can tag it with their own names."

The spot, animated and in color, commends the nation's historical observance and reminds that the founding fathers "did not believe that freedom of religion meant freedom from religion."

It also reminds that "Freedom is a blessing from God, a responsibility for man."

The music throughout, accented by the ringing of a replica of the Liberty Bell, is "Let Christ's Freedom Ring," written by Bill Reynolds, who heads the Sunday School Board's church music department.

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Crises Issues and Record
Budget, Focus of CLC Meeting

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NASHVILLE (BP)--The world hunger and public education crises and Baptist participation in the bicentennial drew the attention of members of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission during the commission's annual meeting here.

The commission also urged the Federal Communications Commission to hold public hearings to consider complaints on television programming exploiting sex and violence, and explored the relationship of evangelism and social action.

In other developments, the commission gave its 1975 Distinguished Service Award to J. Clark Hensley, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission; set a record budget; and re-elected its officers.

The commissioners also voted statements opposing moral laxity in sexual behavior in America and supporting enactment of "a morally responsible program of national health security."

On sexual misbehavior, the commission statement said, "We adhere to God's ideal of sexual purity before marriage and sexual fidelity in marriage. We urge all people to stand against adultery and for sexual purity, sexual integrity and sexual responsibility . . ."

Phil D. Strickland, an attorney and associate secretary of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, declared that "the issue of hunger and the Southern Baptist Convention's response to it may be one of the best barometers to our integrity and our caring as a denomination."

Strickland spent 10 weeks this summer, financed by the Texas and SBC Christian Life Commissions, interviewing representatives of 60 different hunger organizations in Washington and traveling in the hardest-hit hunger areas in the third world.

"I do not have any conclusive, quick answers. It would be foolish of me to even say I am an expert on this growing, hurtful problem," Strickland said. "But, as related to Southern Baptists, I have some impressions on the subject of hunger.

"Provincialism and our ignorance of international events and the consequences of these events is sin. Southern Baptists must gain a sense of what international justice really means. For what we do in the United States, though we pay little attention to it, has a vital and, many times, a devastating effect upon the third world.

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"On the issue of hunger, as far as Christendom is concerned, we are 'eating dust' on the issue. People who are doing something about hunger are not Christians mostly. Organizations that are trying to do something about hunger are basically not Christian. So many of these people are doing more Christian-like acts than we have ever thought of. We are behind in dealing with the issue--not only behind, but far behind."

Strickland, who directs the program of citizenship and legislative concerns for Texas Baptists, noted that his statements were "very strong," but said, "I have come to a very clear conviction that we, as a denomination, have a very heavy responsibility to respond to the cries of hunger around the world."

Another speaker, Frank Stagg, professor of New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, also spoke forcefully on the hunger issue in a far ranging address on the need for a prophetic Christian voice on a number of world issues.

"It is an ugly scandal that the world falls into two camps: weight watchers and the starving," he declared. "We have grain for Russia but little for Africa."

The commissioners voted \$9,000 to develop a coordinated communications plan on hunger, including a comprehensive packet to be circulated among Baptist leaders.

Expressing concern over the crises surrounding busing and other pressing issues in the realm of public education, the commission voted to include discussion of it at its annual seminar in Washington next March. Commissioners also voted for the staff to conduct a colloquy on public school education next year.

The resolution on television sex and violence, sent to FCC Chairman Richard E. Wiley and members of the FCC, declared that the "exploitation of sex and violence on television is a national disgrace" and that the networks have repeatedly failed to meet their responsibility to conduct themselves as morally responsible guests in the homes of the American people."

The resolution urged the FCC, which it said has a responsibility to deal with complaints about "misuse of the airwaves," hold a public hearing to "consider the complaints and grievances of American citizens regarding television programming that exploits sex and violence."

The commission's statement requested the opportunity for the SBC Christian Life Commission to give testimony at the hearings.

Commission Executive Secretary Foy Valentine told the commission that Lee Porter, director of organization since 1972, has resigned and will do additional graduate study at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, to convert his doctor of theology degree to a doctor of philosophy degree with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth. The commission authorized a letter of appreciation for Porter's work.

SBC President Jaroy Weber, in a breakfast meeting with commission members, frankly discussed the tension between Baptists who disagree on the role of evangelism and social action.

"There must be less criticism on the part of people committed to either side and more love and understanding about God's objective for our world," declared Weber in supporting the importance of both the spiritual and social implications of the gospel.

He said personal evangelism must be the first aim but that the "history of revival and evangelism proves that when the gospel is faithfully proclaimed, it calls for social renewal. God's two hands must work together--personal faith and social action."

Noting that the Christian Life Commission has been under fire more constantly than any other segment of SBC life, Weber said: "This doesn't surprise us and, in a sense, this role of the Christian Life Commission is to help us maintain a creative tension between doctrine and practice."

But he added, "We have not always said the right thing in the right way and it has created unnecessary tension, but, in balance and fairness, we are better people and have a greater respect in the secular world because of the continual reminder and prodding of our conscience by the Christian Life Commission."

The commission also voted a \$376,000 budget for 1975-76 and re-elected Lloyd Crawford, a land developer from Golden, Colo., as commission chairman. Sara Frances Anders, professor of sociology at Louisiana College, Pineville, was re-elected vice chairman, and Chevis Home, pastor of First Baptist Church, Martinsville, Va., was re-elected secretary.

On the question of the bicentennial, the commission voted funds to prepare resource materials for Southern Baptist pastors.

In an address on the state of the agency, Foy Valentine, Christian Life Commission executive secretary, said an important part of Baptist heritage "is the acceptance of both the prophetic and priestly, both the radical and conservative dimensions of the gospel.

"The Christian Life Commission does not deny the validity of the priestly; but it is our special, and in Southern Baptist life, our unique responsibility to affirm the validity of the prophetic. "

On the subject of civil religion, Valentine said, "The Christian Life Commission must help Southern Baptists reject civil religion because its unitarianism ignores the scandal of the cross, the exclusiveness of biblical religion and the peculiarity of the religion which insists that God has shown humanity his face in Jesus Christ."

He said that Baptists have a past worth celebrating, a present worth possessing and a future worth securing, and that the Christian Life Commission "has a place to fill, a dream to follow, a calling to obey."

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Survey Indicates Support
For Ministry to Human Needs

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By Toby Druin

ATLANTA, (BP)--Southern Baptists agree that their Home Mission Board should be "greatly involved" in ministering to human needs, according to a new awareness and attitude survey.

The survey, conducted recently for the board by an independent study agency, also revealed:

--Of various Home Mission Board activities, the most significant awareness (44 percent) exists for Christian social ministries;

--Most persons' involvement in home missions is "passive," involving contributing to mission programs (80 percent) or listening to a speaker (67 percent) or reading about it (40 percent). However, 25 percent have visited a home mission work site or an associational meeting or done volunteer work;

--The pastor (14 percent), the Woman's Missionary Union (13 percent), and the state Baptist paper (12 percent) are considered most informative about home missions;

--Of the various publications related to missions activities, state Baptist papers are read by more persons (25 percent) than any other;

--Though only 12 percent were receiving Home Missions magazine, another 32 percent were reading copies provided by their churches or friends.

The study, conducted by Marketing Information Service of Atlanta, was to provide insight on the degree of awareness and the attitudes of Southern Baptists toward the Home Mission Board and its programs.

Fred B. Moseley, assistant executive director, said the information gleaned from the study will be considered by the Missionary Education Task Force (METF) as it considers strategies for missions education.

Moseley is a member of METF, which was formed as a result of the report of the SBC Executive Committee's study Committee of 15, and action of the Executive Committee expressing concern for missions education. Other members are Carolyn Weatherford, SBC Woman's Missionary Union; Keith Parks, Foreign Mission Board; Allen Comish, Baptist Sunday School Board; and Norman Godfrey, Brotherhood Commission.

The information also will be used by Home Mission Board program leaders as they consider future emphases, Moseley said.

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To obtain the information, telephone interviews were conducted with 959 church members in churches across the United States. The sample was designed to represent the total Southern Baptist church membership.

Of those polled, 75 percent were women, 77 percent attended church once a week or more 46 percent had held a church office or leadership position in the past three years, and almost one out of four belonged to a Southern Baptist missionary organization.

In testing attitudes toward Home Mission Board programs, the church members were asked eight questions and asked to rank each according to a scale of 5 points for "agree strongly," 4 for "agree moderately" 3 for "neither agree nor disagree," 2 for "disagree moderately" and 1 point for "disagree strongly," no points were scored for a "don't know" response.

The only question showing strong agreement (4.4 out of a possible 5) was the statement: "The Home Mission Board should be greatly involved in ministering to human needs."

The next five were closely grouped only .5 above "neither agree nor disagree."

Scoring almost equally were the statements: "Evangelism must have the highest priority of all home missions activities" (3.5), "The Home Mission Board should sponsor projects jointly with black Baptist churches" (3.4), and "The best language missionary is one who is a native of that culture" (3.4).

The statement, "The Home Mission Board should put a church in every community in the nation," drew a 3.2 agreement score and "the emphasis on spending for missions should be for mission personnel rather than buildings" got 3.0, indicating no preference.

Moderate disagreement--both scoring 2.2--was registered for the statements: "Most of the Southern Baptist home mission funds should be spent outside of the old South" and "Priority should be given by the Home Mission Board to cities of more than 100,000 population."

The most significant awareness of board programs was indicated for Christian social ministries, which was mentioned by 44 percent of the persons surveyed. Each of the other programs was mentioned by fewer than 10 percent.

However, among those persons who were able to name at least one specific board program, nearly all considered the board effective in that activity or area of work.

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CORRECTION

In BP story dated 9/17/75 entitled "Shun 'Play-Like' Faith Christian Life Award-Winner Urges," change paragraphs 2 and 8, lines 2 and 1 respectively, to read "the Christian Action Commission" (not Council).

THANKS--Baptist Press