



# --- FEATURES

produced by Baptist Press

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76-20

Radio-TV--Age of the  
Sixty-Second Sermon

By Bonita Sparrow

FORT WORTH(BP)--In 60 seconds or less a message about the world's sponsor, Jesus Christ, slips neatly into the station break of prime time radio and television.

Southern Baptist churches across the 12.5 million member denomination, while maintaining a strong pulpit ministry, more and more are turning to the broadcast medium to present the Christian message.

While the Sunday morning or evening worship service is in no danger of air time obsolescence, many Baptist churches are going to one-minute spot announcements. Most of these Christian commercials are produced by TimeRite, Inc., with offices in Dallas and Wilmington, N.C., as the advertising arm of the denomination's Radio and Television Commission.

"Whatever a church allocates for such a project is what it's going to cost," said W.C. Woody, TimeRite president. "We take the budget the church sets and try to achieve its objectives of reaching the most people for the money."

TimeRite often proposes a capsule approach away from the stained-glass setting and far from the "turn or burn" shouts of some Christians in broadcasting. The commercials may be set on a tennis court, golf course, in family groups. A film for First Baptist Church, Muskogee, Okla., featured a submarine in the middle of a prairie.

The messages relate to realistic situation, offer God's love as an option for living and encourage listeners to seek God's way for solving problems.

Some pastors recognize that Madison Avenue, at great expense, has proved that television advertising pays. "The person you really want to reach may not give you a half-hour on Sunday morning but won't turn you off if you come on for one short minute in the middle of a popular television show," said Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Albuquerque, N.M.

A professional surveyer hired by the church indicated the capsule approach is the "best way to appeal to the non-Christian, non-church goer..."  
formerly

In New Orleans, J. Truett Gannon/pastor of First Baptist Church there, became convinced of spot advertising's effectiveness when his congregation purchased 30-second slots to present the church to an estimated 320,000 people watching NFL Monday night football.

"It was the only time I ever discussed religion in a bar," one man said later. "The whole bar got quiet and everybody watched. It was about not blaming God for war and violence. It said the only thing God is guilty of is love. And at the end, the fellow (Gannon) speaking offered help from the church. I really liked that commercial."

Few people realize that spot announcements are the "least expensive way" to reach large numbers of people with the gospel, according to Wayne Allen, pastor of Memphis' East Park Baptist Church.

"We paid \$300 a minute for time for three one-minute spot announcements telling Memphians the church cares about alcoholics, troubled teenagers and those in jail. We figure," said Allen, "probably 80,000 people saw us in Memphis, plus those in the three-state viewing area. You couldn't mail all those people a post card for that amount."

One problem, East Park Church faced was the local station's policy of not selling time to religious organizations. But the station manager viewed their commercials and made an exception, "accepting them on their merit," said Allen.

For other churches, radio produces effective results. James L. Pleitz, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla., was one of the first Southern Baptist ministers to use radio for one-minute gospel messages. He believes the "short devotional message that instantly relates to people is the way we are going to penetrate the secular mind."

"You don't necessarily get a response or finished results immediately," he said, "but some of the messages are very evangelistic. We feel strongly that we're creating an appetite for things religious."

Pleitz' spots are on seven radio stations--including one in Memphis, Tenn., and another in Winston-Salem, N.C. He considers spot advertising so effective that if forced to choose between them and airing the Sunday worship service, "I would choose the spots."

In Virginia, Charles G. Fuller, pastor of Roanoke's First Baptist Church, uses radio to deliver one-minute, "God's Minutes," just before the noon news each day, and "Drive Time" spots during peak commuter hours. The spots "reach more people in 16 cities in Virginia than ever visit the church," Fuller said.

James W. Waters, pastor of Mable White Memorial Baptist Church in Macon, agrees that radio is an effective extended pulpit. Waters, on the air since 1953, said, "If there are 35 people in church on Sunday, 65 will be absent. The broadcast medium is the mission arm of the church to reach those people..."

So convinced were John A. Wood, pastor of First Baptist Church, Paducah, Ky., and the congregation there of broadcasting's effectiveness that they remodeled the sanctuary to accommodate television equipment to beam a quality program from the church to the local station. Included was a closed circuit television system, "which offers tremendous possibilities for church educational activities," said Wood.

The church also produces several religious specials each year. Its hour-long Christmas Eve special is aired locally, with the station pre-empting the network to present the program.

While airing Sunday worship services and presenting Christianity in capsules are effective, several Baptist state conventions and agencies are using documentaries to tell their individual stories.

The Missouri Baptist General Convention was among the first. In "Me and Tom and the River," Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and an "old-timey" Baptist preacher rode a raft down the Mississippi River from the past to the present. Scenes highlighted Missouri's history and present.

Bob Thornton, who produced "Me and Tom...", also produced, "The Whale that Came to Mississippi" for the Mississippi Baptist Convention. "Whale" studies the heritage of Mississippi Baptists, assesses its present, and challenges for the future.

"Rising postal rates and our concern about newspapers and their need to meet high mailing costs turned us toward television," said Earl Kelly, executive secretary of the Mississippi convention. "We're going to buy prime time to air the show--on a medium reaching a target audience the normal church does not reach..."

TimeRite has also produced a "Life and Liberty '76" series of 27, five-minute Bicentennial programs for the Arkansas State Baptist Convention, produced by Rosser McDonald of TimeRite. Budget for the project was \$50,000, Woody said. "We bought time on the Arkansas Razorback football radio network to promote the series. The radio people like the promotion spots and are running them free as public service announcements during the week."

The Arkansas Bicentennial television spots will cover the state from stations in four cities, including Monroe, La., which reaches southeastern Arkansas.

Baptist agencies using the documentary include the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, for which Thornton and TimeRite produced the award winning "The Mountain Within," featuring film and television star Andy Griffith. Thornton is also producing a documentary on aging for the Virginia Baptist Homes, featuring Will Geer of "The Waltons" television show. The film is geared as educational and a fund-raiser.

In spite of proven effectiveness in broadcasting, some Baptists still feel using radio and television as air waves pulpits is wrong. Yet the Radio and Television Commission programs reach an estimated 100 million people weekly. In 1975 alone, the broadcast industry gave more than \$10 million worth of free time to air commission programs.



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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January 30, 1976

76-20

## Ford Urged to Block CIA Use of Missionaries

DALLAS (BP)--The Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, meeting in quarterly session here, called on President Gerald Ford, "by executive order or whatever other action may be effective, to prohibit the CIA from using or working with missionaries of any denomination in intelligence operations."

The social concerns arm of the 2.2-million-member convention said, "The use of missionaries for such purposes is now, and always has been, contrary to the clear policy of Southern Baptists," who have over 2,600 missionaries in 82 countries.

"We know of no instances in which Southern Baptist missionaries have been engaged in CIA activities. We join with the (Southern Baptist) Foreign Mission Board in reaffirming this historic principle of separation," the commission continued.

Noting that it strongly opposed use of missionaries for the gathering of political intelligence, the commission charged, "Such practice is a deplorable compromise of the missionary responsibility to communicate spiritual values and truths.

"It is a violation of the separation of church and state principle embodied in the First Amendment. It endangers both the lives and work of missionaries and the political integrity of this country."

James M. Dunn of Dallas, the commission's chief executive, said he applauds the Foreign Mission Board and other individuals and organizations which have opposed mingling of missionary responsibilities with CIA activities.

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## Honduran Baptists Report Largest Growth in History

Baptist Press  
1/30/76

LA CEIBA, Honduras (BP)--Messengers to the Honduran Baptist Convention here heard reports of the greatest growth in the convention's 18-year history.

Baptisms totaled 404--one baptism for every 2.8 Baptists in the convention. The previous year's total was 107. Membership of the churches grew from 1,063 to 1,381, an increase of almost 30 percent in a single year.

In the last eight years membership has grown by 300 percent and offerings have increased by 500 percent.

Analyzing reasons for the unprecedented growth, Southern Baptist missionary Ralph A. Wilson, statistician for the convention, said, "The growth can be attributed to studies in the churches concerning the fullness of the Spirit. I also feel God spoke to people in the midst of Hurricane Fifi which killed thousands and left many homeless."

Although relief and evangelistic efforts by Baptists contributed to growth in disaster areas, the increase in baptisms, memberships and offerings came from all parts of the Central American republic.

Inocente Maldonado, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Tegucigalpa, baptized 55 people into the membership of his church during the year.

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"For us growth came with a new study of the New Testament," Maldonado said. "We referred to the 'Great Commission' and baptism. We came to feel that the scriptural order was to make disciples, then to baptize, and then to teach new converts in the Christian life.

Agronomist Otoniel Viera, a government official, was elected convention president.

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Sue (Mrs. Ralph A.) Wilson is a Southern Baptist missionary press representative in Honduras.

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'Yau Really Dzn't Cawnt!  
That's What the Man Said

Baptist Press  
1/30/76

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Feb. 22, 1976, edition of the Baptist Bulletin Service might well become a collector's item, says Leonard E. Hill, who edits the service for the Southern Baptist Executive Committee here.

That particular issue could trigger a stream of letters to the editor, Hill says. Ministers are cautioned that persons reading the bulletin that Sunday will probably develop a puzzled look. "If it happens while you're preaching," Hill advises, "don't worry. "It's not you, it's a back page article by Don M. Aycock, designed to show that individual church members really do count."

Aycock's approach, however, is almost too clever, according to predictions by some advance readers of the bulletin. The article, titled, "You Really Don't Count," is reprinted with permission from the Baptist Bulletin Service, which is produced and distributed to churches by the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville.

Any person who can read Aycock's article through with complete understanding is above average, says Hill.

"The First Baptist Church was a pleasant little place. It was what most people would call a 'model' church. Everyone got along well. The budget was in good shape, and all of the committees functioned smoothly.

"In fact, the committees worked too smoothly! Because things went so well, the members began to feel that they were not really necessary.

"One day things began to change. One committee member said, "I have so many other things to do, I'll just drop out of my place of responsibility. The church is so full of capable people, I won't even be missed." So he dropped out of his committee.

"The next week another parson thought, "If I dan't continue in my position in the church, who will knaw?" So he, too, gaze up his jod.

"Then onx morx member decided to gize up hes share of the resqonsibility in the charch. This ment that anothxr person had ta do doubly duty.

"A thurd mezber gaze up his jod, and threo othxrs hed to werk threx thmez as hard.

"Thdn a foxth qzit, and a fivtk, and siyth, too!

"Tzis onty gaes ta prxve one fyct: is yay are a mendar og a cyurch comnittex, yau really dzn't cawnt!"

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