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76-51

Rural Church's Laymen
Lead Way in Missions

By Roy Jennings

LEXINGTON, N.C. (BP)--In an era when many ministers plead for laymen to become more involved in the churches, Jersey Baptist Church near here is an anomaly.

At first glance, the church looks like thousands of other Baptist churches. It's strictly country and about average in size as Southern Baptist churches go. The church facility is about 10 miles out of Lexington, out on Route 7, not far from Winston-Salem.

About 330 resident members make up the congregation and earn their living largely from farms, mainly dairying. Besides the pastor, Morris S. Hollifield the only paid worker at the church is the part-time janitor.

But first glances are deceiving. Underneath that "small" appearance the church's Brotherhood (missions organization for men and boys) conducts three mission Sunday Schools weekly; renovated a child care center and established a Love Thy Neighbor program there, doubled gifts to missions through special offerings with an ambitious missionary-centered project, involved a high percentage of its church families in organized mission action projects and in individual personal ministries; helped a local community organization buy a double amputee a pair of legs.

One of the church's mission Sunday Schools is conducted at the Golden Age Rest Home and Convalescent Center, about six miles from the church, on the outer edge of the church community.

The Sunday School class grew from the ministry of Mr. and Mrs. R. Lee Palmer, Jersey's two eldest members. For several years the Palmers visited friends in the home, led prayer meetings, conducted singing sessions and ministered to persons in general. When the couple became less active because of age, Jersey set up the organized Sunday School class.

Kermit Dunning, a bachelor in his mid-thirties and an active Brotherhood man, currently teaches the class. He works at the furniture company in Lexington and also farms.

About 55 persons live in the rest home, with 35 able to move about. Dunning has 29 elderly persons enrolled in his class and averages 32 to 35 in attendance.

Most patients who attend the rest home Sunday School are limited physically. Many arrive in wheel chairs. Some walk in on crutches. Nurses lead others. But they all wear their Sunday best. Some of the patients literally spend hours getting ready, Dunning says.

"These people enjoy singing, but they tire very easily. So I restrict the singing to a stanza or two of each hymn and sing several to get all the favorites in. I choose only very familiar hymns for the services."

Some patients can participate more actively in the service than others, so the service must be planned to permit a place for all, Dunning adds.

"Several patients are limited in their ability to think or reason. They may wander in and out of the dining room during the Bible lesson, but distractions are usually minimal. We keep the lesson brief and to the point...as not to give the feeling of rushing." The church provides literature, and Hollifield says, the people are genuinely grateful. No offerings are taken in the services, however, one patient insisted on donating a piano.

Jersey also offers Bible instruction at a seafood restaurant about two miles from the church. Harold Tate, treasurer of the church's Baptist Men organization and a mechanic at the county school garage, teaches a half-hour class for 10 restaurant workers.

The class has a high turnover because the employees are either high school or college students. It's the only church contact for many class members because work hours often conflict with scheduled church services. The restaurant manager, a Methodist layman, asked the church to start the class.

The other Brotherhood-related Sunday School class meets regularly at the Davidson County Correctional Center, a minimum security unit. Robert N. Knapp, a shop man for an aluminum company, and Zell Setzer, a federal probation officer, work with the men. The class attracts up to 20 persons and meets in the prison dining hall. It provides opportunities to minister to inmates and their families, says Hollifield.

Jersey Church under the leadership of its Woman's Missionary Union (WMU, missions organization for woman and girls) and supported by Brotherhood, renovated and furnished the Children's Home of the Junior Order of American Mechanics, a child care center, then established an ongoing ministry to the children. Most of the children are wards of the court and their freedom is limited.

Besides a "Little Sister" program involving Acteens, (WMU's mission organization for girls grades 7-12) the church families invite children from the center into their homes weekly and take the children on outings.

Hollifield says Jersey's visiting missionary program has increased church members' knowledge of mission opportunities and special offerings have doubled.

"For five or six years we have followed the practice of providing an item in the church budget to cover expenses of two missionary speakers each year," Hollifield explains. "In March, we have a home missionary spend a day in our church. At the morning service the visitor brings an inspirational message and illustrates it with personal experiences.

"We do the same thing in November or December with a foreign missionary. Following the morning service, the missionary has lunch with the church family.

"During Church Training, (on Sunday evening) the missionary meets with the children. He uses the evening worship period to show slides and explain displays portraying customs of the country and people where he serves.

"After such a day, a name on the prayer calendar becomes a face, a person with a memorable experience about real people.

"Our special offerings have more than doubled in five years. Last year we gave more than \$2,700 to missions at Christmas over and above our budget. In February, we gave almost \$500 to world relief causes and in March we gave \$1,274 to home missions, last year."

But there are other results beside large gifts. Out of the home missionaries' visits grew a mission project to the Cherokee Indians which included gifts of clothing and toys, and help for a retired home missionary couple to work with migrants in Key West and Cubans in Miami.

Through the home missionary couple, Jersey is providing meals for migrants, Bible instruction in Vacation Bible Schools and gifts for the aged in rest home ministries.

The church is involved in yet other small group and personal ministries. For instance, the Acteens conducted a back yard Bible study during the summer at multiple locations and enlisted the Baptist Men (Brotherhood's mission organization for men) to move tables and chairs from site to site.

In a housing area where there was no church ministry, the men cleaned a barn, set up furniture then moved it out when the mission Bible school was completed.

On special days such as Easter Sunday, Labor Day, Independence Day and sometimes on a Sunday afternoon, the men spend about a half day at the church involving children in the community in sports activities.

On an individual basis, one of the Baptist Men, who works second shift, teaches reading to men at the local prison during his off hours.

Hollifield credits strong lay leadership and the work of the Holy Spirit for any of the church's successes:

"It's an unusual community and church family. This is just a country peracher's paradise."



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Computer Users Build
Church Profile List

DALLAS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Computer Users Association in their fourth annual meeting here heard a feasibility study on the first profile master list of Southern Baptist churches and established a quarterly newsletter.

The organization has about 250 members from churches, colleges, state conventions, and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) agencies.

At last year's meeting of the organization, a committee was appointed to work toward a cooperative effort of a church profile master list.

"We are working toward a mailing list that would be adaptable for many uses," said Bettie Marie Stevens of Jacksonville, Fla., outgoing president and a data processing specialist for the Florida Baptist Convention.

"We received input from as many organizations across the SBC as possible about their needs in mailing lists.

"For example, we could computerize the list of small town churches with less than 500 members. There are all sorts of ways lists could be broken down. This would provide a more economic use of Cooperative Program resources."

The committee will report to the Coordinating Committee of the Inter-agency Council, SBC, in May.

Lynn E. May Jr., executive secretary of the Historical Commission, SBC, Nashville, was elected to succeed Ms. Stevens as president.

Other new officers are O. Max Burns, Home Mission Board, SBC, Atlanta, program vice-president; Ernest Hamilton, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, membership vice president; and Martha A. Grove, Tennessee Baptist Convention, Brentwood, Tenn., secretary-treasurer.

Don Hull, of the denomination's Radio and Television Commission staff in Fort Worth, will edit the association's newsletter.

-30-

Southern Names Kelley
To Graduate Studies Post

Baptist Press
3/19/76

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Page H. Kelley has been named director of graduate studies for the School of Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, according to Roy Lee Honeycutt, dean of theology.

Kelley will succeed Morgan Patterson, recently elected dean of academic affairs at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

Kelley has been professor of Old Testament interpretation at Southern Seminary since 1969 and has been on the faculty since 1959. The Hartford, Ala., native has served several churches as pastor and was on the faculty and staff of the Baptist seminary in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, before coming to Louisville.

He has written three books, "The Book of Amos" (1966), "A Nation in the Making" (1969), and "Amos, Prophet of Social Justice" (1972), and wrote on Isaiah in the "Broadman Bible Commentary."

Kelley will assume the directorship on Aug. 1, 1976.

-30-

New Orleans Renews
School, Adopts Budget

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--A diploma program designed to certify competency in Bible interpretation, preaching and pastoral administration for ministers without a bachelors degree, a \$2,627,000 budget, establishing of a long range study committee, and hiring of a new faculty member were approved by the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary board of trustees here.

The diploma program, to be offered through the seminary's School of Christian Training Program, is "unique because more than half of the requirements leading up to the diploma in pastoral ministries may be completed off-campus," said Ray P. Rust, executive vice president at New Orleans.

The training program was begun at the seminary as on-campus program but has been inactive since 1958.

Now the program "has the flexibility to enable a minister to receive his education while still on his own church field," said Rust.

"This flexibility is provided through the use of educational opportunities approved by the seminary administration.

"Seminary Extension, Baptist colleges, church administration department of the Baptist Sunday School Board and state convention-sponsored education extension centers offer courses, which will be credited toward the diploma in pastoral ministry," Rust said.

Of the seminary's new budget, more than \$1,800,000 will come from the Cooperative Program unified budget of Southern Baptists.

The board elected H. T. Bryson, pastor of the Eastdale Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala., as associate professor of preaching in the division of pastoral ministries. Bryson has served as president and vice president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention board. He is the author of several books.

Seminary board president Robert S. Magee was re-elected for another term, as was Floyd Lewis. A local New Orleans physician, Dr. Guy Williams was named secretary, and Dudley May of Baton Rouge, La., was named treasurer.