



FEATURES
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Church Offers 'Abundant Life' to Indiana Community

By Jim Newton

NEW ALBANY, Ind. (BP)--Pastor Elvis Marcum knocked the mud from his shoes as he waded through a pasture and surveyed the 80-acre "Abundant Life Community" of Graceland Baptist Church here.

"This property is a gift of God as a tool to accomplish his purpose here," he mused. Marcum pointed out the \$1 million worship center, the olympic-size pool, a lake and cabins with adjacent dining facilities, acres of pasture for the horses grazing nearby, a book store, prayer garden and prayer chapel. He talked of the future.

Within the next five years, the church is planning to add a gymnasium, an apartment complex, additional education space, and a nursing home/convalescent center, he said.

They call it the "Abundant Life Community" because it is a community of believers who have discovered the joy of abundant life in Jesus Christ--people who have fun and enjoy the ministry they feel Christ has given to them, he explained.

"We've found ourselves, found our purpose," Marcum explained. "It is to share Christ with this city, and to meet the needs of people in the name of Christ. This is a layman's church. The people do everything. We've tried to help the people become the body of Christ, to realize they are all ministers, that God has given them gifts and talents they are to use in ministry to others." Marcum, however, was reluctant to count how many ministries the 1,725-resident member church is involved in, saying he didn't know and had never stopped to count them.

"Our people have literally touched the city," the pastor observed. "No other organization in the city (population 40,000) has had as much impact on the total city as our church."

In 1963, when Marcum came to the struggling mission, average Sunday School attendance was only about 80; now it is about 1,400. The church boasts of the largest Brotherhood in Indiana, even though the church's approach to both Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union is non-traditional. The church's Brotherhood director, John Fields, is also the associational Brotherhood director and the president of the Indiana state Brotherhood. Brotherhood and WMU have a joint mission action program that they conduct co-educationally through committees. All the men are automatically Brotherhood members and every woman is considered a WMU member. Laymen at Graceland have been pioneers among Southern Baptists in the Lay Renewal movement. About 25 members of the church are active participants in lay renewal weekends (Lay witness missions).

Graceland is best known for its community-wide bus ministry. Dean Stone, the church's minister of education who coordinates the bus ministry, said the buses not only run 20 routes on Sunday morning but are used every day throughout the week. Free bus service is provided to take senior citizens to shopping centers or doctors' offices. The buses daily bring day care, kindergarten and (starting in September) elementary students to the church's school.

On Sundays, after busing people to Graceland, some of the buses return to different points in the city where Bible study classes are held inside the parked buses. Almost 500 persons, most of them children, ride the buses each Sunday, and about 75 Graceland members are involved as bus workers. In addition to the church-sponsored bus ministry, a group of Graceland laymen head a separate corporation called Church Tours, Inc., which offers a cost-plus, reduced rate bus tour service for churches, schools and civic groups.

Graceland has ministries at each of five area nursing homes and convalescent centers, and sponsors a "Keen-agers" program for adults ages 55 through 155 (the oldest member is only 107, however). The Keen-agers take at least one trip each month together on the church buses. Once a year, the church sponsors a national Keen-ager Convention for senior citizens. Almost 400 attended the first convention in 1972.

Besides nursing homes and highrise units ministries, Graceland sponsors ministries at apartment houses and to the physically and mentally handicapped. A specially-equipped bus and convalescent van pick up wheelchair patients each Sunday and take them to church. Similar services are offered on weekdays, for trips to the doctor and other needs.

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The church sponsors a program at Silver Crest, an institution for multiple-handicapped children under 21, with at least three Sunday morning activities there plus weekday visitation. Special services are provided on Sunday to three different groups at Graceland--adult deaf, mentally retarded adults, and mentally retarded under age 21.

For the past two summers, the church has sponsored special camps for the handicapped, at the new cabins in the Abundant Life Community. The church's day care program, kindergarten and new elementary school reach about 225 children and their parents, Marcus said.

Graceland also offers free food and clothing to needy people in the community, is involved in a club ministry to youth in local high schools, has a jail ministry and effort to reach teenagers with a drug or alcohol problem, sponsors "children's church" (worship service), operates a Christian book store, sponsors an annual nationwide leadership training conference and presents a "Living Christmas Tree" musical program each Christmas.

All the church's ministries are highly evangelistic and are based on a dependence on prayer and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, Marcum said, "We're a missions-minded people, and evangelism is our heart-throb."

The ministries, new building and property development would have been impossible without time, materials and labor donated by laymen, the pastor stressed.

"You see a need and you know you have an ability to help, and you just pitch in and do it," said Jim Padgett, who owns a crane leasing and steel erection company.

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Church Members Face
 Citizenship Dilemma

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--Most Southern Baptist church members are being forced to choose between becoming a "good church member" and a responsible Christian citizen, a Virginia pastor declared here.

Church programming must be restudied to allow members to answer the call for involvement in the political processes from Southern Baptist pulpits, said Elmer S. West Jr. of Richmond, a speaker at a conference on "Moral Issues in the '76 Election," sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission.

"Let's face it, our typical design of the program of activities for a local Baptist church does not encourage political activity on the part of our members," West said at the conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

"Concerned, articulate preaching may be used to help our members to be sensitive to the issues and motivate them to do something about them," said the pastor of Ginter Park Baptist Church in Richmond, "but we will have to develop a more flexible and less threatened stance on church programming.

"With the goals of church participation which we have set," observed West, "and the involvement within the church walls which we seek to generate, it is most difficult for a Southern Baptist to be a good church member--according to our grading system--and also a responsibly involved citizen. Our generally accepted emphasis and church priorities almost force a person to feel he must choose between church and community.

"If our members attend all the services we urge them to attend," added West, "and they even accept half of the positions which their church's nominating committee offers them they hardly have time for family life, to say nothing of being actively involved in the political process and in the community.

"If someone were to ask me why I would encourage a person to go into politics as a profession or why I would encourage everyone to be involved in the political process," said West, "I have a simple answer--For God so loved the world that he gave his only son--that's it. God loves the world."

West told the conference participants: "The kind of responsible citizenship to which we are called can spread love, enhance justice, and open opportunities for freedom. This, my friends, is good news. This is what God intends for his world and for his people. I believe this is a vital part of the Christian calling. My basis for believing it is Jesus Christ--what he did and what he said."

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Ministers Need to Receive
 As Well As Give Care

Baptist Press
 8/3/76

BLUEFIELD, Va. (BP)--Persons in the Christian ministry have traditionally found it difficult to accept their own need for care and understanding, a husband-wife team told the annual Bluefield College Ministers' Conference here.

Pastors, especially, have often found it necessary to portray an image of total self-reliance in all situations, no matter how tragic or grievous it might be personally, said Albert Meiburg, dean of the faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N. C., and his wife, Virginia.

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The Meiburgs said ministers with problems need not feel as if there is no exit from their problems; that, with spiritual guidance, they should be willing to take responsibility for creating new situations and by seeking help from outside resources.

"Persons in the ministry need to receive care as well as provide care," the Meiburgs said.

The primary objectives of the Meiburgs were to encourage the participants--ministers and their wives--in a process of defining personal identity beyond assigned roles, a process of family growth by personal and family goal-setting, and the assessment of communication skills as a means of enhancing relationships among family members, church members and others.

In encouraging a process of personal and family goal-setting, the Meiburgs stressed the importance of goals as "tools for organizing our energies, establishing priorities, and measuring accomplishments. To be helpful, goals should be realistic and capable of attainment, specific and concrete, yet flexible," they said.

"The process of goal-setting is a reflection of our values and can be a way toward family or organizational unity," lessening possibilities for crippling frustration resulting from disoriented efforts which seem to have no direction, the Meiburgs said. "The achievement of worthy goals is a source of self-confidence."

Other leaders of the conference held on the hillside campus of Bluefield College, a Virginia Baptist junior college in the process of achieving four-year status, included William Blevins, professor of religion, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., and Tom Reynolds, associate pastor, Blacksburg (Va.) Baptist Church.

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Baptists Seek Remedies
To Family Problems

Baptist Press
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By Sharon Roberts

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--Statistics indicate the family of today is in serious trouble. Last year, more than 1,000,000 divorces were granted, and one marriage in every four was a remarriage.

The moral and social crisis of our day could be family instability

These disturbing nationwide trends were noted recently at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center by several experts in marriage and family life, including John W. Drakeford and R. Lofton Hudson, two counselors and authors. Drakeford is professor of psychology and counseling at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, and Hudson directs the Midwest Christian Counseling Center, Kansas City, Mo.

With other experts, they addressed nearly 1,000 persons at the first National Family Enrichment Conference, one effort by Southern Baptists to answer the cries for help seen in the statistics.

Family members, church staff members and professionals who attended came seeking ways to strengthen the existing family unit and minister to victims of divorce, widowhood or single parenthood.

Marriage and family life is not what it used to be, agreed the conference leaders and participants. Hudson, in a seminar entitled "Marriage Under Construction," identified some points of stress unique to the 20th century family.

Roles have been redefined, he said, and family responsibilities are no longer assumed according to traditional male-female roles. With women becoming an increasingly large part of the work force, family expectations also change. Wives sometimes make more money than their husbands, a situation which requires adjustment by both parties. The mobility of the family also is affected by both partners working.

On the other hand the family is more secure with the husband under less financial pressure, said Hudson, who emphasized the increased opportunities afforded by the dual-career family.

Divorce has increased so that a predicted divorce rate of 50 percent by 1985 is not unlikely, he continued. The single parent is much more common today, but the average salary for the woman who is head of a home is \$6,400, or subsistence-level salary. Some 10 million children live in one-parent homes, Hudson cited, adding that the church and society must take notice of the needs of single parents.

Joseph W. Hinkle, secretary of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's newly-created family ministry department, expressed the philosophy behind the expanded programs of family ministry and the National Family Enrichment Conference.

"To me, there is no greater challenge in our nation today than that of helping families," Hinkle said. "I believe in the family, and I'm committed to meeting its needs. Marriage and the family are sacred and are a part of God's plan, his first institution."