



August 25, 1976

76-141

Laymen Share Christ  
With Prison Inmates

By Jim Newton

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Every other Saturday, Baptist men from such cities as Jacksonville, Orlando, Winter Park and Gainesville trek to the state prison at Starke, Fla., to share Jesus Christ with 1,400 inmates in the modern, new facility.

The Baptists call it a prisoner regeneration program, instead of rehabilitation. The program is mostly evangelistic, with laymen simply visiting inmates and talking to them about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The inmates are responding, the men say. As many as 75 laymen participate in the program from which they say 472 prisoners have accepted Christ; during the first half of 1976, recorded professions of faith totaled 226.

The Baptists' Starke ministry began from the concern and vision of three Baptist laymen--Austin Brown, a chaplain at the prison and former inmate, and two laymen from Jacksonville's Parkwood Baptist Church--Mickey Parrish and Jim Williams. Other denominations are also involved in ministry at the prison.

Involvement in the prison ministry "has changed my life," said Parrish, a printing ink executive, so much that he resigned his job and is going to Africa as a volunteer missionary.

Williams, an electrical contractor, said the evangelistic ministry is a followup to a Bill Glass Evangelistic Crusade at the prison in April 1975. Glass, a former professional football player, specializes in prison evangelism and brought a team of 125 laymen for one-on-one evangelism, and a dozen top athletes.

A stipulation for holding a Bill Glass crusade is that laymen come back to the prison at least seven times. Chaplain Brown hit on the idea of having the men come back at least twice each month, on a permanent basis.

"The revival that started in the prison a year and a half ago is still continuing," Williams said.

Last Christmas, the Baptist men in the prison ministry gave a Christmas party for the inmates and provided 1,600 Christmas stockings for every man in the prison. At the party, inmates were given a Coca Cola and more than 10,000 homemade cookies prepared by women from the involved churches.

One inmate who had been in maximum security nine years said it was the first time in that time he had been given a Coke. "It's the best Christmas I've had in nine years. I guess it took Jesus to get me a Coke," he said.

Besides the evangelistic phase of the ministry, almost 200 inmates are involved in a Bible correspondence program sponsored by Parkwood Baptist Church. Additionally, a tape ministry in which inmates are given tape players enables them to listen to outstanding preachers from across the nation. Chaplains lead the inmates in small groups for spiritual growth and offer group Bible study sessions once a week.

Three prison chaplains--including Brown--devote much of their time to help inmates who have accepted Christ to mature as Christians. Chief Chaplain Max Jones led Brown to Christ while the latter was still in prison for manslaughter.

"We know these men," Brown said, "and we can usually tell if they're sincere or not. Some of these men are being saved, and that's the first step toward rehabilitation."

Williams said the "lifers" in maximum security and the men on death row were especially responsive to the gospel.

-more-

Shortly after the recent Supreme Court decision which upheld capital punishment as constitutional, shock waves spread throughout R Section--the maximum security unit commonly called "death row."

"There are some angry, hostile men back there," said Dale Hatfield, prison chaplain. Immediately following the news of the Supreme Court decision, Brown noted, some young men among the 77 on death row, broke down and cried. Others would not talk to anyone, he said. Some just accepted it, saying that's just the way it is.

David Delap, a death row inmate who has accepted Christ, said most of the R Section inmates felt, as he did, that the Supreme Court decision "is a step backward in the justic system."

Most prisoners on death row, he said, look forward to Saturdays when the Christian laymen visit and share Christ. A "runner," (a trustee who runs errands for the men on death row) said, however, he had been there three years and none of the laymen had talked to him much, except to hand him a tract, tell him he needed Christ and rush on to rep at the pattern with another prisoner.

But Brown had strong words of praise for the ministry and the role Williams and Parrish have played in it and other correctional institution-based ministries of Parkwood Baptist Church.

Through their inspiration and "vision," the church's Brotherhood has a multi-faceted prison ministry at Starke, at the prison farm, county jail, and a work release center where they hold worship services each Saturday. Last year, Williams noted, more than 800 prisoners made professions of faith as a result of the church's work.

-30-

Adapted from the October 1976 issue of World Mission Journal.  
(BP)Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.

Senior Citizens Get Free

# # #

Baptist Press  
8/25/76

Tuition at Bluefield College

BLUEFIELD, Va. (BP)--Bluefield College, a Baptist college here, will allow senior citizens 65 years of age or older to attend regularly scheduled classes tuition free.

The only cost will be a registration fee of \$25 per academic term, regardless of th course load. The cost of books and laboratory fees is additional.

In announcing the decision of the college to provide leisure-time education to senior citizens, G. M. Poulton, director of development, stressed the college's desire to open its doors to those otherwise unable to receive a college education.

"Senior citizens obviously do not need the benefit of college courses to aid them in improving employment opportunities so most view normal college expenses as too great with too little return. The college's move to allow tuition-free entrance to people in this category makes . programs available for the personal advancement and satisfaction of senior citizens," Poulton said.

Enrollment of senior citizens will be limited to a maximum of 20 in any one academic term. Applications will be taken on a "first come, first served" basis, according to the admissions office.

-30-



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

## NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor  
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

### BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
DALLAS Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461  
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 254-5461  
RICHMOND Richard M. Styles, Acting Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226  
76-141

August 25, 1976

## Catholic Emissary to Baptists Ends Ministry with High Hope

By Jack U. Harwell

NEWNAN, Ga. (BP)--A Roman Catholic priest has concluded two years of close association with Southern Baptists. He candidly feels that he and Baptists are better off for the experience.

Will Steinbacher has just moved to Cincinnati to become national personnel director for Glenmary Missioners, a Jesuit order ministering in small Southern towns from Ohio to Texas.

For the past two years, he has lived in Newnan, Ga., representing his order and the National Bishop's Commission on Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs among Baptists.

Father Steinbacher followed in the footsteps of two predecessors, Frank Ruff and Robert Berson, also with Glenmary, an order which has sought to develop good Catholic-Southern Baptist relations since the late 1960s. He, in turn, will be succeeded by a Chicago native, Father Joe O'Donnell, for 11 years a Catholic pastor and professor in Beaver Dam, Ky., who will work out of Newnan.

"I guess you could say my job was one of breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions," Father Steinbacher said as he evaluated his two-year assignment.

"I have found some tensions and strong feelings by people of both faiths," Father Steinbacher said. "But I have also found a great deal of openness, warmth and acceptance on both sides."

He said "some Catholics feel that Baptists don't drink, smoke or dance, and aren't a very happy people."

On the other hand, "Baptists have tended to believe that Catholics all smoke and bow at every moment to the Pope, a bishop or a priest."

Seeking to eradicate false images, Father Steinbacher has arranged many Baptist-Catholic dialogues, spoken on several Baptist college campuses, preached in a few Baptist churches and written articles for Baptist and Catholic publications.

He even took part in an ordination service for a Baptist minister--Charles L. Moates, associate pastor of Central Baptist Church in Newnan.

Father Steinbacher has also spent much of his time speaking to Catholic groups, explaining Southern Baptists to them and telling them how to relate to Southern Baptist people and agencies.

He chuckled: "I was speaking to one Catholic unity commission in Atlanta. I spoke so glowingly of my impressions of Southern Baptists that one priest asked me if I was still a priest."

Although Southern Baptists are in all 50 states, Father Steinbacher has worked primarily in five states--Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee--and has done some work in Florida and North Carolina.

He reminisced: "The most overwhelming experience of my life was attending the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas in 1974. I had never seen such a mob of Christians and sensed such a worldwide scope of diverse and dynamic programs.

"But by the time I attended the 1976 convention session in Norfolk, I was more at home and was not so overwhelmed. I met many Baptist leaders who had become personal friends since 1974."

He added: "My acceptance at Executive Committee meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention has been a deep personal thrill for me. They seemed to sincerely welcome me, even with my clerical collar, and my presence didn't intimidate them."

Father Steinbacher said six particular things about Southern Baptists have impressed him the most--"your sense of missions, your feeling for prayer and worship, your diversity of ministries, the way your annual conventions somehow tie all this diversity together, the never-ending expansion of Southern Baptists into new mission areas and the growing work of the SBC Home Mission Board, especially in the area of inter-faith relationships.

"I have been witnessed to by many Southern Baptists," he recalled. "At first I was offended, but I learned to appreciate their zeal. This evangelistic fervor is the core of Baptist life, as I understand Baptists.

"Catholics need to renew that evangelistic zeal in the lives of individual Catholics."

Father Steinbacher cited two dangers he has observed in Southern Baptist life which caused him concern.

"I do not feel the average Southern Baptist church member shares the world vision held by their leadership. Many Baptists seem to stress their local church to the exclusion of the secular and spiritual world beyond it," he said.

"And, I sense that most Southern Baptists need to see anew their duty to move on from the foundation of their personal conversion experience to help change social systems that affect us all."

He said, "I feel that Baptists and Catholics can work together on dealing with issues that drive people to drink --such as poverty, prejudice, injustice, racism, etc.-- rather than working solely on governmental control of liquor sales."

He summarized: "I am highly encouraged about Baptist-Catholic relationships in the future. Some beginnings have been made, some misconceptions and stereotypes have been broken down and some bridges have been built.

"As I go across the Southland in my new assignment with the Glenmary order, I will encourage many other Roman Catholic brothers to work with Baptists in their respective states. It's a marvelous experience."

-30-

Mississippi Baptists Honor  
Odle, Elect Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press  
8/25/76

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board voted an \$8.4 million budget, elected a new associate editor for the Baptist Record, the state's weekly newspaper, and honored the retiring editor of the publication.

Tim Nicholas, 28, photo-feature editor at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta, was elected associate editor, effective Sept. 20. He will succeed Donald T. McGregor, who will assume the editorship, Sept. 1, on the retirement of Joe T. Odle.

Board members also heard a request for special funds to aid in the beginning of an alcoholism treatment center at the Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson and adopted a design for a corporate seal.

Nicholas, a native of Atlanta, has been on the Home Mission Board staff for four years. He has also served in the U. S. Air Force and worked as a summer intern on the Christian Index, Georgia Baptist state paper, while earning a bachelor of arts degree in journalism from Georgia State University. The board paid special tribute to Odle, who left the pastorate to serve for the past 20 years on the Mississippi Convention's staff, 17 of those years as editor of the Baptist Record. The record budget, which will be recommended to the convention's annual meeting for action in November, includes a basic portion of \$8.3 million and an advance section of \$100,000. The budget allocates \$42,500 from the basic portion and another \$7,500 from the advance section as "start-up" money for the alcohol treatment center, which was to open Sept. 1. It is expected to take care of its own expenses after it gets into operation.

-30-

(2) Phot of Tim Nicholas will be mailed to state Baptist editors.