



'Church Should Expand
Concern for the Blind'

NASHVILLE (BP)--Christian denominations in this country could fill a much-needed role by appointing "resource and information-oriented" missionaries to the blind and by greatly expanding denominationwide concern for sightless persons, the director of blind services for the State of Tennessee declared here.

The statement by William J. Farrell, 67, blind since high school and state employee for 32 years, has some backing among a growing number of Southern Baptists concerned that their denomination become more involved in ministry to and with blind persons.

The United States has some 468,000 legally blind persons and blindness--especially among older adults--is increasing, since people are generally living longer, Farrell, a United Methodist layman told Baptist Press. "Most blindness occurs in adulthood," he added.

Two Southern Baptists--one sighted and the other blind--are trying to alert the denomination to needs for ministry and involvement with blind persons.

Essentially, what Claud O'Shields, a vice president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, and Jay Waugh, blind Southern Baptist from Burlington, N.C., want to see is a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)-wide missionary and/or consultant program for the blind, coordinated through the convention's Home Mission Board.

"Acceptance and association are two needs usually denied blind people," said Waugh, blind since birth, "and the church should be in the forefront of eliminating this isolation.

"Churches and blind persons need involvement with and information concerning each other," O'Shields added: Each needs to build bridges of understanding and mutual acceptance."

Their efforts--and the concern of others--have generated dialogue and heightened interest in ministry to the blind, with some preliminary steps already being taken.

The Home Mission Board, the agency that would field any missionaries to the blind or consultants on blind ministry, for example, earlier this year made an assignment to study a specialized program of missions for unsighted persons, under the agency's department of Christian social ministries.

Southern Baptists already have some resources for the blind. Some home missionaries, across the years, have included blind persons in their ministries, although no specific program or policy on ministry to them has been formulated as yet, according to Gerald Palmer, director of the HMB's mission section.

Palmer agreed that some expansion--particularly in the area of missionaries and/or consultants--is needed.

"The Home Mission Board intends to become involved in ministry to the blind on an enlarged scale," Palmer said. "Anything it does in this area," he noted, "will be in cooperation with the Baptist Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), the Brotherhood Commission, and the Baptist state conventions."

The Sunday School Board for many years has published braille and large-print publications, including the "Braille Baptist" and other materials for blind persons. Taped instructional, inspirational and biblical-oriented materials are available and being expanded, a board spokesman noted. The "Media Library Services Journal" and other publications give information to aid ministry and services for the blind.

Woman's Missionary Union has provided "Royal Service" magazine material for the "Braille Baptist" for several years and publishes other printed materials for aid in ministry to the blind, including Mission Action guides. WMU recently released a taped teaching aid as a supplement to WMU manuals and are preparing an audio version of the Baptist Women's manual for release next year.

Several Baptist seminaries and colleges have blind students attending and provide special facilities and arrangements for them, where needed. Also, a few Baptist state conventions have work with blind persons. But where they do, observers say, it is an additional assignment, sometimes given to workers with the deaf.

"Any new, increased emphasis on ministry to the blind would eventually involve resources--including personnel--where needed," Palmer noted. "No timetable has been set for these, however. We at the board are still in the preliminary planning stages," he added.

Waugh and O'Shields were not critical of efforts already underway among Southern Baptists but said they felt the "missionary and information aspect" of ministry to and concerning the blind ought to be greatly expanded.

O'Shields, a member of the board of directors for Waugh's evangelistic association, said he has drafted a resolution he hopes will be adopted by "messengers" to the Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City, Mo., June 14-16.

The proposed resolution, as presented to the SBC Resolutions Committee, urges that the SBC Executive Committee "be asked to give immediate and careful study to this need and give recommendation to the proper Convention agency to initiate a ministry to the blind as a part of the SBC's Bold Mission Thrust," the Home Mission Board's attempt to evangelize and congregationalize the nation by 1980.

"Many denominational leaders are interested in ministry to the blind, but it takes time, I realize, for such things to being to jell," O'Shields told Baptist Press. "Still, I'll be anxious to see something more happen in increased ministry among blind persons. I think this is an area of our denomination that has been largely neglected."

Waugh concurs. His organization late last year drafted a resolution asking that denomination-wide emphasis and ministry be considered by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and by the Southern Baptist Convention (through the Home Mission Board).

The North Carolina convention adopted the resolution unanimously last November, including a recommendation that its general board be asked to "give careful study to this need and give recommendation for a ministry to the blind," as part of the state convention's program.

Farrell, who said he sees failure to recognize blind persons as whole people in his own denomination and others, said missionaries assigned to ministry with unsighted persons could serve as full-time "resource persons" who might travel over one or more states. Missionary responsibilities and resulting services should not overlap state government or other services, he cautioned.

Such persons could communicate with pastors of local churches and other blind persons who generally aren't aware of resources to aid blind people, he said.

The Waugh association in its recommendation, noted there are about 50 percent more blind persons than deaf in this country. Yet, they cited, the Home Mission Board and some Baptist state conventions have provided deaf ministries for several years, while not involving themselves in specific programs for blind persons.

Waugh said his association does not want their interest in the blind to deter programs for the deaf, but, "we feel that a ministry to the sightless people should be added during Bold Mission Thrust."

Yet, Baptists need to be astute in the area of ministry to blind persons, some who are blind caution. W. Clayton McCoy, 35, is an active Southern Baptist layman and computer programmer from Jacksonville, Fla., who became progressively blind from childhood. He believes any programs entered or begun by Southern Baptists should be information-oriented, combined with evangelism and local church involvement with blind persons.

While McCoy and Farrell said treatment of blind persons as "different" is a hindrance in the long run, they noted that special programs for older adults who have lost their eyesight and for persons newly blinded can be helpful.

They prefer that blind people be integrated, where possible, with sighted people to enhance adaptability and independence.

But, they said, newly blinded persons, including Christians, usually have adjustments--sometimes bitterness, doubts and fears--to work through. "Their confidence needs developing," McCoy said. "The Christians need strength in what they already believe. They need to know that God still cares." Non-Christians, need the strength belief in Christ brings, the layman said.

'Being a Father Is What You
Yourself Can Do for Children'

By Nancy McGough

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Joe Adams realized this year that "being a father is what you can do yourself for your children, instead of what you might be able to give them."

Money wasn't always as tight as it is presently for the Adamses.

Joe, the father and husband of the clan, was a Naval engineering officer on submarine duty 16 years before coming to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here last year.

Now that the finances are tighter, Adams says he has learned a great deal about being a father and thinks more about it as Father's Day, June 19, 1977, approaches.

Adams and his wife, Barbara, are from Buffalo, Mo., and have two teenage daughters, ages 14 and 16.

"People used to tell me, 'Look out when your kids become teenagers.' But I've found them to be a real joy in my life. They're not a burden but an encouragement."

Adams is a little older and more experienced than some other fathers on seminary campuses, but each has his own general philosophy of raising children and fatherhood.

Ron Brown, second year theology student from Harrogate, Tenn., sees fatherhood as an expression of stewardship. He and his wife, Connie, have two children, ages 3 and 7.

"What children become depends on some things we do for them. So we look at ours as very special blessings from God. We need to be faithful in our stewardship of raising them," he says.

Brown, pastor of Corn Creek Baptist Church in Milton, Ky., says, "As a pastor I preach about fathers needing to be a better example and being responsible. Fathers need that--I need that. But I would also like fathers to stop and think:

'It's really great to have these children and this wife to love me. And I'm glad I've got them to love.'

Larry Davidson, a first-year theology student from Stone Mountain, Ga., takes time from studies at Southern to wrestle with his son-- a favorite passtime for Bill, age 2.

As Father's Day draws nearer, Davidson, reflects:

"In a way it's a neat time for fathers, but in another way it really bears on me--more so than other days--of a father's responsibilities.

"It causes me to think ahead, 'What will Bill be in the future?'"

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Wake Forest, Baptist
Ties Tense in N. C.

By Johanna Seltz

WINSTON-SALEM, N. C. (BP)--Wake Forest University, which has had its hassles with North Carolina Baptists before, is at the center of a hotly debated controversy which won't go away.

The controversy ignited when a small student group took it upon itself to invite Larry Flynt, publisher of the sex-oriented Hustler magazine, to the campus last February and give him its "Man of the Year Award"--tongue in cheek, a student spokesman said.

Coy Privette, president of the State Baptist Convention of North Carolina, appeared the next night, at the group's invitation, to rebut Flynt and receive an "Alumni of the Year Award."

Ever since then, the Biblical Recorder, the state convention's newspaper, has been flooded with letters, first from pastors and laymen deploring Flynt's appearance and what they perceived to be a decline of Christian values on campus, and then from defenders of the school.

More than 50 letters came in according to J. Marse Grant, editor of the Biblical Recorder. It was the most mail the paper has received on any one subject in the 18 years he's been editor.

The concern has escalated from dismay and embarrassment over Flynt's campus appearance to a full-blown controversy over the relationship between the school and the Baptist state convention. Broad hints have been made in the Recorder that perhaps the convention and Wake Forest University should no longer be entwined.

"Wake Forest has always had its critics," said John Lewis, a trustee of the school and minister of Raleigh's First Baptist Church. "As a trustee, I wish Larry Flynt hadn't come, but it's unfair to charge the trustees and administration with dereliction of responsibility for allowing it to happen.

"I think the decision to invite Flynt was an unhappy choice, but I would defend the students' right to make that decision." Lewis said. "As long as we have a substantial number of Christian faculty we should not fear the open confrontation of ideas . . . or the risks of freedom."

"The university has not done a very good job of communicating with grass-roots Baptists," said Privette. But he's encouraged by recent trustee action to develop closer ties with N. C. Baptists and does not think the convention and school will divide, although, he added, the school will be closely watched.

"We are a people who feel very free about expressing ourselves," said the convention executive secretary, Cecil Ray. "Between now and the convention in November, there will be many exchanges. I can't predict what will happen."

Wake Forest's trustees have said they want to strengthen the ties between the school and local churches. At their meeting last September, the trustees voted to hire a full-time staff member to try to weld firmer relations with the churches. More workshops for ministers and medical missionaries were also approved.

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The trustees also raised the tuition break given to needy ministerial students and children of Baptist ministers from \$150 and \$300 to \$600.

At their latest meeting, May 13, the trustees discussed the relationship between the convention and the university for more than an hour and a half and created more financial incentives for Baptist students.

"The trustees feel very close with the Baptists and we want the Baptists to know that," said chairman Egbert L. Davis Jr., of Winston-Salem.

Trustees and university administrators will attend more Baptist association meetings, Davis said. Ministers will be encouraged to urge students to apply to the school and a trustee committee is now studying ways to make the Christian commitment of the university better known, he said.

"The issue isn't Larry Flynt," said T. Robert Mullinax, executive secretary of the convention's Council on Christian Higher Education. "Flynt was just the little elf that opened Pandora's box. It was the occasion to let people give vent to their feelings."

A major reason for the ill feelings is the knowledge that North Carolina Baptists are a minority at Wake Forest, Grant said.

"The Baptist State Convention provides three-quarters of a million dollars to Wake Forest," Grant said. "Only 27 percent of the student body is Baptist, and only 10 to 11 percent of the applicants each year are North Carolina Baptists. At Baylor University (a Baptist-supported school in Texas), 65 percent of the students are Baptists and 75 percent of the freshman class. Three-quarters of the Baptists are from Texas.

"I think when you have such a small percentage of North Carolina Baptist students in an institution that gets the largest share of North Carolina Baptist money, well, it calls for a close look at the relationship," Grant said.

Grant and the Cecil W. Seagle of Charlotte have called for a commission to examine the relationship between the school and convention, discover the reasons for tensions between the school and grass-roots Baptists, and suggest ways to strengthen the ties.

"The situation now is like tension between a husband and wife," Seagle said. "They can either divorce, separate or find adequate counseling to resolve the difficulties. We can decide on an amicable separation or . . . reconciliation."

(Dissolution of ties to N. C. Baptists may be difficult, since the convention approved a contract with the Reynolds Foundation in 1946 which binds the convention to provide at least 7.5 percent of its distributable income each year to Wake Forest, in perpetuity, with Reynolds providing not less than \$350,000 per year.)

The school administration acknowledges that the low number of applicants among state Baptist students is distressing, and statistics show that the percentage is declining: 407 out of 3,658 this year compared to 613 out of 1,739 applicants in 1959, for example.

Tuition and other costs of about \$3,700 a year, relatively high academic standards and a limited curriculum compared to public colleges and universities discourage many people, including North Carolina Baptists, from applying to the school, said W. G. Starling, the university's admissions director.

Another possible reason for the decreased Baptist applications is that four of the five Baptist junior colleges that used to feed many students to Wake Forest have become four-year schools.

Starling quickly pointed out that 64 percent of the North Carolina Baptists who applied to the school were accepted this year.

"There's not a written policy which specifically states any preference for North Carolina Baptist students," Starling said, "but when this office evaluates and compares applicants, the university's concerns for and its obligations to the North Carolina Baptist student weigh heavily."

Wake Forest University President James R. Scales was more specific: "Baptists, North Carolinians and (children of) alumni have preferred status," he said.

Another central issue in the controversy is the question of what type of school Wake Forest has become and whether it retains its "Christian identity."

Letters in the Biblical Recorder show many people feel the school is too permissive.

C. Mark Corts of Winston-Salem said the school needs to make its behavior and goals more compatible with the convention.

"There are people who feel Wake Forest has moved too far away from Baptist concerns and that there might be people there who don't have an appreciation for Baptists or the convention," said Mullinax.

About 30 of the convention's more than 3,460 churches now ask that their donations to the convention not go to Wake Forest.

Another problem, Mullinax said, is a misunderstanding about the differences between a church and a college.

"The role of the church is to preach, teach, evangelize and indoctrinate," Mullinax said. "A college is for the critical examination of ideas. To train the mind is a very important ministry, but there is a basic difference in the way a college and church work. There has been a tendency for some of us to ask our colleges to be more like churches than they can actually be."

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This article was adapted from a Raleigh News and Observer article by Johanna Seltz, staff writer.

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Robison Homosexual Views
Runs Afoul of FCC Rules

By Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)--The Sunday morning program of Evangelist James Robison was cancelled temporarily by a local television station following Robison's verbal attack of homosexuals and "Playboy" publisher Hugh Hefner.

Robison, a Southern Baptist, was reinstated a week later on WFAA, Channel 8, after pledging to "refrain from personal attack on anybody by name."

As a result of Robison's sermon attack against homosexuals in February, WFAA was compelled by FCC regulations to grant equal time for a rebuttal by the pastor of a homosexual congregation in Fort Worth.

Following the brief cancellation, Mike Shapiro, president of Belo Broadcasting Corporation, said the station's switchboard was swamped with telephone calls and "letters are coming in by the bucketsfull."

Shapiro was quick to say the calls and letters had nothing to do with the station's decision to reinstate Robison.

"Our decision to resume the broadcasts came after Robison agreed to refrain from personal attacks on the air," Shapiro said.

"We think Robison is great and hope he has a long run with us."

Shapiro lamented that many of the people who called or wrote to protest the cancellation felt the station was to blame.

"The FCC language is very specific that you can't attack personally anyone on the air," Shapiro said. "If you do, you must notify an individual in advance."

A representative of Robison's evangelistic organization said the broadcasts had been under "increasing pressure" from other stations and some had dropped the broadcast last year because he dealt with controversial issues.

The evangelist, whose Sunday morning broadcast is carried on 70 TV stations, said he wasn't upset with WFAA but with the FCC rules.

"WFAA isn't trying to be a problem to me, but is seeking to fulfill the law which is what I want to do," Robison said.

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"There seems to be inconsistencies in that particular law because in some talk shows people are attacked constantly by entertainers.

"Anita Bryant has been made fun of on several late night shows because of her stand against homosexuality."

In his televised sermon on homosexuality, Robison read a newspaper story in which the pastor of the homosexual church said God had made him what he was.

Robison refuted the man's claim and said God would forgive homosexuality or any other sin if the homosexual is willing to repent.

The Agape Metropolitan Community Church filed for equal time under the FCC Fairness Doctrine. During their broadcast, two lesbians sang, "Because He Lives," and the pastor said Jesus cured the blind man in John, Chapter 9, but left him homosexual because it would glorify God. He also used Galatians 3:28, ". . . There is neither male nor female . . ." to support the homosexual view.

WFAA, which produces Robison's program, refused to carry his comments about the "Playboy" publisher in a taping session in May and notified him his program was being cancelled.

A Robison spokesman said the evangelist quoted Hefner as saying rather than making another \$100 million, he'd like to fall in love, find the right person and settle down.

"Hefner is a hypocrite," said Robison, "because while he's trying to destroy so many families and tear down the image of women, he turns around and says he's looking for what he will be unable to find in his current lifestyle."

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First Black Student
Fellowship Started

By Jim Lowry

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KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The first organized Christian fellowship for black students on a historically white campus has been started at the University of Tennessee campus here.

Significant differences between worship experiences for blacks and whites make the new fellowship a vitally important tool for reaching black students, according to John Corbitt, part-time consultant for National Student Ministries at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and an ordained pastor of a National (black) Baptist church.

For blacks, Corbitt said, religion is more emotional, while still retaining the same basic intellectual requirements. Religion is a liberating force for black Americans, Corbitt added.

The new Black Student Fellowship of the Baptist Student Union will meet in the same building as the existing Baptist Student Union at the University of Tennessee, and will be led by the same campus minister, Bill Lee.

Black students, however, will plan their own programs and religious experiences with the black religious culture in mind.

In the past, Baptist Student Unions have searched to find an effective means to minister to black students on the white campuses, but blacks have not responded in large numbers.

Only two black students were actively involved in the Baptist Student Union program at the University of Tennessee before the Black Student Fellowship was organized.

Three weeks after the Black Fellowship was organized a total of 47 students attended one of the meetings. Contact has been made with over 170 black students.

Black churches in Knoxville are providing funds to help the Black Student Fellowship in its effort to evangelize black students and help blacks grow spiritually while on the college campus.

Corbitt explained that the desire to establish black student fellowships on historically white campuses is an expression of pluralism and should not be considered a return to segregation.

He added that most people realize that America is composed of many different and unique sub-cultures and not one system of thought. The new fellowships hopefully will encourage blacks to plan and initiate programs of interest to allow blacks to maintain their heritage while ministering on campus.

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Corbitt said that over 500,000 black students currently attend historically white colleges and universities, and that over 70 percent of the blacks who are Christians are Baptists.

Distinctively black fellowships where students can plan and promote programs in the context of the black experience is the only way to reach black students effectively, according to Corbitt.

The Knoxville Black Student Fellowship will be used as a model to explain the concept to campus ministers attending Student Weeks at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Centers this summer.

Corbitt said he hopes to see at least a dozen new Black Student Fellowships similar to the Knoxville arrangement within the next year, and is optimistic that more will be added during upcoming years as the concept is more widely understood by campus ministers.

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Byrds of a Feather
Flock to Louisville

Baptist Press
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LOUISVILLE (BP)--The Byrds are "nesting" at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

But each Byrd's decision to flock here came separately.

Edward L. Byrd and his wife, Marty, came to Southern in 1937 to prepare for the pastorate. Now, 40 years later he is returning to Southern this fall as visiting professor of pastoral studies. He recently retired after 27 years as pastor of First Baptist Church, Florence, S.C.

Just before Byrd was asked to come as professor, Marty was elected as one of four women now serving on Southern's Board of Trustees. Byrd was a trustee 10 years (1964-74) and was chairman of the board two of those years.

Adding to the coincidence--their son, Davis, enrolled and was the seminary's "architect-in-residence" last year.

Davis was a successful architect and planning consultant before coming to Southern. He was also a deacon and a Sunday school teacher at his father's church in Florence.

For seven years he taught Old and New Testament survey courses at the church and received much affirmation because he was able to convey the Bible's unity to his class members.

A year and a half before coming to Louisville, Davis thought, "I'd like the opportunity to learn more about the Bible than I would be able to learn on my own."

But no one drops a career on a whim, so he continued his work.

Six months later, however, he and his wife, Kay, attended a futuristic conference. He was convinced the only hope for the future was Christianity but sensed a need for more people to articulate the faith intelligently.

He began looking at Southern Seminary, and considered training to be a seminary or college professor. When he visited Southern, Davis discovered the seminary was beginning work on a campus master plan.

President McCall discovered Davis had just completed plans for the campus of a South Carolina College and before long, Davis had a job offer--administrative assistant for campus planning, while a student at Southern.

Davis looks forward to being on campus with his parents.

Edward Byrd also looks forward to his new duties as visiting professor.

Maybe, one sharpwitted observer noted, the seminary should have sign which reads, "Byrd Sanctuary."