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Christian Life Commission
Produces TV Viewers' Packet

By David Wilkinson

NASHVILLE (BP)--In the midst of the increasing uproar over television programming, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has produced a special packet of materials to help parents, pastors and others concerned about the medium's moral content.

The packet, entitled "Help for Television Viewers," is being mailed to about 30,000 Southern Baptist pastors and more than 15,000 ministers of education, church librarians and other church, state convention and denominational leaders across the 12.9-million-member denomination.

Its introduction comes at a time when the subject of television morality is receiving renewed nationwide attention, sparked particularly by the controversy over "Soap," a new comedy series which ABC-TV plans to air this fall.

Religious leaders from several denominations, including staff members of the Christian Life Commission, have protested vigorously over "Soap" and have formed various alliances aimed at keeping the series off the air.

"Television's current offerings of sexual immorality, violence, profanity, social drinking and drunkenness, and godless materialism broadcast into our homes and into the minds of our children every day has reached the unbearable stage," claims Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission.

"This packet is not the final word, but neither is it just another list of complaints about television programming. We think it is a significant beginning in providing the kind of materials that will help Christians cope with the moral challenge television presents."

According to Valentine, the packet is the result of the commission's four hearings on "Television and Morality" conducted across the U. S. this past year, careful monitoring of the three national networks by Southern Baptist viewing teams, and months of research by the agency's staff.

The packet is also a response to a set of recommendations approved less than three months ago by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in its annual meeting in Kansas City, Mo., calling on all Southern Baptists to "courageously confront television's moral challenge."

The SBC recommended that Southern Baptists make a special effort in August to study the packet's materials along with other "trustworthy resources," to evaluate carefully the moral content of television programming in September, and to communicate their concern to advertisers and local and network television officials during October.

The recommendation also urged Southern Baptists to unite in the next year with other groups "who share our deep moral concern about current television programming."

The packet, which contains a dozen different pieces of information and suggested guidelines related to television morality, includes statements on "How Television Affects Us," covering such issues as TV violence, sexuality and profanity.

It also contains separate suggestions for individuals, families and churches on what they can do about changing and coping with television immorality, a hard-hitting bulletin insert, a list of resources for study and action, a selection of facts and quotes about television, a survey form for evaluating programs, and a list of appropriate questions to ask before, during and after a program which can be affixed to the television set for easy reference.

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The packet even includes "immediate reaction" postcards addressed to the three major networks. The viewer can write his reaction to a specific program on the card and mail it promptly to the appropriate network.

It is designed primarily for Southern Baptists, but the Christian Life Commission believes it offers useful help for other concerned Christians as well. With no dated materials, it may be used by individuals or it can be utilized as a source for group discussion by churches or other concerned groups.

"Obviously, the networks cannot please everyone," states Harry N. Hollis Jr., director of family and special moral concerns for the Christian Life Commission, in one of the packet's articles. "There are too many groups with too many different philosophies to do that. But the networks must hear the anguished cry, the broad-based protest by the American people (who) are fed up with the exploitation of violence and sex on television. Something has to be done about it. Something will be done about it."

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Prison Worship Center
Dedicated By Inmates

By Elaine Herrin

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8/9/77

St. GEORGE'S, Grenada (BP)--Leon Edwards, whose Christian witness on this Caribbean island is fast becoming legend, occupied a prison cell here for seven years until his unexpected death in October 1975.

Only days ago that cell and surrounding area in the right wing of Richmond Hill Prison became the Prison Worship Center dedicated "in Loving Memory of Leon Edwards."

The worship center, pulpit and table--all handcrafted by prison inmates--are made from mahogany trees in the prison yard.

Edwards, a convicted murderer who accepted Jesus Christ as Savior while in his cell listening to a Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission broadcast, was the first member of the Grenada Baptist Church organization, first leader of the prison Bible study group here, and "spiritual father" to several inmates and prison officers.

The recent dedication service was led by Manget Herrin, Southern Baptist missionary associate, friend of Edwards and leader of the Bible study group that Edwards began.

Taking part in the service with song and testimony were several Christian prisoners; missionary Kenneth Casey who led the prison choral group in a musical selection; and Gregory Warde, a former inmate.

A close friend of Leon Edwards during his confinement, Warde was led to Christ through Edwards' friendship and now serves as song leader and a Bible study leader in St. George's Baptist Church.

Further demonstration of the continuing influence of Edwards' life came when Herrin gave an invitation following his message at the dedication. Two men professed faith in Christ and requested baptism.

Prison authorities here have given permission for baptism, as they did several years ago when J. P. Allen, Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission executive with whom Edwards had corresponded, came to Grenada and baptized Edwards in the Caribbean Sea.

In like manner, the two men will go into the waters of baptism, "raised to walk in newness of life." Prisoners, but free--free to worship within the walls of Richmond Hill Prison in a center dedicated to one of their own who has gone before them.

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Elaine Herrin and her husband, Manget Harrin, are Southern Baptist missionary associates stationed in Grenada.



M'Lang: A Model
For Small Town Missions

By Jim Newton

M'LANG, Philippines (BP)--It's not the sort of place anyone would stop by just to visit, but if you really want to see an effective example of Baptist missions work in a small town overseas, M'lang, Philippines, is the place to go.

It's in the heart of the island of Mindanao, one of the southern-most islands that make up the Republic of the Philippines.

M'lang is the name of both the small town and the municipality (or county). About 10,000 people live in the town and about 60,000 in the area.

There's little electricity, no television, almost no telephone communication, only a few cars, no paved roads, and only 15 newspapers from Manila that reach M'lang for the 10,000 people there.

"The transistor radio is our main link to the rest of the world, and radio only gives a superficial view of what is happening," said missionary Jim Slack. "The people here live in their own little world that hinges mostly on rumors they hear about what happened in the next barrio (village)."

Fifteen years ago, the region was predominantly Muslim, but now it is mostly Roman Catholic.

Baptist influence is unusually strong. There are about 1,000 Baptists in M'lang--10 percent of the population.

The strongest Baptist church on the island of Mindanao is there--First Baptist Church of M'lang.

The Southern Baptist College provides college, high school and elementary education with a strong Christian orientation to 13,000 students.

About 30 percent of the students are Baptists; about half are Roman Catholic.

For the last 10 years, an average of 375 to 400 students have made professions of faith as a result of the school's witness, Slack said.

Response to the gospel in M'lang has been tremendous.

Last September, during an evangelistic crusade at M'lang Baptist Church, more than 270 decisions for Christ were recorded.

Two months later, 98 persons were baptized in one afternoon by Pastor Leodegario Salazar. The previous December, Salazar had baptized 74 persons in one day.

Slack, who has researched the subject extensively, said that Mindanao is the most responsive island in the world where Southern Baptists have worked.

The reasons, he said, are varied and "must be understood in relation to culture, history, geography and the sociological situation of the area."

The influence of Southern Baptist College has been a key factor in the response of the people in the nearby area, according to several M'lang Baptist leaders. Most of the school teachers in the villages are graduates of the college, and the college's president and high school principal, along with a First Baptist Church deacon, are three of the members of the municipal council.

A strong emphasis on involvement of laymen in missions is also given credit for Mindanao's openness to the gospel.

While two Sunday morning worship services--one in the Ilongot language and one in English--are being conducted at First Baptist Church in M'lang, six laymen and six students from Southern Baptist College lead worship services and Bible study at five extension points (missions).

In addition, the church sponsors four Bible study centers, and the Woman's Missionary Society assists with Bible studies in seven homes on weeknights. Flor Baligat, the church's "Bible woman" (the equivalent of a religious education director for a church in the U.S.A.), coordinates the work of the seven home Bible studies, one each night of the week.

Since the church was started in 1952, First Baptist has organized 14 mission points that have become self-supporting churches.

It has sent out, and financially supported, one of two home missionaries through the Mindanao Baptist Convention.

The church has the strongest Woman's Missionary Union program of any church in the Philippines, and it organized a Brotherhood last year.

"At first, our church was concerned only about our surrounding area," said Pastor Salazar. "We really had to struggle to convince the people to send out a missionary."

Now, however, Salazar says he feels it is the most missions-minded church in all of Mindanao, and perhaps the Philippines.

In fact, with its strong orientation toward involvement of the laity, the M'lang church's deep commitment to evangelism is perhaps unparalleled for a small town overseas.

And when the laity do not feel they have the proper training for involvement in the extension churches, they turn to the resources of Southern Baptist College to help equip them for ministry.

"I don't care if I do not see many of the members during the Sunday worship services, as long as they are serving in extension points beyond the church's reach," Pastor Salazar said.

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Adapted from World Mission Journal

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Childs Moves to Editor Post
At Brotherhood Commission

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8/9/77

MEMPHIS (BP)--Jack Childs, director of the Service Section at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission here, will become editor of Crusader Royal Ambassador boys materials including Crusader and Crusader Counselor magazines, Sept. 1.

Childs, 41, an employee of the commission for 16 years, will succeed Lee Hollaway, who began duties as director of communications for the Seminary Extension Department, Nashville, on July 18.

Born and reared in Memphis, Childs is a graduate of South Side High School. He is completing requirements for a bachelor of arts degree from Memphis State University, with a major in journalism. He was employed in the promotion department of Memphis Publishing Company and by the Baptist & Reflector, Tennessee state Baptist news publication, Brentwood, before joining the commission.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state editors.