



--FEATURES

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Pastor Finds Successful Keys
In Building Inner City Church

By Mark Smith

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Trying to build a church on the West Coast, where only 10 percent of the people worship regularly, can be a difficult task. But to do it in one of the deteriorating inner city areas of a California metropolis can be a devastating experience.

Yet, not for the Church on Brady.

The First Southern Baptist Church, just east of downtown Los Angeles on Brady Street, is a rapidly growing congregation of nearly 450 people who are working diligently--and successfully--to bring the gospel of Christ to their multi-ethnic neighborhood.

Tom Wolf, their highly motivated and youthful pastor, recently told students at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary that when he arrived at the church, 14 years ago, the congregation was dead-set on destruction. "I can remember in the earlier days on one Wednesday night when we had only six people come," he recalls, "and three of those were my wife and son and me.

Now Sunday morning attendance consistently runs about 430 and "we are becoming a regional church," Wolf says. "We are now drawing people from within a 20 to 25 minute driving radius. We will continue to minister in our local neighborhood as well as our regional neighborhood east of the downtown area."

"A key reason for our success is that I believe a congregation must be of the community and not simply in the community in order for it to work," says Wolf, a graduate of Baylor University and Fuller Theological Seminary. "Our church is a true ethnic representation of the neighborhood we are in. We are approximately 65 percent Mexican-American, 30 percent Anglo, and about five percent Asian, with some black brothers and sisters also."

Wolf, who believes pastoral stability is essential to a congregation, came to the church with a commitment to serve "for seven to 10 years, with a vision of 20." He says, "It took a long while before they even began trusting me. But it didn't matter, because I was willing for them to test it. I knew eventually they would come around when they saw I would not abandon them. I believe it gave them confidence."

The pastor feels that his living in the area where he ministers and adding a staff member of Mexican-American heritage were confirmations that he was serious about "building an inner-ethnic congregation that will glorify God and will not center on ethnicity as much as on our oneness in Jesus Christ."

Wolf admits his is not the typical Southern Baptist church. "We don't have Sunday School or church training as such, but instead, we have age-group ministries balanced within themselves," he says. "We have adult, youth, children and pre-school ministries. And within each of those categories, we have four areas of ministry--Christian training, koinonia, outreach and care ministries."

"I feel that the thing that really sets us apart in relation to programs...that will always vary from church to church...is that we never institute a program without an adequate leadership base to support it," Wolf explains. "If a leader senses he is called to another ministry or leaves our church, then we may very well drop that program if we do not have the leadership to sustain it. It is hoped, however, that the person leaving has done his job and reproduced his ministry in someone else who will take and sustain it."

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Wolf says that if a program proves not to be fostering the objectives of the church--evangelizing the lost and upbuilding the believers--then it is cut "ruthlessly."

Worship services don't fall into traditional categories either. "On Sunday mornings our worship services run from about 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and I preach for 45 to 55 minutes," he explains. "Even after such a lengthy service, our people hang around and talk and share a lot afterwards."

"During my worship services, I preach expositively," Wolf says. "I spent two years on the Gospel of John, and I have been seven years on the Gospel of Matthew. Right now, I am on the last two verses of the book and I anticipate finishing it very shortly--in about three months."

Wolf hasn't preached on Sunday evenings in the last seven years. He says that service is reserved for music and sharing "during which our members take no more than four minutes to share a specific event that has happened in their lives. Before they are finished, they draw out the principle God showed them from it and then connect it with a Bible verse if possible."

Wednesday night services are 50-minute lectures in which Wolf uses an overhead projector and mimeographed materials.

Wolf feels that a part of the success of the Church on Brady lies in its name. He recalls churches in the New Testament were identified either by God or geography. "We thought instead of identifying with the Lord as such, we would identify with our location," he explains, "so we began calling ourselves the church that gathers on Brady." He says the name, in the church's predominantly Catholic neighborhood, is a less offensive point.

The confident Wolf is "extremely optimistic" about the future of his church and its work in the community.

"We anticipate that by 1985 we will have a regular attendance of about 1,800 on Sunday mornings and a budget of \$1 million," he states. "Our main objective is to become the spiritual reference point east of downtown Los Angeles by means of edifying the body and evangelizing the lost. We will become a sending base to the ends of the earth with the good news of Jesus Christ."

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Youth Sentenced
For Church Fires

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WASHINGTON, Ga. (BP)--Roy K. Palmer, 17-year-old Lincoln, Ga., youth has been sentenced to two six-year prison terms for his part in the burning of two churches in Wilkes County in December, 1977.

Palmer pled guilty to the charges and was awarded the terms, to run concurrently. Charges on the burning of two churches in Lincoln County during the same spree with two other juveniles, are pending. The other two boys have been given maximum two year terms which they are now serving at the Augusta Youth and Development Center.

During the court sessions Washington First Baptist Church pastor Albert W. Huyck Jr., and several other pastors pleaded for leniency on Palmer's behalf.

In church conference, Mulberry Baptist Church which had been totally destroyed by the boys, who admitted they had been drinking and smoking marijuana, voted to forgive them and ask the judge for leniency. The white youths denied having any racial motives in the destruction of the predominantly black churches.

Ten Baptist churches have burned in Georgia since July 4, 1977.

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Round One With EEOC
Goes to Southwestern

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has won the first round in its battle with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission over the filing of certain employee information with the agency.

U. S. District Judge Eldon Mahon has denied a request by the EEOC for a summary judgement and ordered a trial date set for the year-old suit. The EEOC is seeking to force the seminary to file EEO Form 6 which provides information on the number of employees and their duties, pay and tenure and to identify employees by race, sex and national origin.

A spokesman for Judge Mahon said the refusal to grant summary judgement did not indicate the EEOC was wrong but meant simply that there were important facts that could be decided only in a trial.

Following the hearing that denied summary judgement, seminary president-elect Russell Dilday said, "Our lawyers consider this a victory which indicates the seminary has legal justification for its position. The court agreed that there are issues that need to be decided by trial."

The EEOC, which has appealed the denial, contends that compliance to its agency's regulations is required because the seminary is an institution of higher learning employing more than 15 persons.

Southwestern Seminary, serving as a test case for the six Southern Baptist seminaries, contends the request is an infringement upon First Amendment guarantees. The seminary states that, as an integrated auxiliary of the church, it is exempt from compliance, as provided in the EEOC act.

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House Recognizes Zuni
Claim to Sacred Site

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Zuni Indian land claims and religious rights received a boost from Congress when the House of Representatives passed a measure which directs the Secretary of the Interior to acquire the Zuni Salt Lake, a sacred site for the tribe, for its use.

The lake, a shrine important to the culture and religion of the Zunis, is on land owned by the state of New Mexico. The tribe failed to file a claim to the land under a 1946 law which required such action by 1951. According to testimony before the Indian Claims Commission, charged with administering the 1946 law, the Zuni tribe was given bad advice by the Bureau of Indian Affairs which was running the tribal government to a large extent at that time.

The approximately 600 acres involved are valued at about \$30,000. Salt is the only known mineral in the area.

Zuni legends and tradition call the lake the Salt Mother. It apparently was formerly on the Zuni reservation but Salt Mother became offended at the lack of attention from the tribe and moved several miles away, according to tradition. Pilgrimages each year to the Salt Lake to propitiate Salt Mother and for sacred ritual still take place.

Salt from the lake was formerly used for trade and in Zuni homes as well as for sacred purposes. The tribe still mines salt from the lake with the permission of the state of New Mexico.

Similar legislation was passed by the Senate a year ago. No conference has been scheduled as yet to work out the differences between the measures passed by the two bodies. The Carter administration opposed the legislation on the grounds that it wanted time to work out a comprehensive approach to such claims rather than dealing with them piecemeal.

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Pogue, Wingo, Estes
Join Personality List

ATLANTA (BP)--A nationally known astronaut, educator and news editor, all Southern Baptists, have joined a growing list of program personalities for the National Conference of Baptist Men June 16 in Atlanta, Ga.

Col. William R. Pogue of Fayetteville, Ark., retired astronaut who spent 80 days in space in Skylab 3, will preside at a breakfast for 200 Baptists in engineering at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Nolan Estes, general superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District, encompassing 175 elementary and secondary schools with a combined enrolment of 135,000, will address 900 Baptists in education in the Grand Ballroom of the Marriott Hotel.

Hal Wingo of Greenwich, Conn., news editor of "People", weekly magazine with a circulation of 1,777,000, will speak to 1,000 Southern Baptists in communications at a breakfast in the Grand Ballroom of the Atlanta Hilton Hotel.

The three vocational breakfasts are among 19 planned in Atlanta hotels at 7 a.m. for the 16,500 Southern Baptists expected at the men's conference. Others are for Baptists in agriculture, arts, business and professional positions, church-related vocations, government, health services, law enforcement, legal professions, management, military, retirement, sales, technical skills, sports, transportation, and young adults in search of a vocation.

Second feature of the conference is a two-hour rally at 9:30 a.m. at the Omni Coliseum with President Jimmy Carter as the invited speaker.

One of the purposes of the breakfasts and rally is to provide Southern Baptists a forum for communicating the values of lay involvement in the Christian movement, Glendon McCullough, executive director of the Brotherhood Commission, conference sponsor, explained.

The breakfasts and rally are open to wives McCullough said.

Persons wanting tickets for either or both activities should write to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar, Memphis, Tenn., 38104, indicating the breakfast desired and enclose a check for \$12.50, McCullough said.

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Unusual Marriage Fete
Frees Woman of Guilt

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ROCKY MOUNT, N.C. (BP)--The couple standing before pastor Gaylord Lehman of Lakeside Baptist Church wanted to be married. Nothing unusual to a man who's been a pastor for 20 years.

But they were from another state and didn't want news of the marriage to appear in the weekly paper where they lived. Their age was another thing--both are nearing 70. It was to be the first marriage ceremony for each--but they'd been living together faithfully as husband and wife for 44 years!

They have no children and not a soul knew they weren't legally married but the woman's conscience began to bother her when she recently filled out Social Security forms that called for "date of marriage." After the ceremony, she shed tears of joy in a moving and emotional experience. The feelings of guilt seemed to be washed away in the tears, the Rocky Mount pastor said.

But he encountered problems with a ceremony for people who have been "married" for 44 years. "You can't ask them to 'enter into their marriage' with patience and understanding," he said. "You cannot really pronounce them husband and wife after they have faithfully fulfilled an inner commitment to each other for 44 years. And you cannot talk to them about the normal pitfalls--sex, money, and in-laws. So I talked about 'reaffirming your commitment' and 'continuing to share life with fidelity' and 'pledging yourselves anew' to the values held sacred for 44 years."

"The ministry is an unpredictable business. There's always something unusual about to happen," the pastor concluded.

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