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More Language Helps Needed, Lewis Tells State SE Reps

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Calls for renewed efforts to equip bi-vocational and language pastors in ministry highlighted the annual workshop of state Seminary Extension representatives in Nashville.

"All men have a right to hear of the love of God in the language of their soul," James Lewis told staff members from 15 state Baptist conventions. Lewis, assistant director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of language missions, urged the development of additional printed materials and training opportunities for ethnic church leaders.

"Seminary Extension was the first SBC agency to respond to the needs of language pastors," Lewis said. "We appreciate what we have, but much more is needed--and on a more advanced level."

A department of the six Southern Baptist seminaries, Seminary Extension had made nine of its basic courses available in Spanish. Two other courses are being translated.

Significantly, one of the workshop participants was Manuel Alonso, of New York, the first ethnic leader to be designated as a state Seminary Extension representative. Each of the representatives holds a major staff assignment in his state in addition to helping promote study through Seminary Extension. The department's more than 50 theologically oriented courses are designed especially for persons who have never attended seminary.

Ethnic and bi-vocational ministers will continue to receive promotional emphasis from the department through 1979-80.

J. T. Burdine, stressing the needs of bi-vocational pastors, pointed out that the nation's economy is having an impact on the ministry. Eroding financial support, he said, is prompting more and more pastors to consider a bi-vocational role. Burdine is a consultant in the Home Mission Board's rural-urban missions department.

Seminary Extension staff member Bob Johnson reported that 333 extension centers already have been registered during 1978-79. That almost equals last year's record total of 340 centers, with more than a third of this reporting year remaining.

Participants in the workshop nominated individuals for the first national award for Seminary Extension center directors. Recipient of the 1979 recognition will be announced and the award presented at the SBC annual meeting in Houston this June.

Lee Porter, adult consultant at the Baptist Sunday School Board, closed the workshop by sharing from his continuous experience with Seminary Extension students since 1964. Porter has served as a teacher and director of a Seminary Extension center and as an instructor for its Home Study Institute.

While acknowledging the significant growth of Seminary Extension in recent years, Porter added, "For every one we are reaching, there may be 100 we are not reaching--pastors, staff members, and lay leaders who want to learn and develop in their ministry."

Church Fees Practical Commission Maintains

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Nothing is more practical than to charge the churches using "Together We Build" for the costs incurred by the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission to administer the program, according to commission findings.

The findings were made public at the commission's annual meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, where commission members also approved a \$1,526,447 budget for 1979-80 and elected David C. (Bill) Bates chairman. Bates, a layman from Pineville, La., was previously vice chairman.

Projected Cooperative Program income for the commission's new budget is \$292,250, or 19.3 percent of the total. The remainder comes from the sale of materials for budget development and through fees charged to churches and institutions for major fund raising projects.

A motion to review those charges was passed at the 1978 Southern Baptist Convention sessions in Atlanta. The motion, submitted by Indialantic, Fla., pastor John Green, requested the Stewardship Commission "to consider developing an alternate method of financing the 'Together We Build' program so that this new program may be available to all cooperating churches without extraordinary fees above basic costs."

"Together We Build" is a fund raising technique, generally used for building, that secures money and pledges before a project is begun, thereby saving interest charges. The Stewardship Commission used the program to raise over \$30 million in the past year and over \$100 million since the program began in 1969.

Green contends that services of the Stewardship Commission and other SBC agencies should be without cost to cooperating Southern Baptist Churches.

The SBC Executive Committee issued a statement at its February meeting, which will recommend for adoption at the 1979 annual meeting in Houston, that interprets current practices concerning charges for services rendered by SBC agencies.

The statement says that there have been some exceptions to the general rule of support of agencies through Cooperative Program funds, designated gifts, income from endowment or trust and through compensation for goods and services.

Those exceptions have been guided by principles, which according to the statement, allow agencies receiving Cooperative Program funds to "charge the church for the recovery of reasonable costs," when the agency provides "service or materials for fund-raising for the individual church."

The Stewardship Commission, which gave "careful study" to the motion for alternate financing, employs 10 consultants who work exclusively with "Together We Build."

Its response to the convention in Houston will say its charges to churches are on a cost recovery basis; the cost for fund raising with "Together We Build" is less than with other fund raising approaches; and the fund raising consultants in "Together We Build" have a responsibility to all the programs of the churches."

"Therefore we report that there is not a more practical funding source available," the report concludes.



March 20, 1979

Handicapped Girl Touches
Family and Finds a Home

By Judy Touchton

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--For most of her short life, seven-year-old Jennifer (not her real name) has been alone--at least legally.

Her parents, according to law, are Sellers Baptist Home and Adoption Center, a Southern-Baptist-owned and operated ministry to unwed mothers and couples seeking adoptive children.

She spent her first 18 months of life in a nursery for handicapped children after she was born to a young woman at Sellers. But unlike most of the children at Sellers, she was never placed for adoption. She had little if any future; no hope for a "normal" childhood; by some predictions, no hope for life at all.

A rare disease, akin to Mongoloidism, struck Jennifer with all-out fury, causing near blindness, deafness, curvature of the spine, deformities, facial disfigurement, retardation.

Though constantly threatened with institutionalization, she had physical care, necessities. But not the love of a family. And though it saddened all who heard of Jennifer, no one expected much change.

But now, through what could be termed a modern miracle of fate, circumstance and answered prayer, Jennifer has a family.

When Jennifer was about 18 months old, a young woman searching for direction to her life, and her mother, went one day to a nursery for handicapped children, just to help out.

"We were told most of the children in the handicapped part of the center were waiting placement in an institution--or waiting to die," said the daughter. "All had family except one--Jennifer.

"She was lying in the bed, totally unaware of events, with a deadpan smile the first time I saw her. The nurse said she was like a newborn baby; she didn't even crawl.

"After I fed her and put her back in the bed, she pulled up by the side of the crib, laid her head over on me and smiled. That smile melted me. You could see what love could do...even for a short time."

Daughter and mother started home, finished with their day of volunteering. After about two blocks, they stopped on the side of the road and cried.

The daughter wanted to bring Jennifer home for a weekend. "Mother insisted they were not going to let a single, 18-year-old girl bring a child home. But in my persistence, my youthfulness, my ignorance, I just knew the Lord had a hand in it.

"Jennifer was meant to come to this house...to be part of this family. There were just too many coincidences," the daughter, now married, said.

Jennifer is not pretty. She has a protruding forehead, her head is oversized. Her arms and legs are frail, too weak to support her body. She stands, with help, about knee-high to adults. Her head sometimes bobbles side to side. Yet Jennifer is beautiful, a tiny person forced into a misshapen body.

She sits in her little rocker in the family room, in her red jumper with her hair pinned back with matching red barettes, as much a part of the warm Christian family as the three natural children; two adult daughters and a teen-age son.

But she was not always so accepted. When mother and daughter first brought Jennifer home, the father was unmoved. "I wasn't going to get hooked up with any little girl. I didn't want to get attached," said the father. "But I did."

By the second time the family took Jennifer back to the nursery, "It was like leaving a member of our flesh and blood."

They began talking of adoption, but a doctor discouraged them. "He painted the blackest picture he could...almost chastized us for even considering adoption," Daddy says.

But another doctor only asked: "Do you love her now? Is she repulsive to you now? Terrible things could happen, but if you love her..."

Five years ago, May 1974, the family brought her home...as a foster child. In those five years, each family member found Jennifer filled a need, strengthened their faith.

But why adoption? Why legally bind themselves?

"I want her to have my name," the father sighs, tears welling in both eyes. "It's just that little difference that keeps her from being ours completely."

Besides, Jennifer's family has a dream, a vision of sorts, that she will be healed.

"They don't have any doubt," says Mary Dan Kuhnle, director of Sellers. She and others on Sellers' staff rejoice at the probable adoption of Jennifer--marking success in real human lives and symbolizing the value of their ministry.

Jennifer's father, officially around May 1979, explains, "Our first prayer was for the Lord to let her know we love her. And he has. He has blessed and allowed her to see, walk (until a fall) and function close to a normal child.

"Her special needs make her a special person. But her special needs are no more than many people have...her needs are just visible. Besides, God will heal those handicaps one day.

"Should the Lord see fit to take Jennifer tomorrow, it would not dampen our faith... because we know the healing has taken place already--in her spirit."

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Determination Helps Overcome Accident

CONCORD, N.C. (BP)--Eva Whittington is trying to be an example of what people can do if they don't give up.

A year ago, Miss Whittington, 18, was in an automobile accident that left her paralyzed from the hips down. Today she is a full-time student at Gardner-Webb College in Boiling Springs, N.C.

On weekends, she returns to her hometown of Concord and coaches basketball for a team of girls, ages nine to 12. She works 12 hours a week in the Gardner-Webb library and plans to continue her employment at a discount store when school recesses.

And she's determined to walk again by summer with the help of leg braces and crutches.

Before her accident, Miss Whittington was a cheerleader at Central Cabarrus High School, in the choir, on student council, vice president of the senior class, a schoolbus driver, on the basketball team, in national honor society and coach of a girl's basketball team. She taught a cheerleading class and worked part-time at a department store.

"The doctors at rehab thought I hadn't accepted my accident because I was such a happy person," she says. "But I have accepted it. God made me feel that I have a purpose."

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