



# BAPTIST PRESS

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March 22, 1979

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Congregational Worship:

Week's 'Deadest Hour'

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Sunday morning worship service unfortunately is often the "deadest hour of the week," a Baptist pastor declared at a Southern Baptist Sunday School Board seminar.

Ways to recapture the interest and dedication of church members during worship services may be as varied as the 35,404 Southern Baptist churches, more than 100 pastors and ministers of music learned at the week-long seminar on enriching congregational worship. Numerous speakers covered a broad spectrum of information relating to the needs of worship in Baptist churches during the week.

"The charge has been made that 11 a.m. Sunday is the deadest hour of the week for most people," said David Matthews, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, S. C. "A lot of people get up ritually, half conscious, and sit half passively...doing the same things week after week."

He said people keep coming back because of their search for meaning and their search for pleasure, and worship unconsciously becomes an attempt to please.

"As Southern Baptist worship leaders, we must begin to rescue worship from show business," Matthews said.

The primary business of the church is worship, Matthews continued, not evangelism, witnessing or missions. "Until the church has worshipped, gotten in touch with God, the church has nothing to witness to," he said.

"If worship is to live again," Matthews explained, "we have to change the concept of worship first. Changes in form and style will follow."

Robert J. Norman, pastor of Belmont Heights Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., said churches need to encourage spontaneous involvement of members, be flexible on special days of worship and strive for informality with dignity.

"The staff of a church needs to be in charge of the worship experience without the congregation feeling manipulated," Norman told the group. "Let members use their spiritual gifts and talents in the services."

"Worship is the most significant thing man does, more important than eating and sleeping," added Gene Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City. "As worship leaders, we must strive for balance between the aesthetic and the practical.

"We must be sure there's no gap between what we say in worship and what we practice," Garrison said, "and be certain of a theological basis for worship."

James Barry, pastoral guidance consultant in the church administration department at the Sunday School Board and an organizer of the seminar, said, "Pastors have not given the time and thought to congregational worship that they should. They have allowed it to happen.

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"We hope pastors will take a more active part in planning worship, and develop more openness to new ideas," Barry said. "We hope they will be open to new variations of worship in a responsible way to meet the needs of congregational members. A big challenge will be how to blend the traditional with the contemporary."

Two of the four morning sessions were led by pastor-minister of music teams addressing the problem of staff relationships in churches. Garrison was assisted one day by James Van Hemert, minister of music at First Church, Oklahoma City. Frank Marshall, minister of music at Belmont Heights, Nashville, was on the program with Norman.

"It's unreal to think staff members will see everything alike," Garrison told the pastors and ministers of music. "Agreement is not required for acceptance. There are points where we are allowed to differ and still affirm one another."

During the course of the staff relationship discussions, topics considered were personal-social life between staff members, responsibilities, criticism and communications skills.

Numerous other topics related to worship--such as drama, children's worship, worship in funerals, weddings and special days, choral technique, and use of non-keyboard instruments during worship services--were covered in the seminar, sponsored by the board's church administration and church music departments. The seminar opened with a worship session at First Baptist Church, Nashville, which featured several creative techniques for worship.

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Brazilians Remain in State of  
Caution, Concern, Uncertainty

By John J. Hurt

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BELO HORIZONTE, Brazil (BP)--Flood waters that have played havoc with a fourth of Brazil have its citizens watching rain clouds now with the same concern Texans and Oklahomans have for tornadoes.

Some rivers are receding; others are rising as water pours down from the mountains. But in all areas, the ground is soaked, and more rain means more houses collapse, more highways disappear, more uncertainty is added to the time for normal living.

Southern Baptist missionaries and Brazilian Baptists have turned from their assignments in church ministry to ministry toward the refugees of the severe flooding.

Fred L. Hawkins Jr., Southern Baptist missionary to Brazil acting as flood relief coordinator for South Brazil, said Southern Baptist funds channeled through the Foreign Mission Board have "helped to lift the morale of the pastors and people who are suffering." He added, "Many were in a state of shock and had no idea what they were facing."

Hawkins, who earlier reported the need of \$300,000 for hunger and disaster relief, now describes total needs as "more and more staggering." But he sees the aid as "vital" to getting churches and people back to a near state of normalcy.

Inadequate relief funds require spreading money thinly among the suffering, but expressions of appreciation abound. The Foreign Mission Board, stretching all available funds, has provided \$285,000 for work, coordinated with Brazilian state convention secretaries and local pastors, to help Baptist families.

"Churches and church members are embracing one another," said Jose Bittencourt, executive secretary of the Baptist convention in Minas Gerais, a state larger than Texas and one of the hardest hit. He said relief funds had gone only to "the most critical needs."

Typical of the inadequacy of funds is the case of Bittencourt's own son-in-law, Oliveira de Araujo, pastor of First Baptist Church in Manhuacu, a city where about half its corporate limits was under water for more than a week. It wasn't until Bittencourt took a reporter

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there that he learned his son-in-law hadn't received any salary since January, and there's no indication when he will get a payment. But Araujo mentioned this only to his father-in-law. He told visitors about the \$3,000 in relief funds which "helped because our people knew other people cared about them."

Flood waters caused destruction or condemnation of about 325 homes in his city. Scores live with more fortunate relatives. Fifteen families live in a former store within a block of the pastorium. The pastor has taken in two girls, whose parents are with relatives. An estimated 6,100 of Manhuacu's 40,000 residents have become refugees.

Typical, too, are situations in which people without work cannot maintain church contributions. Lack of funds in church treasuries spells trouble for state conventions. Bittencourt declined to estimate what the floods would do to convention programs, but some observers forecast drastic cuts in pastoral aid.

Communication with churches and mission points is being resumed in most of the flood areas, but reports are incomplete. In the state of Minas Gerais, according to some reports, 307 cities received some damage and 51 were isolated for days. In the state capital, Belo Horizonte, water rose to six and eight feet in the business district and traffic now zig-zags trying vainly to avoid potholes. Some 200,000 were homeless at one time in Minas Gerais. Refugee camps still dot some hillsides and will for many weeks. The state reports 12,451 houses destroyed and 14,968 damaged.

The Brazilian-operated orphanage at Itacaja, where 65 children were evacuated, reported it was back in operation, but water damage was estimated at \$13,000. Benjamin Cardoso Reis, orphanage director, said soaring food costs added to his problems. He jumped from a food-loaded canoe to keep it from capsizing in a raging river as he carried the first supplies to the orphanage grounds. Food costs can be judged by the fact that the canoe held \$2,000 in supplies.

Brazilian Baptists, historically among the most progressive in caring for their own needs, are helping their own people as best they can. Churches that escaped major damage have sent van loads of food and clothing to affected areas. This country's Baptists, working toward total support of their pastors by their 1982 centennial celebration, still insist they will make it despite current problems.

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John J. Hurt, editor emeritus of Texas' Baptist Standard, is on special assignment in Brazil to report on flood damages and relief efforts.

Oldest Alaskan  
Dies in Fairbanks

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FAIRBANKS, Alaska (BP)--"Grandma" Minnie Tucker, who was about 107 when she was baptized, died March 6 at about the age of 120.

Mrs. Tucker, believed to be Alaska's oldest resident, was born at Rocky Point, an Eskimo community on the Seward Peninsula east of Nome. When she obtained her Social Security card, she listed her birthdate as Aug. 12, 1866, which would have made her 113 at her death.

But her daughter, Edna Wilder of Fairbanks, who says no accurate records of her mother's birth exist, believes she was about seven years older than that.

Mrs. Tucker, who married Arthur S. Tucker of Bluff, Alaska, in 1910 and was widowed in 1942, made a public profession of faith under the ministry of John and Lillian Isaacs at about the age of 100 at Friendship Baptist Mission in Fairbanks. She was baptized seven years later.

Mrs. Wilder says her mother remembered hearing as a child that the United States had purchased Alaska from Russia, but that she did not see a white man until she was about 10.

"She was scared of him," Mrs. Wilder said.

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Curiosity Begins Ministry  
For Retarded at Center

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--Yvonne Deville wondered if anyone was ministering to residents of the Pecan Grove Training Center as she passed it each day.

She inquired about two years ago and the result is a weekly program at the rural Riverview Baptist Church for the 120 mentally retarded residents of the center.

Lindsey Burns, pastor of Riverview, said 15 to 20 residents come to the church one day a week. "At first they were withdrawn. Now they participate in the activities with interest," he said.

A bus from the center arrives about 9 a.m. but a "line starts forming in the hall at the center about an hour before that," workers said.

Burns said the church's primary approach is to show God's love by being interested in them and by telling Bible stories and leading action-songs where they can participate.

"Sometimes a group may be quiet or some may talk. Some say words of a prayer as we pray," Burns said. "We try to teach them on their level of understanding that God loves them."

The church, with a Sunday School enrollment of 135, budgets about \$300 per year for gifts and supplies to support the ministry. Many of the members donate items for gifts and prizes.

In addition to the Wednesday program, the church sponsors a monthly birthday party for all residents at the center and an annual Christmas party.

Joyce Turner, Pecan Grove director of training, said of the program at the church: "They are so loved there. The real learning is that the church cares, that the church is a good place to go."

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Parents Build Abode  
In Memory of Son

AMITE, La. (BP)--Mr. and Mrs. Frank Lea built a new parsonage for the Mt. Nebo Baptist Church in memory of their son because "Chuck was a happy person helping others."

An insurance settlement following their 18-year-old son's accidental automobile death provided the funds. Chuck Lea, a supervisor trainee for an oyster processing company in Amite, was killed instantly last summer a month before his 19th birthday when a car out of control hit the car in which he was a passenger.

Lea said the old parsonage was run down and he and his wife felt the money could best be used to serve people so they built the pastor's home in their son's memory.

Pastor Eddie Kirkland, in his first pastorate since graduating from New Orleans Baptist Seminary, and his wife, are the first occupants of the new parsonage.

During dedication comments on the patio on a sunny but chilly afternoon Kirkland said "Chuck gave of himself as he lived. The house is established as an abode for ministers. In a real sense Chuck gave the house."

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