



BAPTIST PRESS

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79-57

Secrecy Self Defeating Religious Communicators Told

NEW YORK (BP)--The idea that the business of churches and religious institutions can be done in secret is "imprudent and downright impossible to carry out," three of the nation's best known religion editors told the 50th annual convention of the Religious Public Relations Council.

"The more interesting a story is, the more likely it is to come out," Marjorie Hyer of the Washington Post said. "Secrecy in the church is a problem for the church, not for the press."

She said reporters will find out the details of a story when they have the desire to do so. "What churches need to realize is that when a story breaks, that news and the way it is released reflects on the institution involved."

Richard Ostling of Time magazine said more secrecy is associated with churches and religious institutions than most realize. "However, the situation is better than it was a few years ago," he said.

The improvement can be traced to the move toward openness by the Roman Catholic Church, Ostling said, noting that a tendency still exists among many "mainstream Protestants to be defensive about the information they release."

Ostling pointed out two ways to approach the question of openness as it relates to churches: "One is that it is smart to be open and, secondly, it is right, God's will and justifiable for the people to know what is going on."

Kenneth A. Briggs of the New York Times expressed concern about increased use of the words "secrecy" and "privacy" by some religious bodies as they relate to the release of information.

He said the cloak of secrecy is often raised because of the attitude of self-preservation held by many churches; more competition among the so-called "growth churches" for dollars and members; and the heightening of the wall between the "world" and the religious community.

Briggs expressed reluctance to name the organizations he had in mind because "behavior in those organizations is not always consistent." However, he did say it is "hard to get close to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and the Unification Church."

He urged the public relations persons to develop a "working relationship" with members of the press. "It is perfectly possible in most cases to talk to reporters about what can and cannot be said about a certain issue."

Warren Day, of the National Council of Churches in New York, who moderated the discussion, said talking about openness is not enough to get the job done.

"We often become so concerned with a short-term problem that we compromise on a long-term principle," he declared. "Too seldom are we willing to stand as the keeper of the watch."

"To make sure that the leaders of our churches and organizations are never comfortable in making decisions in windowless rooms is our mission," said Day.

RPRC Elects Officers, Urges
Broadcast Bill Action

NEW YORK (BP)--The Religious Public Relations Council elected a United Methodist and a Southern Baptist to its two top offices and passed a resolution urging Congress to revise or kill legislation which would deregulate radio and television broadcasting with little regard for the "public interest."

In other developments, Southern Baptists captured the most awards during the DeRose/Hinkhouse Memorial Awards competition of the national, interfaith organization, with nine out of 39 given. United Methodists, Roman Catholics and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) collected eight, six and five respectively among top award winners.

Sue Couch, director of communications services, United Methodist Communications, Nashville, Tenn., was elected national president, and Thomas J. Brannon, public relations director for the South Carolina Baptist Convention, Columbia, S. C., vice president.

The resolution dealt specifically with measures in the House and the Senate which would deregulate radio and television and make their response to the public interest contingent only on "market place forces."

RPRC urged that the House of Representatives either revise the Communications Act of 1979 (H.R. 3333) to insure that it retains the public interest requirements of the Communications Act of 1934, or, failing to do that, to kill it. It urged outright defeat of the Telecommunications Competition and Deregulation Act of 1979 (S.622), a measure which would guarantee outright license renewal of television stations.

Southern Baptist awards presented in the New York meeting went to Donald S. Whitehouse, Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville (a "Best in Class" award and a category first place Award of Excellence for public relations campaign); Catherine Allen, Woman's Missionary Union, Birmingham, Ala. (first in folder category); Mark Sandlin, Baptist Sunday School Board (first in photography); W. C. Woody, Radio and Television Commission, Fort Worth, Texas (first in radio spots); Norman Jameson, Baptist Press, Executive Committee, Nashville (first in feature writing); Robert O'Brien, Baptist Press, Executive Committee, Nashville (second in news writing); Tom Brannon, South Carolina Baptist Convention, Columbia (second in public relations campaign); and Frank Olsen, Radio and Television Commission (second in television spots).

Besides Whitehouse, "Best in Class" awards, accompanied by a plaque and a \$100 prize, went to James L. Merrell, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), St. Louis, writing class; Robert Friedly, Robert Schafer and Thomas P. Inabinett, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, Ind.; audio-visual class; William R. Richards, United Methodist Communications, Nashville, broadcast class; and Dewitt S. Williams, General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, Washington, print class.

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RPRC Cites
Secular Media

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NEW YORK (BP)--A national news magazine, four newspapers, two radio stations and a television station were honored during the 50th anniversary of the Religious Public Relations Council, a national, interfaith organization of religious communicators.

Eight media representatives were also named "Fellows" of the RPRC during the organization's annual Merit Awards competition, which recognizes excellence in the reporting of religion.

Merit Awards and the honor of "Fellow" went to the following media and media representatives respectively: Newsweek magazine and senior editor Russell Watson; Hamilton Spectator, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and religion editor Charles Wilkinson, the only individual ever to be named a "Fellow" three times; Cleveland (Ohio) Press and religion editor George Plagenz; Denver Post and religion editor Virginia Culver; The Columbian, Vancouver, Wash., and photo editor Steve Small; KCBS Radio, San Francisco, and CBS radio network and George McManus; WHWH Radio, Princeton, N.J., and Jesse Owens; and WFAA-TV, Dallas, Texas, and public service director Helen Jane Wamboldt.

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Arabic Broadcasting Gets
Record Response, Expands

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--The Arabic Project, a Southern Baptist plan to reach the entire Arab world with Christian radio broadcasts, had a record 200 responses in one month recently and plans to expand programming.

William T. (Pete) Dunn, Southern Baptist missionary director, said the ministry received 200 letters from 13 different nations in one month--more than ever before in the same period of time.

"The numbers may not be large, but in these hot and dry lands it is like a breath of fresh air on a cool morning," Dunn said.

Dunn also announced the ministry's plans to expand into another language, Berber. Berber is the language of more than 15 million people living in Morocco, Algeria and parts of Tunisia. The Arabic Project is already receiving some response from these countries.

The Berber people live in villages or as nomads in the Sahara Desert region of north Africa. A Berber Christian graduate of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut wrote the series of programs and will voice them from Trans World Radio's 1.2 million-watt station in Monte Carlo, Monaco.

The Berber programs are part of a total project designed to cover "every Arabic-speaking country with the good news of God's love for all mankind," Dunn said.

One of the goals of the project is to bring together interested Arabs for Bible study and worship. In 1978, seven such groups in three countries were established with more than 100 young men meeting together weekly. An evangelist from the Baptist center in Beirut recently revisited a group of 22 young men who have been meeting for almost a year in a neighboring country. He found them studying the scriptures and meeting together twice a week for prayer.

The group's leader told of its visitation program, in which nine teams of two men go into surrounding villages while the remainder stay at someone's home to pray for them.

Occasional visits from the evangelist, their Bibles and the radio programs are usually the only resources these small groups have for establishing their congregations. Some material is sent in response to requests initiated through the broadcasts, but no missionary work is allowed in many Muslim countries.

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Accident Claims Life
Of Seminary Professor

Baptist Press
4/9/79

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Ellis W. Hollon, professor of philosophy of religion at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, died on Sunday, April 8, following an automobile accident on April 6 near the Southeastern campus in Wake Forest, N.C.

Hollon, 46, had been on the faculty at Southeastern since 1967. He was a native of Little Rock, Ark., and held degrees from Ouachita Baptist University, Southeastern Seminary, Duke University, and Emory University.

He formerly served on the faculties of Middle Tennessee State University, Mobile College, and Georgia State College. He was pastor of several Baptist churches in Arkansas in the 1950s.

Hollon is survived by his wife, Gurtha DePriest, and one daughter, Faye, 15.

Funeral services were scheduled for April 10 in the chapel on the Southeastern campus.

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Warren Rust
Dies in Arizona

ATLANTA (BP)--E. Warren Rust, national consultant for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board metropolitan missions department, died April 5, in Phoenix, Ariz., following lengthy bouts with respiratory disease ending with heart failure.

Rust, 63, had recently become a consultant after serving nearly eight years as a staffer in the metro missions department, first as department director, then as associate director because health problems required his relocation to Arizona.

Rust served previously as pastor of several churches in Missouri, Tennessee and Kentucky.

He formerly was president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, on the board of trustees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, on the board of trustees for Carson-Newman College, on the executive board of the Missouri Baptist Convention, president of the Missouri Baptist Pastor's Conference, and chairman of the board of trustees of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

Other denominational activities included serving as a member of the Southern Baptist Convention committee which in 1962-63 drafted the "Baptist Faith and Message" statement later adopted by the convention.

Rust, a Kentucky native, was a graduate of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., and held a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary. He had also completed residence study on the doctor of theology degree at Southern.

A memorial service was held at Tempe Mortuary in Tempe, Ariz., on April 6 and graveside services in his hometown of Covington, Ky., on April 9.

Family members, including his wife Anna Lee Morris, and a married daughter, have requested memorial gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, rather than flowers.

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W. A. Duncan Dies
At 87 Years of Age

Baptist Press
4/9/79

ATLANTA (BP)--W. A. Duncan, a past president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and long-time Baptist denominational leader, died at the Baptist Village Retirement Home, Waycross, Ga., at age 87.

In 1973, the board honored him for his long leadership in its ministry. Duncan also served on the Southern Baptist Foundation and held numerous other posts. He retired in 1957 after 30 years as pastor of First Baptist Church, East Point, Ga. He was buried in Atlanta after funeral services at First Baptist Church in East Point.

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