



-- FEATURES
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81-35

Paraplegic Ministers
From Wheelchair

By Barbara Little

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)—Lewis Barton ministers uniquely to handicapped persons—
from his wheelchair.

Barton is a paraplegic. An eight-foot fall in 1977 resulted in permanent paralysis and wheelchair confinement.

As chairman of the handicapped ministry committee of the Kansas City Metro Mission Board, he has instantaneous empathy with others coping with disabilities, including the mentally retarded, orthopedically handicapped and blind.

"From the viewpoint of someone with an ongoing crisis experience, I always bear in mind when I see others with handicaps, 'But for the grace of God, there go I.' This gives me a different perspective on self-pity," he explains.

Barton believes Southern Baptists can do more to assist the disabled. Noting that 1981 has been designated the "International Year of Disabled Persons," he says he realized that "as Baptists, we are lagging behind many denominations in our working with handicapped persons." He says a minimal amount of materials, literature and methodology is geared specially to the handicapped.

Barton was a bivocational pastor in Atchison, Kan., at the time of his accident. Following his recuperation he enrolled as a master of divinity student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Each day he commutes 45 minutes to Midwestern from his home in Atchison, driving himself in a specially-equipped automobile. Maneuvering to classes, chapel and the library is a time-consuming and often frustrating experience.

"What to you is an act, to me is a process," he explained.

While some handicapped persons resent being helped, Barton says he does not. "I am in a helping ministry and have learned that it is necessary to let others be helpful to me."

There is no trace of bitterness in Barton. His secret for handling the disability, surprisingly, was found in a book he read before the accident. "The theme of the book was 'why not me,' instead of 'why me, Lord?' I guess it comes from my New England background, but I am a realist. I don't think anyone in the world is exempt from any experience."

The key to coping, he adds, "is presence in the Lord."

Barton is an encourager. But he also works to make people aware of the struggles, prejudices and ignorance that surrounds the disabled. "The goal of the handicapped person is to be included to the maximum," Barton concludes. "Exclusion is the major handicap, not the handicap itself."

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**Plans Underway For
LA Inerrancy Rally**

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Plans are underway for a rally for biblical inerrancy in Los Angeles just prior to the 1981 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"We are trying to get Judge (Paul) Pressler and Paige Patterson out here before the convention," said R.L. Hymers, who headed an ad hoc committee which conducted the Second Annual Rally For the Bible in Los Angeles Feb. 21.

Hymers' group, called the Committee to Promote Faith in the Bible, said the purpose of the February meeting and the reason another is planned for June is "to make people aware of the liberalism in the seminaries and what is being taught in them."

Hymers was one of the speakers in the February meeting, which also featured an address by Harold Lindsell, editor-emeritus of Christianity Today magazine and former president of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, a conservative group dedicated to exposing "liberalism" in Southern Baptist schools and institutions.

Other Southern Baptists participating in the meeting, which drew about 1,600 participants, were Gwin Turner, pastor of Baptist Temple in Los Angeles, the master of ceremonies; William A. Powell Sr. of Buchanan, Ga., executive vice president of the BFMF and editor of its publication, Southern Baptist Journal; S.G. Posey, executive secretary-emeritus of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California; B.P. Maddox, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Hollywood, Calif., and Murphy Lum and Greg Owyang, ministers at First Chinese Baptist Church of Los Angeles.

Videotaped interviews also were played for participants. Featured were Bailey Smith, president of the SBC; W.A. Criswell of Dallas, former president of the denomination; Swiss theologian Francis Schaeffer and the late John R. Rice of Murfreesboro, Tenn.

"The entire program was focused on the question of inerrancy in the Southern Baptist Convention," Hymers said.

Hymers did not give an exact time for the June meeting, but Powell said the rally is planned for Saturday night and Sunday morning before the SBC, which is scheduled June 9-11.

Churches Shift Emphasis
Toward Helping Families

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--After two decades of competition, churches are shifting their emphases toward becoming a strong positive influence on families, the director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission says.

"In the last two decades most churches have primarily competed with families rather than supporting them," J. Clark Hensley told state family ministry consultants in a Sunday School Board seminar. "But now we see a glimmer of hope that church leaders are redirecting energies to strengthening the first institution God established."

Hensley cited church-sponsored family and marriage enrichment conferences, parenting workshops and other programs "that contribute to family togetherness rather than family segmentation."

To aid families in coping with economic and societal change, Hensley called on Christian families to "model the kind of family life that can become the leaven to help us face the shockwaves of the future."

In an address on the Bible, divorce and remarriage, Hensley said, "The divine norm for marriage is a monogamous relationship for life."

However, he emphasized that "imperfect people enter into marriage covenants and sometimes fail. There are many reasons for such failure and it is not according to God's purpose. Therefore, such failure misses the mark, falls short of the glory of God and is sin. But it is not unpardonable sin. Like other sin it can be forgiven."

On the question of remarriage, Hensley said, "We are not facing a legalistic social problem but a sin-failure-forgiveness problem."

"All sin can be forgiven. Now if God cleanses the record, removes totally and forgets completely, who am I to say that the person is not free to establish a new relationship if, as Christians, they feel so led?" asked Hensley.

He said the questions of divorce and remarriage demand careful thought and study of the Bible by every Christian. He said when persons experience divorce among family members, "they begin to think about what they really believe and what the Bible says."

To lead his church to strengthen families, Hensley said, a pastor should see his role as mediator of the "grace of God in such a way as to be effective in the life of his own family and in the life of the church."

Specifically, he said pastors should model good family life, understand and preach biblical principles that apply to families, counsel family members, plan with church leaders to strengthen families and help members understand "the church exists for families and not families for the church."

The degree to which churches strengthen families will have a direct bearing on how effective evangelism will be in the '80s, Hensley said. "The spiritual temperature of our churches is controlled by thermostats in the homes of our members."

He predicted evangelism that will bring positive results in the '80s will be cultivative evangelism—"People doing their Christian witnessing through their own neighborhood and at their jobs."

Courts Will Not Reinstate
N.C. 'Motorists' Prayer'

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has unanimously rejected an appeal to a lower court decision which struck down North Carolina's motorists' prayer.

By refusing to hear the North Carolina case, the high court let stand a decision by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals which ruled that a printed prayer which had appeared on official state-produced maps for more than 10 years violated the First Amendment's prohibition against an establishment of religion.

The prayer, challenged by a North Carolina citizens' group, invoked God's blessings and protection against the "perils of travel."

In another case, the justices held that no substantial constitutional question was at stake in a conflict between a Maryland woman who refused to present medical proof that her two sons had been immunized against measles and the Montgomery County Board of Education policy requiring all students to be innoculated.

Barbara J. Syska, a native of Poland who lived through Nazi and communist occupations of her homeland, argued that she had a "deep moral conviction" amounting to a religious belief against medical screening and examination. The woman's religious affiliation was not mentioned in briefs filed with the court.

By declining the case, the high court left undisturbed the long-standing legal principle that consideration of health and public safety generally takes precedence over most objections based on religious grounds.

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Sunday School Board Appoints
Telecommunications Consultant

Baptist Press
3/3/81

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--In a move to implement a denominational telecommunications system, a consultant and a special staff study team have been appointed at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Board president Grady C. Cothen named Dan K. Phillips, 37, of Birmingham, Ala., as the consultant, and appointed a Teleteam of five staffers to serve with Phillips to study programming, production and financing of such a system.

Phillips will join the telecommunications staff March 16. He has done consultative work with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and with a Birmingham, Ala., group which is building a low-power telecommunications transmitting and receiving facility.

Currently employed as a design engineer with Southern Company Services of Birmingham, Phillips will provide expertise on telecommunications technology and will serve on the Teleteam.

Other members of the Teleteam are Richard Kay, chairman and director of the office of planning; Jimmy Edwards, vice president for publishing; Morton Rose, vice president for church programs and services; DeVaughn Woods, vice president for finance; and Lloyd Householder, director of communications.

Kay, who will direct initial work on the telecommunications system, said Phillips "is knowledgeable of the fast-moving telecommunications industry and has experience in the

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development of an uplink station with broadcast capabilities."

Phillips holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, and the master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He has completed advanced studies in reliability engineering from UCLA and Rutgers University.

Phillips has been pastor of churches in Volga, Ind., and Jacksonville and Talladega, Ala.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

Baptist Net
Catches Hams

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
3/3/81

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--A group of Baptist laymen and ministers are hamming it up in Oklahoma, but the ministry they have in mind is no laughing matter.

The "hams" are amateur radio operators scattered throughout the Sooner state who, under the guidance of state Brotherhood Director Laddie R. Adams, have organized a radio communication network which could be utilized during a natural disaster as a part of Oklahoma Baptists' disaster relief ministry.

Every Sunday at 2 p.m. members of the new Baptist Net get together via ham radio. "After a formal check-in, we talk about how we would conduct the net in the event of an emergency so we will be prepared if and when a disaster strikes," explains Cal Hunter, pastor of First Baptist Church, Mooreland, president of the Baptist Net, and a 28-year ham veteran.

Members of the net, Hunter says, would facilitate communication between the disaster relief unit which would be on the scene of the disaster and Baptist headquarters in Oklahoma City. During a natural disaster, commercial communication is often disrupted, and ham radio becomes the best means of communication.

In addition to relaying requests for volunteers and supplies, the Baptist Net could provide needed information about weather conditions, movement of the storm, and through telephone patching equipment could help get word to relatives of persons in the disaster area.

"One of the best things that has developed with the net is a regular period of witness and fellowship," Hunter explains. "We pray together at the beginning and the closing, and usually a pastor or layman brings a brief devotional. And we know we're being monitored by hundreds of hams, so it's a witness for the Lord at the same time."

"It's been meaningful to me just to get to know these men in other parts of the state," adds Muskogee layman Loren Carlburg. "We share prayer requests every week, and it's exciting to see God answer those prayers, even though you may have never personally met the person you're praying for."

Adams says the Baptist Net has had a positive effect on Baptist Men's work throughout the state, and he believes the interest in the net illustrates the need for pastors and other Baptist leaders to create avenues of ministry where Baptist laypersons can find meaningful expression for their gifts and vocational skills. "I hope this will be the first of a number of groups like this," he says. "When laymen get excited about missions and ministry, the potential is practically limitless."

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Adapted from April's World Mission Journal.