



Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

-- FEATURES

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Layman Is 'Good Samaritan'
Over Atlanta's Expressways

by Patti Stephenson

ATLANTA (BP)--To motorists stranded along Atlanta's clogged expressways, Ron Lamb is a welcome, if surprising sight.

He's probably the only tow truck driver who works in a coat and tie.

Lamb drives a hulking, rust-mottled tow truck to and from his job as a supervisor at the United States Post Office in Chamblee, Ga., a small town straddling two inter-state highways that feed commuters to Atlanta.

Almost every day, inching his truck through rush-hour traffic, Lamb spots a car beached along the shoulder and stops to offer a tow or to change a tire. Often, his clothes are smeared with grease after tinkering with a balky engine.

Yet Lamb, a friendly, unassuming man, ill at ease with praise, refuses when grateful motorists try to pay him.

"Helping people who are broke down is my ministry," he explains.

The idea of becoming a Good Samaritan of Atlanta's highways grew from Lamb's lay witness training at his church, First Baptist of Tucker, Ga., two years ago.

"Everyone was talking about using your gifts for the Lord," he tells in an unhurried, bashful drawl. "I knew I couldn't preach, but I could change a tire and drive a truck, so maybe the Lord could use that."

Lamb bought a road-worn tow truck from a service station owner going out of business. He replaced the engine, added new tires, and overhauled the winch.

Since then, day and night, he's aided dozens of marooned motorists, from towing travelers to the nearest garage to donating gasoline to drivers whose tanks have run dry.

"I give them the can, too, on the condition that they fill it up and give it to somebody else in trouble," Lamb says.

The former Navy airplane mechanic scavenges parts from old cars and stores a tangled heap of clamps, belts and hoses in his truck. He stocks jugs of antifreeze and oil, and keeps a spare starter on the floorboard next to his weighty toolbox.

More than once, his spare parts have been stolen off the truck. But Lamb reasons, "The only thing I can control about that is my response, and I guess they must have needed them more than I did."

While replacing burst water hoses or hoisting a stricken car with his boom, Lamb puts his witness training to work. "I have sort of a captive audience out there on the road," he smiles.

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Lamb often finds mechanical breakdowns lead to talk of other troubles--an unhappy marriage, sickness, rebellious children. He listens patiently and shares his faith in Christ openly.

"I always explain why I have this ministry," he says. "You never know what effect your words will have on someone further down the road."

Lamb, a Methodist for more than 40 years, became Southern Baptist just seven years ago. In addition to his truck ministry, he teaches Sunday School, has helped resettle a refugee family and remodel a children's home, and plans to work with a Baptist pastor in the Bronx next summer.

Lamb remembers his mother sending him as a young boy to mow the grass for two neighborhood widows, and "warning me not to take a penny for it," he tells. "That was just something you were supposed to do."

Now a grandfather, Lamb still lives by that generous creed and is happy helping the strangers whose breakdowns offer him an opportunity to minister.

"You can help people and take credit for yourself," he says, "or you can use it to share the teachings of Jesus. Who'd have ever thought a tow truck could help you do that?"

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Midwestern Trustees
OK Faculty Matters

Baptist Press
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KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees approved sabbatical leaves, promotions and a tenure appointment at their semi-annual meeting.

G. Temp Sparkman was promoted as professor of religious education and church administration, effective Jan. 1, 1982. Sparkman has been a Midwestern professor since 1972.

Tenure was granted to F. William Ratliff Jr., assistant professor of philosophy of religion and theology.

The trustees elected Samuel E. Balentine, instructor in Hebrew since 1979, as assistant professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, with a three-year contract.

Six-month sabbatical leaves were granted V. Lavell Seats, dean of students, registrar and professor of missions, and William B. Coble, professor of New Testament and Greek. Seats' sabbatical is effective July 1 - Dec. 31, 1983; Coble's, Jan. 1 - July 31, 1983.

In financial matters, the trustees received the 1980-81 audit, revised the 1981-82 operating budget and gave preliminary approval to a business and financial plan and an investment procedure plan with the understanding that these will be presented for final adoption at the annual meeting in April 1982.

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Magnolia Combines Revival
Services, Television Pilot

By Greg Warner

MAGNOLIA, Ark. (BP)--From the front row, it looked like any other Southern Baptist revival. The preacher offered a simple message of new life in Christ from chapter three of John. The congregation sang "Just As I Am."

But it was no ordinary revival. Blinding lights and television cameras were aimed at the pulpit, recording each appeal; outside, a network of cables led to a van full of technicians and equipment.

The revival also was a television pilot--the first preaching program for the American Christian Television System (ACTS), the proposed national Baptist network.

Television crews of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission came to the small Arkansas town Oct. 18 to videotape four nights of revival services at Central Baptist Church. The services will be edited into an evangelistic program called "Invitation to Life."

The strategy of the new preaching program is to conduct revivals in Southern Baptist churches around the country, tape the services, and add short feature segments on church members ministering in the communities. The edited programs will be test-marketed in selected cities and later incorporated into the weekly schedule of ACTS programming.

"The reason we're taking this kind of approach," RTVC President Jimmy R. Allen explained, "is that it is centered in local churches and can communicate not only the salvation experience with Christ, but also the nurturing community of the church."

When ACTS goes on the air, the RTVC tentatively plans to conduct one revival each month. Four programs will be produced from each crusade to provide the weekly "Invitation to Life" episodes.

John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston, preached the revival services in Magnolia. Larry Black, minister of music for First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., led the music.

Allen said Bisagno was chosen for the pilot from "a number of gifted pastor-evangelists around the Southern Baptist Convention." It has not been decided if Bisagno will be the "Invitation to Life" preacher when the show begins weekly broadcasts, Allen said.

The "Invitation to Life" Crusade, as the Magnolia revival was called, was planned by the RTVC and Central Baptist. A similar crusade and taping is scheduled for North Phoenix Baptist church in Phoenix Nov. 1-4.

According to Allen, the two churches were chosen to give the RTVC a chance to try the "Invitation to Life" strategy in different settings. "For the pilot we wanted cities that would be representative of two different locations where Southern Baptist churches are live and witnessing," he explained. "Magnolia was chosen as a small town; Phoenix was

chosen as a growing city in the Sunbelt."

Stubblefield said Central Baptist spent two months preparing for the "Invitation to Life" Crusade. RTVC Vice President Ben Loring and Richard Harris of the Home Mission Board's mass evangelism department worked with the church. More than three hundred members of the Magnolia church, which averages 700 in Sunday School, were involved.

After the four nights of revival, 60 decisions were recorded, including 11 professions of faith.

"Our primary purpose was that something happen at Central Baptist Church," Stubblefield explained. "But that is just a small measure of the full impact when this is shown on television. Our people are very conscious of this. They see it as another opportunity to share the gospel."

Ron Harris, minister of media at First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas, was producer-director for the "Invitation to Life" pilot. The RTVC's John Cobb Smith was director of operations, supervising technical aspects of the production. Ragan Courtney was the writer.

Courtney said: "We had to ask ourselves, 'Who needs another worship service?' We wanted to show people at work and in their every day lives, then cut away to show them worshipping in the service." Television crews followed several church members to work or into their homes to show how Central church reaches the community.

The shows are expected to be aired on consecutive Thursday nights (January 7, 14, 21, and 28) on WXIA-TV, Channel 11 (NBC), in Atlanta; KERO-TV, Channel 23 (NBC), and Bakersfield, Calif.; WLOS-TV, Channel 13 (ABC), which serves Greenville and Spartanburg, S.C. and Asheville, N.C.; and KTPX-TV, Channel 9 (ABC), Midland and Odessa, Texas. Independent station WOFL-TV, Channel 35, in Orlando, Fla., will air "Invitation to Life" on consecutively Mondays (January 4, 11, 18, and 25).

The RTVC has purchased the air time for the test broadcast at a total estimated cost of \$120,000.

Directors of missions in the five test markets are working with the RTVC to organize local Baptist support for the broadcasts and advertize the show in each area. They also will set up local telephone counseling centers for people who respond to the program.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) mailing 10/27/81, on page 5, story entitled "Argentines Name Street For Pioneer Missionary," please change graph 1, line 2, to "George" instead of "Georgia."

Thanks,

Baptist Press

Seminary Names Cothen
To Replace J.H. Kennedy

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Joe H. Cothen has been elected vice president for academic affairs at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, replacing J. Hardee Kennedy, who will retire Dec. 31.

The election came during the fall meeting of the executive committee of the seminary's board of trustees.

Cothen, currently chairman of the division of pastoral ministries, joined the New Orleans faculty in 1968 as associate professor of communication arts. After serving in the pastorate, 1971-77, he returned to the faculty as associate professor of pastoral work and later was elected full professor.

In announcing Kennedy's retirement, Landrum P. Leavell II, seminary president, said: "It is with deepest gratitude for 42 years of dedicated service as student, professor, chief academic officer, counsellor, confidant and friend that we accept Dr. Kennedy's decision to retire. He has the longest tenure of dedicated service of any faculty member in the history of this institution."

Kennedy earned a master's degree from the seminary in 1944, and a doctorate in Old Testament and Hebrew in 1947. After three years as a tutor, he joined the faculty as assistant professor in 1947. He became associate professor in 1949 and full professor in 1954.

In addition to being vice president for academic affairs--a post he has held since 1972--Kennedy also has been vice president of the graduate council of the school of theology and dean of the school of theology.

Kennedy and his wife, Mary Virginia, will retire to a new home in Meridian, Miss.

Cothen, a graduate of Mississippi College, earned a bachelors and doctors degree from New Orleans. He also has a masters from the University of Southern Mississippi.

He has been pastor of churches in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.