



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Misconceptions Relay Church Entering Retarded Ministry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Misconceptions cause many Southern Baptist churches to miss ministry opportunities with mentally retarded, according to three denominational workers in the field.

Church leaders usually think only of mentally retarded children, not knowing that 80 percent of the seven million mentally retarded in the United States are 18-54, says Don Trotter of the Sunday School Board's Sunday School department.

Dottie Rich, associate director of the special education department at DeLaney Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., said one of the most common concerns of parents of mentally retarded persons is the lack of Christian group homes and Christian ministries. She said churches could sponsor Christian group homes for mentally retarded adults whose older parents can no longer care for them.

Rich, whose church is one of approximately 3,000 Southern Baptist churches with a specialized ministry to retarded, said about 105 mentally retarded persons are enrolled in their Sunday School.

She said their main effort is to implant Christian values in the mentally retarded so they can interact with the community. "Our program is all heart and very little recognition," she explained. "The only way I can describe it is to say it is love."

Rich, Trotter and Howard Parshall, chaplain at Pinecrest State School, Pineville, La., said lack of interest characterizes the attitude in most churches concerning mentally retarded.

Parshall, who is the only chaplain in an institution with 1,600 mentally retarded patients, feels his importance is to "reaffirm the residents' sense of worth."

He emphasizes resident participation in his six weekly chapel services. He explains that his five-minute sermons are experimental in nature. "To the mentally retarded person that is what religion is all about," said Parshall.

Trotter said Southern Baptists have advanced in mentally retarded work, but more people must be willing to accept the mentally retarded person into the life of the church.

He feels many churches do not have a ministry to mentally retarded persons because they are unaware of the need or because they are hesitant to approach anything unfamiliar to them.

Southeastern Selected For
Trustee Development Project

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has been chosen to participate in a "Seminary Futures Conference for Trustees," to be conducted by the Alban Institute, Washington, D.C.

The conference will be led by John Fletcher of the Alban Institute, and Robert W. Lynn, vice-president for religion for Lilly Endowment, Inc., which is funding the study. The study, March 15-16, 1983, will involve the seminary's 30 trustees in a study of the role of seminaries in religious history, recent trends in the theological education, and the tasks of trustees in the future mission of seminaries. Southeastern was one of 11 seminaries chosen to participate.

According to Southeastern President Randall Lolley, "Our selection for this significant project is a continuation of our determined effort to help our trustees fulfill their legitimate role. After all, our trustees are elected by the Southern Baptist Convention to set policy and guide the work of this seminary."

Trustee development has been a special priority at Southeastern under Lolley's eight-year presidency. In 1975, the trustees met with faculty and administration in a two-day retreat to explore common concerns and build stronger relationships. In 1980, with a \$29,000 grant from Lilly Endowment, the school began a six-part, two-year special program of trustee education and development.

In addition, the seminary surveyed all accredited ATS seminaries for data on boards of trustees and developed a manual for new trustee orientation which was first used at a new trustee orientation meeting last year.

Also as a part of the program, Lolley has visited every trustee in the trustee's home or place of work, a project that took him to 21 states.

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Deacon With Graham In Russia
Says Soviets Want Him Back

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COLLEGE PARK, Ga. (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham, heavily criticized for saying he saw no evidence of religious persecution during a brief trip to Moscow, fulfilled the promise he made before going there--to preach the gospel--says Graham's interpreter, a Georgia Baptist deacon.

"I accompanied Dr. Graham everywhere in the Soviet Union," said Alexander Haraszti, a native Hungarian and deacon at First Baptist Church, College Park, Ga. "I am witness to the fact that Dr. Graham gave a personal testimony of his faith in Jesus Christ to every political body, to every religious body and to every single leader with whom he had a meeting."

Haraszti, a frequent visitor to the Soviet Union and interpreter for much of Graham's visit, told Jack Harwell, editor of the Georgia Christian Index, that Russian leaders at every level said they hoped Graham would return to the Soviet Union "in an expanded capacity."

Many critical newspaper columnists said Graham likely tempered his remarks with the hope of returning to Russia to conduct a full-scale crusade in the future.

Haraszti, who has been in the United States 20 years and is president of the Hungarian Baptist Conference of the American Continent, said, "It is a little-known fact in religious circles that the severe religious persecution and administrative measures initiated by (Nikita) Krushchev were stopped by Leonid Breshnev, and that thousands of churches closed by Krushchev were re-opened by Breshnev."

He said there are only 17 million members of the Communist party in Soviet Russia, but over 100 million members of organized religious bodies.

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"Communist party leaders have had tremendous difficulty in enticing people to join the party," Haraszti said. "The most plausible explanation for this failure is that church bodies had a strong influence on people, stronger than the party.

"The government faces a tremendous dilemma. They are duty bound, as instructed by the Communist party, to maintain a materialistic ideology as the basis of the state and society.

"The government, however, sees the importance of religion in the world and cannot ignore that reality....It is definitely in the interest of the government to give churches as much freedom as they possibly can."

Haraszti said Graham; Duke McCall, president of the Baptist World Alliance; and Bailey Smith, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, were given "every possible distinction," because for "international consumption...the government wants to show that religion is important in the Soviet Union."

But, he added, "The government has not found a way, on the grass roots level, to respect religion without enhancing the spreading of religious beliefs among the people of the street. That will explain the various religious experiences of religious leaders in the Soviet Union," he said, mentioning Smith's Russian language Bibles confiscated at the Moscow airport.

Another Georgia pastor, Frank Johnson of First Baptist Church, Douglas, was in the same BWA-sponsored preaching group as Smith. He quoted a Russian Baptist leader who told him large numbers of Bibles, New Testaments and hymnals have been printed legally inside the Soviet Union in the past few years.

"I must admit, as an American, it is hard for me to understand the government confiscating Bibles at the airport and then, at their own expense, printing them for the people...I observed this paradox many times," he said.

McCall, who spoke at the same peace conference Graham was invited to address, said Graham "did the cause of world peace a great service and also added immeasurably to the stature of the United States, by standing so firmly as an American there and calling for even-handed disarmament."

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Former SBC President's
Wife Dies in Nashville

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6/9/82

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Nora Isabell Storer, wife of J.W. Storer, Southern Baptist Convention president in 1954-55, died May 31 after a brief illness. She was 94.

She moved with her husband to Nashville in 1956 when he became executive secretary treasurer of the Southern Baptist Foundation, which he led until 1967. He was pastor of First Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla., for 25 years before that. He died in 1970.

Mrs. Storer is survived by two brothers, Paul Wilbanks, Coweta, Okla., and Tom Wilbanks, Texarkana, Texas.

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Six SBC Agencies Join Forces To Combat World Hunger

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Six Southern Baptist agencies have joined forces in a project to help 13.8 million Southern Baptists combat world hunger.

Supported by the Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union, and Brotherhood Commission, and coordinated by the Christian Life Commission, the project includes the distribution of 40,000 world hunger packets for the denominational observance of World Hunger Day, Oct. 10.

Packets will be sent to Southern Baptist pastors, ministers of education, Baptist Student Union leaders, directors of missions and other denominational leaders.

Foy Valentine, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, said the packet is to help Southern Baptists make a concerted and unified response to world hunger.

"Inside and outside our convention," Valentine said, "several organizations are pressing their conviction that hunger is the most critical moral issue of our time. Bread for the World works to shape public policy related to hunger. The SEEDS enterprise sponsored by Atlanta's Oakhurst Baptist Church seeks to raise consciousness and deepen commitment to alleviate hunger. Agricultural mission enterprises such as World Hunger Relief, Inc., and Global Outreach help to alleviate hunger by improving food production. Interdenominational enterprises such as World Vision raise money to feed the hungry.

"This compilation of materials represents the combined commitment of the Southern Baptist Convention's own agencies, however, to deal with the grave moral issue of world hunger."

Southern Baptist gifts for alleviating world hunger through the Home and Foreign Mission Boards have increased dramatically since the 1970s. Gifts to world hunger jumped from \$81,000 in 1971 to \$4.9 million in 1981. Of that sum, \$4.76 million went to the Foreign Mission Board and \$145,800 went to the Home Mission Board.

"But the hunger crisis has not abated and millions are still desperately hungry," Valentine said. "Our progress has been infinitesimal in the face of the awesome challenge of world hunger.

"Bible study materials in the packet focus on God's special concern for the hungry and the needy, and emphasize God's mandate to his people to feed the hungry," said W. David Lockard, director of organization for the Christian Life Commission, who coordinated the project.

"Southern Baptists deeply believe the Bible," he said. "God's Word is unmistakable and does not allow us to ignore hungry people in our neighborhood and in our world."

The world hunger packet includes resources to help plan and conduct a world hunger emphasis in a local church and gives suggestions on how churches and individuals can support world hunger causes throughout the year.

Suggestions designed by the six Southern Baptist Convention agencies call for individuals to respond with prayer, by giving through the Foreign and Home Mission boards to help the hungry, engaging in hunger education activities, exercising responsible Christian citizenship on behalf of the hungry, and becoming involved with hungry persons in the community.

According to Southern Baptist Convention action taken last year in Los Angeles, 80 percent of world hunger offerings go to the Foreign Mission Board and 20 percent go to the Home Mission Board, unless otherwise designated.

CIA Will Act If Evidence
Proves Use Of Missionaries

By Anita Bowden

WASHINGTON (BP) -- CIA administrators declared they would take corrective action if anyone presents "hard evidence" that CIA agents are posing as missionaries or involving them in intelligence gathering.

CIA director William Casey met June 8 with Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks and Executive Vice President William R. O'Brien to discuss the agency's position concerning missionary involvement. Casey strongly affirmed the board's position that to involve missionaries in intelligence activities violates the First Amendment to the Constitution regarding separation of church and state.

During the 30-minute meeting with Casey and Director of External Affairs Billy Doswell, Parks also said any CIA use of missionaries "jeopardizes not only the work of missionaries but has the potential of putting them in a dangerous situation and even jeopardizes their lives as well as our being able to stay and work in various countries."

Parks said Doswell told them that if anyone could present hard evidence that missionaries are being used as agents or that agents are posing as missionaries the agency would take action.

In a phone conversation with Baptist Press June 9, Doswell's deputy, Lavon Strong, supported Doswell's statement and added that evidence could be presented either to Casey or the President's Intelligence Oversight Board, an independent group set up to watch for misbehavior in intelligence activities.

Parks said Casey was "very strong in his affirmation that the executive order by former president Jimmy Carter prohibiting use of missionaries as CIA agents could be carried out."

Casey also told Parks and O'Brien that he "personally has strong objections to any utilization of missionaries by the CIA." He said the use of missionaries as agents is not wise and that the CIA "had not and would not use missionaries." He also affirmed that agents would not pose as missionaries or use mission activities as front organizations.

Parks requested the meeting, set up through the office of U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), because of board concern over "persistent rumors of contact" (by CIA agents) with missionaries. The board has no knowledge of any Southern Baptist missionaries involved in CIA activity, but concern over the image of all evangelical missionaries prompted Parks' request for the meeting.

Since late 1975 when former president Gerald Ford acknowledged that the CIA had used missionaries in the past and may again, the Foreign Mission Board has urged that legislation be enacted to prohibit missionary involvement in intelligence activities.

Parks said he was "grateful for Casey's comments" and pleased with his affirmation of the board's stance. Vice President George Bush, CIA director under Ford, has expressed interest in the board's position and requested follow-up information on the meeting's outcome.

Bush will address a Southern Baptist evangelistic rally in the Louisiana Superdome June 13 and has a press conference scheduled that afternoon at New Orleans' Fairmont Hotel.