



Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

--FEATURES

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of three articles about Southern Baptist chaplains at the U.S. military academies.)

BSU Seeking Volunteers
Among West Point Cadets

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By Michael Tutterow

WEST POINT, N.Y. (BP)--Alton Harpe believes the Supreme Court did him a favor by not requiring cadets to attend chapel.

The ban on compulsory chapel resulted in a boom for Baptist ministries at "the Point," according to Harpe, director of student work at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point for more than 11 years. Not only did the decision increase freedom for cadets it boosted attendance at Baptist services and gave Harpe additional contact with cadets.

Though a "civilian chaplain" at the military academy, Harpe claims he enjoys tremendous freedom while ministering among more than 4,000 cadets. He is listed as an official chaplain and the weekly Baptist service is recognized by the academy. In fact Harpe's only restriction is with the students.

The academy schedules every moment of the cadets' lives from sunrise to lights out, "but we don't let them use time as an excuse," Harpe said. "They can squeeze us in if that's a priority."

Baptist Student Union activities require written approval and cadets must obtain permission to attend BSU functions with a limit of one or two off-campus activities per semester. Otherwise, "everything we do must be done at the academy," Harpe explained.

Though academy rules limit "the freedom to do what you want when you want," he pointed out, "what we do on a one-to-one basis is not that different from any other campus situation." Together he and his wife, Fairey, serve as marriage and career counselors, Bible study and worship leaders, parental supplements and confidants.

About 10 percent of the students are Baptist, with Southern Baptists making up the majority. Unless a letter from a cadet's relative or a call from a pastor alerts Harpe to any Baptists among incoming freshmen, his contacts come from religious preference cards "plebes" fill out during their first week at the academy. While freshmen complete two months of training and orientation, Harpe prepares letters to students expressing a Baptist preference, detailing BSU activities and worship opportunities at the academy.

"We try to show them Christian love in a very difficult environment," and present BSU as "an opportunity for Christian growth and for them to minister to one another," Harpe said.

When cadets complete their orientation, the Harpes and nearby Ridgecrest Baptist Church immerse cadets in a little tender loving care. The annual Labor Day picnic, replete with an all-day, family-style cookout, music and skits, attracts about 150 cadets and their families. The function helps cadets meet others who may be assigned to different platoons.

The Baptist Fellowship Hour offers another break from cadets' rigorous schedule of classes, study and military exercises. The academy budgets an hour each Tuesday for club activities, and interested cadets can find music, refreshments and an informal worship service or Bible study at the weekly meeting. Cadets take responsibility for the service; Fairey provides homemade refreshments.

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Other weekly meetings include BSU council and choir rehearsal. But by far the Sunday morning worship service elicits the most response from cadets. The student-led worship draws nearly 100 cadets a week. Either Harpe, a local pastor, or another Baptist leader delivers the sermon and students lead prayer, Bible readings and music.

Each semester Harpe plans special events including the fall state student conference and Saturday evening cookouts during football season; in January 60 to 70 cadets "retreat" for a weekend of Bible study. But whatever the event, "we insist that senior officers show Christian love, that rank not apply at a religious meeting and that cadets go on a first name basis only," Harpe said.

Throughout the year Harpe stresses missions. Since academy regulations preclude off-campus ministries, "we emphasize missions education and support," explains Harpe, noting cadet contributions to home and foreign missions total several hundred dollars annually.

Harpe also emphasizes active involvement in missions. During a closing worship service Harpe reminded graduating seniors that they are not only commissioned officers but "commissioned Christians." He admitted, "We try to get as many as possible to be aware of their responsibility." We give cadets an opportunity to practice their faith," and help instill "a Christian attitude toward one another and their military service," he said.

Harpe, a former campus minister in Florida, and his wife accepted the Home Mission Board's offer to coordinate West Point military ministries in 1970. A former U.S. Army officer, Harpe brought a knowledge of the military and 10 years' experience as a campus minister to "the Point."

BSU has cultivated responsible leaders "who understand Christian love as part of their commitment to their country and God, acting out their responsibility wherever they serve."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Home Mission Board

Dunn Denounces Senate Vote
On Tuition Tax Credit Bill

WB
By Larry Chesser

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WASHINGTON (BP)—The Senate Finance Committee's decision to clear a tuition tax credit measure for floor action has drawn a sharp denunciation from a Baptist church-state specialist.

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said the committee's approval of a modified version of President Ronald Reagan's tuition tax credit proposal is "beyond comprehension in the face of soaring budget deficits and financially struggling public schools."

Citing a 1982 Southern Baptist Convention resolution, Dunn underscored the threat to church-state separation posed by tuition tax credits.

"With tuition tax credits all Americans will be compelled to pay taxes to support parochial schools whose teachings many of us disavow," Dunn said, adding, "Thomas Jefferson called such tax-supported religious teaching 'sinful and tyrannical.'"

Beyond the threat to religious liberty, Dunn charged that the proposal "seriously threatens public education."

"We don't need government encouragement for a system of private and pauper schools," he said. "Pauper schools is what the public schools would become with decreasing tax support for public education and increasing aid for private and parochial schools."

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In the resolution cited by Dunn, messengers to the 1982 Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans registered their "opposition to all tuition tax credit legislation pending in Congress." The statement urged President Reagan to "reconsider his support of tax credit legislation" and expressed concern over "such legislation's threat to the First Amendment guarantees of nonestablishment of religion and the free exercise of religion."

The Senate Finance Committee action came after renewed pressure from the President to pass his tuition tax credit proposal.

The measure's chances of passage during the closing days of the 97th Congress remain uncertain with Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.) pledging to "strongly and vigorously" oppose it. Hollings led Senate opposition during the last major congressional battle over tuition tax credits in 1978.

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CBS-TV To Feature
Southwestern Seminary

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--CBS television will air a documentary on Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Oct. 17.

The special, "Ministry and Mission: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary," was filmed on campus last spring and will be shown as part of CBS' series "For Our Time."

Producer Robyn Mendelsohn said Southwestern was chosen because it is the largest seminary in the world and because of the 75th anniversary celebration planned this academic year.

"I personally was amazed to learn that training for ministry is not just theology at Southwestern," she said. "Here you train the mind and the body and provide specialized training in so many things like music, communication, recreation, childhood education and other areas."

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Tennesseans Tackle Tough Job--
Teach Voltaics To Read Moore

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OUAGADOUGOU, Upper Volta (BP)--She had been told it could be done, but Nancy Strickland wasn't so sure.

Could Tennessee Baptist volunteers, who speak only English, teach Voltaics to read Moore, a language the Tennesseans had never even heard of, much less spoken?

The answer, she knows today, is yes. Since September 1981, Tennessee Baptist volunteers have taught about 170 Voltaics to read their language.

Fellow Southern Baptist missionary Norman Coad told her when she arrived in Upper Volta to begin work as a literacy missionary he had taught someone to read in a language he couldn't speak. But when the mission planned a major development project calling for Tennessee volunteers to do that, the former Georgia teacher wasn't so sure.

"Lord," she prayed, "is it possible this can be done? Do you want me to write and tell these people not to come?" His answer, she says, was yes, it could be done, so she prayed for guidance in preparing the materials and volunteers.

With the help of a Moore-speaking Voltaic she prepared a cassette tape to introduce the vowel and consonant sounds to the volunteers. She sent the tape, along with copies of a Moore primer, to the Tennessee Baptist Convention and they were passed to volunteers.

The first literacy volunteers arrived Sept. 26, 1981. For the first two days they worked together on pronunciation, use of the primer and Moore greetings and teaching directives.

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The third day they went along to their assigned villages traveling by foot, moped or motorcycle. Day by day they returned excited by their students' progress.

For seven months the volunteers came, most staying a month. In eight villages they used a phonetic method which enabled them to teach sounds and syllables and show how the syllables form words. Moore, says Strickland, is very conducive to that approach. The volunteers taught in churches where they existed. In villages that had no churches the villagers built classrooms with walls of grass mats. There were no desks. Each student had a board on which to place his writing notebook.

One volunteer from the first group, Sarah Davis of Nashville, returned home and began leading orientation sessions for each group of volunteers preparing to teach literacy.

Another, Melba Avera of Kingston, Tenn., took a leave of absence from her second grade teaching position to stay almost eight months. At the end of August she returned again to Upper Volta. She has taken another leave of absence to direct the literacy program during 1982-83 while Strickland is in the United States for furlough.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Foreign Mission Board

Baptist Faction Leaders
To Visit Israel Together

By Craig Bird

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Baptist Press
9/20/82

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--James T. Draper Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Convention, has invited 17 Southern Baptist leaders representing the full spectrum of the current SBC political scene to travel to Israel together in late November.

"I don't think anyone who looks at the list of those going can deny that it is a diverse group--and I tried to make it even more diverse," Draper said. Another 17 Baptist leaders were invited but were unable to participate.

The Baptists are going on a joint study tour sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. "There will be seven or eight people for the ADL and our agenda will include meetings with all the top government and religious officials in Israel," Draper said.

The ADL is "interested in continuing to have dialogue with Southern Baptists and, quite frankly, they want to encourage Southern Baptist support for Israel," he explained. "From my viewpoint I would also like to continue dialogue between Southern Baptists and the Jewish community but more than that I want these men from the diverse groups within the SBC to have a chance to develop friendships and relationships.

"Too many of us only know each other through the press and have only seen each other across convention halls--this will be an opportunity to get to know each other personally."

The group will spend time with Baptist missionaries and Israeli Baptist leadership on the trip and current plans are for some of them, probably Draper and the first and second vice presidents of the convention (John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La. and Gene Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City) to visit with SBC missionaries in Beirut.

"Of course if present conditions continue it may not be possible for us to do that but I really feel it is important for us as Baptists to support the work our missionaries there," he said. Draper also has been in close contact with Keith Parks, president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board and the FMB will provide each of the 17 Baptists with information on mission work in the Middle East so each will be sensitive to the situation there.

"We certainly want to express our friendship and love to Israel but we also want to express our friendship and love for all the peoples of the Middle East," Draper said.

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During the trip Draper hopes the men will talk together because they will be together. "It's not so significant what we talk about but that we talk to each other," he explained. He doesn't think the convention necessarily needs to debate theology, "though we do need to talk about our theological differences."

The SBC has been in a visible struggle the past four years since a group surfaced vowing to rid the convention agencies and seminaries of "liberals" and proclaiming that belief in an "inerrant, infallible" Bible as the word of God was the key to doctrinal purity. Shortly thereafter a counter movement was announced to oppose the inerranists and the annual meetings of the SBC have become increasingly political.

Those going to Israel with Draper and the two vice presidents include: Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas; Milton Cunningham, pastor of Westbury Baptist Church, Houston; Paige Patterson, president of Criswell Institute for Biblical Studies in Dallas; Seth Macon, a layman from First Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C.; Glenn Iglehart, director of the interfaith witness department of the SBC's Home Mission Board in Atlanta;

Welton Gaddy, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas; Bailey Stone, pastor of First Baptist Church, Odessa, Texas; Kenneth Mahanes, pastor of Far Hills Baptist Church, Dayton, Ohio; Dan Martin, news editor of Baptist Press, Nashville, Tenn.; Jay Strack, pastor of Riverside Baptist Church, Ft. Myers, Fla.; Frank Minton, pastor of Red Hills Baptist Church, Tustin, Calif.; Earl Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn.; Bob Eden, a layman from First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas; and Joe Trull, pastor of First Baptist Church, El Paso, Texas. Dale Thorn, SBC missionary to Israel will join the group in Israel.

Among those invited who could not attend were: John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston; Ken Chaffin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church, Houston; Bill Pinson, executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas; Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Jimmy Allen, president of the Radio and Television Commission of the SBC, Fort Worth; Bill Self, pastor of Wieuca Road Baptist Church, Atlanta;

James Pleitz, pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas; Alton McEachern, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C.; Bill Hogue, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla.; Parks; Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.; Bill Weber, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, Dallas; Bob Eklund, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hurst, Texas; Jack Graham, pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Fla.; George Harris, pastor of Castle Hills Baptist Church, San Antonio, Texas; Dan Vestal, pastor of First Baptist Church, Midland, Texas; and Fred Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hills Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala.