



BAPTIST PRESS

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Southern Baptists Not Exempt From Problems in Families

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The crises confronting families in America today are also problems that threaten Southern Baptist churches and the denomination as a whole, warns Douglas Anderson, secretary of the Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department.

Citing the skyrocketing divorce rate and numbers of parents rearing children alone, Anderson said, "I think it can be documented that what is occurring nationwide is occurring at almost the same rate in our churches."

Other family-related problems Anderson listed included difficulties among blended families of remarried persons, grandparents separated geographically and by divorce from their grandchildren and low self-esteem of persons attempting to rebuild their lives from broken relationships.

"The consequences of what has been happening the last five to 10 years will be with us the rest of this century," he noted.

Anderson believes pastors and other church leaders sincerely want to help family members in crises, but many simply do not know what to do or how to do it.

"At best we know how to preach at them but not how to help them change their attitudes and behavior," he said. "The problems are too large and too complex for simplistic or authoritative approaches. The crisis is real, nationwide and not a church is untouched by the problems and needs of families."

On the other hand, he praised churches which are providing ministries to members and non-members in counseling, marriage and parenting enrichment and which are emphasizing the importance of family Bible study and worship in the homes.

Christian Home Week, scheduled for May 1-8 in many churches, is one way to emphasize the value of homes where God is the first priority, Anderson said. The 1983 Christian Home Week theme is "Family: Opening the Word Together."

Family in Bible Study Day is set for May 1 while May 8 is Family Worship and Bible Study Commitment Day.

Christian Home Week is also the only event a church must put on its calendar to be part of the 1982-85 Strengthen Families emphasis. Other facets of the emphasis are implemented through Sunday school, church training, pastoral and deacon ministries, music and media libraries.

If ways are not found in churches to help families, Anderson said the crisis threatens to severely weaken Bold Mission Thrust efforts to share the gospel with the entire world by the year 2000.

On the one hand, Anderson said, "If we don't articulate the difference the gospel makes in our homes, non-Christians can legitimately question what the gospel offers. If we're not able to point to people with changed lives, we're going to have difficulty."

On the other hand, the breakup of Christian families is affecting key leadership in churches, including the clergy, deacons and Sunday school teachers. For example, he said the rate of divorce among ministers appears to be approaching the rate of the general population.

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"Where is the people power for Bold Mission thrust if the energy of our leaders is sapped at the point of their most intimate relationships?" asked Anderson.

As to solutions, Anderson urges church leaders to give priority to enrichment for healthy families and ministry for those in need. "We need to remember Jesus Christ came to us in the arms of a family," he said. "We are called to make disciples and to help people integrate the gospel into meaningful human behavior. This is where we're not doing our job."

In helping people who are hurting from broken relationships, Anderson said, "We must come to grips with our task as a people who redeem and who reconcile."

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Greater Lay Involvement Key
To Bold Mission Thrust Success

By Joe Westbury

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--Greater lay involvement in Bold Mission Thrust was a common theme at the Brotherhood Commission Missions Impact 2000 Committee meeting.

The growing need for mission volunteers coupled with increased Brotherhood leadership to motivate and direct their energies, will play a crucial role in the denomination-wide appeal to evangelism and disciple making, program personalities agreed. The seminar was the second input session in the Brotherhood Commission's two-year self-study.

Richard Broholm, executive director of the Center of Ministry for the Laity at Andover-Newton Theological School, called on the Brotherhood Commission to educate Baptist laity so they will understand "God calls everyone equally to missions and service is not limited to traditional church workers.

"He does not limit himself to theological specialists in communicating with mankind--he uses people from all walks of life as missionaries where they live and work," he added.

One of the "rule ministries" of the Brotherhood Commission is to help Southern Baptist laymen recover the New Testament concept of gifts of believers and the responsibility of all members of the church, said Malcolm Tolbert, professor of New Testament at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

Tolbert challenged the Brotherhood to continue to raise that level of consciousness so the ministry will not be relegated to just traditional church workers. "Southern Baptists need to take God seriously when it comes to mission involvement," the Wake Forest instructor pointed out. Tolbert said the laity also needs a clearer understanding of what missions is all about and challenged the commission to help eliminate wrong motives for evangelism.

"A common misconception is our use of fear in explaining what God will do to the lost if we don't reach them. In reality we should be motivated to share the Gospel because God commanded it and it is we who will one day give an account to him," the professor explained.

"The purpose of missions is not to save people from the flames of hell but to end the alienation that has severed mankind from fellowship with God since the Garden of Eden. We need both concepts clarified in order to place missions in its proper perspective," he added.

Leonard Irwin, vice president in the planning section of the Home Mission Board, challenged the Brotherhood Commission to provide greater direction in evangelism and starting of new churches. "Forty percent of the American population still does not affiliate with any Christian church," he reminded the committee members.

The Atlanta, Ga., resident detailed sections of the nation, including the South, which are right for lay missions projects but are being lost to other denominations. "Though we are the nation's largest protestant denomination, we have made less than a token appearance in our nation's largest cities. In our 50 largest cities, comprising 46 percent of our population we find only 25 percent of Southern Baptists and only 17 percent of our churches," he said.

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Charles Chaney, dean of the Courts Redford School of Theology and Church Relations at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., called for a new organizational structure that will enable more laymen to enter foreign and home mission service with less stringent regulations. "We desperately need more missionaries but are excluding many who would otherwise reach out in this avenue of service", he explained.

Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford urged stronger ties between the WMU and Brotherhood on the church, associational and state level. Such a move would provide a more thorough means of communicating missions education to the entire Baptist community, she said.

Committee members of Missions Impact 2000 will continue to evaluate specific programs and make recommendations to the commission in 1985.

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(Joe Westbury is associate editor of World Mission Journal)

Church Secretaries Seek
Professional Recognition

By Jim Lowry

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist church secretaries, in a move to achieve professional recognition, voted in the Second National Conference for Church Secretaries to move toward a national church secretaries organization.

Membership in the organization likely will include secretaries in local churches, associations, state convention offices and denominational agencies.

Almost 700 secretaries from 30 states attended the conference at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Lucy Hoskins, consultant in the board's church administration department, and conference director said good attendance at the conference and the desire for a national organization indicate the level of interest by Southern Baptist secretaries to improve personally and professionally.

The proposed organization would be in addition to state and local secretaries' associations which already offer local contact and training opportunities.

An ad hoc committee will bring recommendations on structure, objectives, officers and meetings within six months. Committee members are Melva Gentry, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas; Alice Edwards, First Baptist Church, Macon, Ga.; Betty Walker, First Baptist Church, Burlington, N.C.; Hortense Barnes, Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala.; and Evelyn Gustafson, Greene County Baptist Association, Springfield, Mo.

The four-day conference offered numerous options for training in areas of special interest in addition to hearing addresses from several speakers, including Christine Gregory, president of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Gregory, who also had served as first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, president of the Woman's Missionary Union and a member of the Baptist World Alliance executive committee, spoke to the secretaries on their special calling to live with integrity.

"God made women with a little extra compassion to communicate with the world," Gregory said. "I am to be loving when I don't want to be loving, and to communicate when I don't to see the other side. If he gave us these talents, he intended for us to use them with great integrity. He calls us in his strength."

Harold Bryson, professor of preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, said "One of the best ways to learn the Bible is to see someone live it.

"As church secretaries, you have as much or more contact with church members than any other staff member," he continued. To be good examples, you are called "to be grounded on the Word of God. We cannot build our lives on the shifting philosophies of today."

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Elaine Dickson, director of the board's direct sales department, told the secretaries they must risk change even though "Many people prefer the knowns of a miserable existence to the unknowns of another existence because of the risks." By taking risks, secretaries can "change the level of dissatisfaction, be aware of better conditions and gain knowledge."

Other speakers to the Second National Conference for Church Secretaries were Bill Bailey, director of chaplaincy services at Central Baptist Hospital, Lexington, Ky.; and Franklin Paschall, pastor of First Baptist Church, Nashville.

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Brewton-Parker Names
Holmes New President

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MOUNT VERNON, Ga. (BP)--Lynn Holmes, an alumnus of Brewton-Parker College, has been named 12th president of the two-year Georgia Baptist college, effective July 1, 1983.

He succeeds Starr Miller, who resigned for personal reasons and will assume responsibility for coordinating the college's new bachelor of ministries degree, the school's first four-year program.

Holmes, associate professor of ancient and middle eastern history and director of placement and cooperative education at West Georgia College in Carrollton, graduated from Brewton-Parker with an associate degree in 1960.

Currently, he is a fellow of the American Council on Education doing an internship in college administration at Mercer University in Macon, another Georgia Baptist college. He earned a bachelor's degree from Mercer in 1960. He has a B.D. from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Brandeis University. Holmes has done one year of graduate study in archaeology at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

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Dreams Become Realities
In Sunday School Clinic

By Linda Lawson

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RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--The hard work of making people's dreams about their church happen was an important part of the Metro Sunday School Enrollment Training Clinic April 16-23 in the Raleigh-Durham, N.C., area.

Space to double the number of children's Sunday school departments was one dream longtime children's worker Mae Moore shared with the Temple Baptist Church in Raleigh, N.C., during the Sunday night service April 16.

Three days later, space had been found in the existing facilities and workers were enlisted to begin the three new departments May 7. Plans also were under way to start a Cradle Roll department, begin Sunday school weekly workers meetings by Oct. 1 and follow up on 129 prospects who had been located during a door-to-door canvass the previous Sunday.

During the clinic five-person teams were assigned to the 47 participating churches to work with church staff to evaluate the Sunday school, help Sunday school workers determine needs, lead conference sessions and recommend ways to strengthen the Sunday school.

Temple's team included Harold Souther, a retired executive from the Missouri Baptist Convention, and four church staff members: Emily Filipi, Wetumpka, Ala., and Dean Abernathy, Jacksonville, David Smith, Gainesville, and Lyn Phillips, Coral Gables, all in Florida.

Pastor Roger Nix, minister of education Charles Johnson and minister of music and youth Rick Carter conducted preparation meetings before the clinic, leading the church to adopt growth plans and locate more than 500 prospects from church members not enrolled in Sunday school and among parents of students in the church's day school.

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The members at Temple, begun in 1949 and located in an older residential area of the city, have become accustomed to growth during the last four years--growth which Nix attributed largely to the creation of new Sunday school units and Sunday afternoon visitation by deacons.

However, progress leveled off in October 1982, at a Sunday school enrollment of almost 900, partially due to lack of space. Nix hoped the clinic would help the church move from "wanting to grow to being willing to do what is needed to grow."

Nix sounded that theme in his Sunday morning sermon as the clinic began. "We're in danger of becoming Bo-Peep Baptists, believing lost people will come to us on their own," he warned. "Reaching one person at a time is the best way of reaching all the world in time."

Sunday afternoon more than 50 persons participated in a People Search, canvassing approximately 400 homes in nearby subdivisions. Survey coordinator David Poole reported Sunday night 129 prospects had been located, emphasizing, "These numbers are people's lives and people's souls."

After the adult workers heard the need for more space for children's departments, they determined they could give up two rooms and reallocate their remaining space without changing the recently reorganized adult division. The media center would be used for the third new children's department.

Preschool workers cited the need for more workers, especially in the extended session. In the youth area, workers planned to paint and fix up part of their area and requested workers to fill existing vacancies.

The clinic schedule called for sessions at the church seven consecutive nights to continue the plans and work. Persons enlisted as new workers arrived for the Thursday and Friday night training sessions.

The team recommendation that the church begin weekly workers' meetings with the beginning of the new church year in October was also reflected in needs identified by the Sunday School workers themselves.

Nix said enthusiasm was one immediate impact of the clinic and predicted a longer-range effect would be to "give our people a sharpened vision of what their important part in the Sunday school is. I believe they have learned that Sunday schools that are growing are functioning during the week."

Sharing his observations about the clinic with his members Wednesday night, Nix said leadership training would be a continuing priority.

"People are not saved to serve," he said. "People are saved to mature, be tested and then to serve. You can't put people in to teach a Sunday school class just because they're excited about their faith and expect long-term results."

He also warned that growth would bring change and pain. "If a church is to grow in any measure numerically, it's going to have some spiritual and organizational growing pains."

Johnson, at 36 the oldest staff member, said, "When we moved into the new educational building in October, we were already peaked out in space for preschoolers and children. That has been frustrating to all of us."

However, he noted, "Our potential is only limited by how much we are willing to work. We have had four good years, and we want that to continue. We've done things we hadn't thought were possible. When a church doesn't worry about people accepting Christ, they ought to close down."

The clinic was sponsored by the Raleigh and Yates associations, the North Carolina Baptist Convention and the Sunday School Board.