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Sunday School Goal Called Attainable

By Linda Lawson

WINONA LAKE, Ind. (BP)--The goal to increase Southern Baptists' Sunday school enrollment from the present 7.6 million to 8.5 million by Sept. 30, 1985, is challenging but attainable, according to five Sunday school directors of three state conventions and two fellowships.

Mike Collins, Ohio; Bill Crider, associate director in Illinois; Lew Reynolds, Indiana; Bill Chambers, Minnesota/Wisconsin fellowship, and Eddie Olds, Iowa fellowship, attended Ridgecrest North, a recent Sunday school leadership conference at Winona Lake Bible Conference Center.

"The goal has permeated the churches," said Reynolds. "I don't talk to many who don't have some idea of what it's all about. They see it primarily as enrolling people in Bible study and starting new units."

The key to the 14 percent enrollment increase in Minnesota/Wisconsin in 1982 was church leaders "becoming aware we can grow and seeing the Sunday school as the organization that will bring about growth," said Chambers.

Crider, Collins and Olds agreed the churches which have set 1982-83 goals for enrollment increases are experiencing the greatest growth. As part of 8.5 by '85, churches are asked to set goals, report goals and quarterly progress to the Sunday School Board and develop and implement strategies for reaching the goals.

As of June 30, a total of 11,631 churches had reported goals for 1983. There are 35,862 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The goal-setting process has increased the awareness of pastors about 8.5 by '85," said Collins. At present, 268 of the state's 464 churches (57.7 percent) have reported goals and Collins said he hopes to see that figure increase to 75 percent for 1983-84.

However, he warned of potential problems if goals are set only by the pastor and the Sunday school director. "Key leaders need to be involved in goal setting," said Collins.

A second factor cited was starting new Sunday schools and beginning new classes or departments within existing Sunday schools.

"We're at a significant point of growth," said Olds. "Churches in Iowa are aware of growth and are reaching out. The idea of starting new Sunday schools is not something we have to push. That is a way of life with us."

In Indiana, Reynolds said, "New churches are accounting for much of our increase. The older, established churches are not getting it done." He said 39 percent of Indiana churches are growing while 61 percent are either stabilized or declining in enrollment, due to population shifts and other factors.

"If our older churches are to grow, new units must be started," said Reynolds. He called for new classes and departments within existing age groups but also those to meet special needs of ethnic and language groups as well as handicapped persons.

"We need to break from our old traditional patterns of following the moving vans with Georgia and Alabama tags," he said.

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In Illinois, a 1981 statewide emphasis, Reach 1 in 81, challenged every Sunday school member to enroll one person during the year. "This broke people out of the mindset against reaching people," said Crider. For 1983-84, another statewide emphasis, Net 4 in 84, will call for classes and departments to show a net increase of at least four persons during the year.

The decade of the 1980s in Illinois is the decade of enrollment, said Crider. "Our overall goal is to have 500,000 persons enrolled in Bible study by 1990." The present state enrollment is 137,067.

The directors also pointed to associational Sunday school improvement support teams (ASSIST) as a key to providing the needed training to enable Sunday school workers to improve their skills.

In Iowa, where the number of associations has just doubled from four to eight, Olds said the change has made it possible for persons to attend associational training events without traveling long distances.

"Our ASSIST teams are working with individual churches as well as conducting associational events. This has been the thing that has helped us strengthen our Sunday school work," said Olds.

Collins said increasing efforts need to be made to nurture and keep the new persons who are enrolled. "It's alarming to me that we had to enroll 941,000 people last year to show a net increase of 151,000," he said. "The caring dimension must be in the growth."

In Minnesota/Wisconsin, Chambers said plans call for efforts to conduct enrollment/enlargement campaigns in as many churches as possible and to involve more churches in the Super Spiral, an accelerated plan for growth. "I feel the goal is attainable, both in our state and nationwide," said Chambers.

Crider said, "I see many churches being very serious about their plans for 8.5 by '85. Where leaders take it seriously, it's working."

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Summer Employee
Dies At Glorieta

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SANTA FE, N.M. (BP)--A summer employee at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, Deborah Carole Lohman, 18, died at St. Vincent Hospital here Tues., July 26, after suffering cardiac arrest two days earlier.

Miss Lohman was a member of Holiday Heights Baptist Church, Hendersonville, Tenn., and was a 1983 graduate of Beech High School in Hendersonville.

She was the daughter of Mrs. Carol Barfknecht of Goodlettsville, Tenn., an employee in the church administration department of the Baptist Sunday School Board and Thomas E. Lohman of Hendersonville.

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Colleges Must Respond
To Change, Expert Says

By Lonnie Wilkey

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist colleges and universities that survive the next decade in higher education must learn to adapt quickly to changing world trends, says a leading consultant from Washington, D.C.

Hadley S. DePuy, director of the College and University Division of McManis Associates, Inc., addressed some 85 admissions officers and presidents representing 43 Southern Baptist colleges and schools at a recent workshop sponsored by the Southern Baptist Education Commission.

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He told the admissions representatives college leaders cannot isolate themselves from world events. "Changing trends in the economy, government, labor, education, social attitudes, demography and communications will have a tremendous impact on higher education in the 1980's," DePuy said.

He cited examples of continued inflation, unemployment, a deteriorating educational system, the role of women, a population shift and rapid advances in communications technologies as factors that will have considerable influence on education.

Given these overall trends, he said, successful institutions of the 1980s will anticipate consumer needs, develop responsive and cost-effective services and adapt management processes and structures to manage change.

According to DePuy, the three determining factors for the survival and success of colleges in the next decade include a distinctive mission, location and attitudes on campus.

Southern Baptist colleges and schools have a unique mission and should capitalize on it, he said, urging the admissions officers and presidents not to be reluctant to voice their school's purpose and other notable aspects.

"An institution with a positive attitude on campus, a distinctive mission and a good location will not fail despite high tuition and the condition of the economy," he said.

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Hampton Heights Feels 'Total Jubilation'

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GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--Hampton Heights Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C., is celebrating the triumph of a daring plan called "Debt Free in '83."

The church's approximately 500 active members have given nearly \$200,000 to erase its debt. The goal set by the deacons and stewardship and finance committees was \$185,000.

The money for the bond retirement program is "already deposited," according to Lyn Anderson, pastor. Two persons contributed \$5,000 each and 15 gave over \$2,000 apiece, but most of the gifts "fell into the \$1,000 range on the commitment cards," Anderson said.

The challenge was issued in May and the pastor said the congregation's attitude progressed from "I don't think we can" to "Maybe we can" to "Sure we can."

At the start of 1983 the economic forecast at Hampton Heights was bleak.

Shortly after Christmas the church leadership came face to face with the certainty of "a terrible money crisis by Easter," Anderson recalled. Contributions through the first quarter of the year did not brighten the picture. The projection: a year-end deficit of over \$66,000.

Church leaders first looked for ways to shave expenses, finally deciding that by paring programs and personnel and cutting back on missions giving it could save \$62,000.

But that bothered leaders. "You cannot cut your way to success," Anderson emphasized.

And then came the idea: Pay off the debt. "Looking back," Anderson said, "it seems so simple. The borrowed part of the goal was small," he pointed out. "Most just dug into their pockets--not trading for that new car or not going on that vacation."

One by-product of the campaign: "The people have self-esteem," Anderson said.

Hampton Heights, organized in 1950, has suffered declining membership in recent years, partly due to proliferation of churches in the area. At one time there were nearly 1,200 members. The church's indebtedness grew to \$670,000 in 1973 when the sanctuary was built.

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Anderson said the church expects growth following the success of the debt-free drive. "Our attitude and spirit both dictate growth," he said.

As Hampton Heights begins to "live within our means," it also should "find out what it is good at and do it," explained Anderson.

He said Hampton Heights will emphasize ministry to senior citizens, missions programs and its flourishing day care program. Day care facilities are filled with 75 children with others on the waiting list.

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Five Year Plan Launched
To 'Reach Out To Texas Deaf'

By Orville Scott

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DALLAS (BP)--Seven young Mission Service Corps volunteers--five of them deaf--are embarking on a five year mission effort involving an estimated 1.5 million deaf and hearing impaired people of Texas.

Before they complete their mission, they intend for Texas Baptists throughout the state to understand the tremendous needs and opportunities for people who live in a silent world. The volunteers are sponsored jointly by Mission Service Corps, the Baptist General Convention of Texas and churches with deaf ministries.

Texas Baptists have a tremendous opportunity in deaf work according to the coordinator of the group, Vesta D. Bice of Dallas, and Robert Parrish, deaf work consultant in the church ministries section.

"There are 95 churches with some type of ministry to deaf people, but only six of these have staff members who are pastors to the deaf," said Bice, who became Baptists' first full-time youth director to the deaf seven years ago at First Church, Dallas.

"The high Sunday morning attendance this year among the 95 churches was about 1,000 deaf people, but there are more than 134,000 deaf persons in our state, not to mention the hearing impaired," said Parrish.

Under a theme of "Reach Out to Texas Deaf," the youthful MSC volunteers will begin their statewide, five-year campaign in the Harlingen-Corpus Christi-San Antonio area. They will spend from six months to a year in each of the sections of the state. They will receive no salary, said Eugene Strahan, MSC coordinator for Texas.

Basic goals are to establish seven new missions for deaf people, win deaf people to Christ, enlist and train deaf persons to become leaders and field workers and develop ministries to deaf youth and children.

One of the strengths of "Reach Out to Texas Deaf" is the MSC volunteers will work in partnership with the local churches, said Bice.

"Thus, when the team departs for another region in the state, the groundwork will have been laid for continued work of the work with deaf people."

The ministry of "His Sign" evolved naturally from the fact that while many churches have started ministries to ethnic groups in their communities, most seem little aware of one of the oldest language groups of all--deaf people.

"One reason for this," said Bice, is deaf people have trouble vocalizing their needs, because, after all, they are a silent minority."

Among the churches who began chapels and churches for deaf people, there developed a tendency to "mainstream" deaf persons into the regular church services. This proved counterproductive as some deaf congregations with perhaps a hundred attending dwindled to a fraction of that as a result of efforts to blend them into the congregation of hearing people, said Parrish.

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"But now, deaf people are making us aware of their special needs and their desire to have a leadership role in the church," said Bice.

Striking evidence of this came last summer at the Statewide Deaf Conference where 20 people went forward to commit their lives to being missionaries and other fulltime Christian service volunteers.

Although their primary ministry is to the deaf, the volunteers will reach many others including families and friends of deaf people, Bice said.

Her parents are deaf, and she admits this is one reason she dedicated her life to helping free people who are locked in a silent world.

Unlike most illnesses or handicaps, deafness is increasing in our population, she said because medical knowledge and technology are helping more people to survive illnesses and live longer.

"About 70 percent of deaf people lost their hearing after the age of 12," she said.

Besides Bice, "His Sign" volunteers are: Becky Swadley of Dallas, the only other "hearing" member of the team, who will perform secretarial responsibilities and arrange lodging for the team. She was influenced to enter deaf ministry because of a deaf cousin.

Regina Davis, Fort Worth, who became deaf at age 13. A graduate of Gallaudet College, Washington, D.C., the foremost liberal arts college for deaf people. Davis will do Christian counseling.

Valerie Bingham, Dallas, an outstanding draftsman. She will do workshops for adults and train teachers for adults.

Severa Trevino, Dallas, who will specialize in helping churches begin ministries for deaf youth and children. He will teach workshops and seminars for workers with deaf children.

Harold Riley, Bryan, the only Black missionary to the deaf in the Southern Baptist Convention. He will lead Bible study and do evangelism.

Mark Mitchum, Arlington, who turned down a number of good financial opportunities in secular employment to serve with the group. He will help churches in using drama and music in reaching out to deaf people.