

(BP)

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

-- FEATURES

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The Lord's Hand Is Not Shortened
For Mississippi Dentist And Family By Bonita Sparrow

BOUAKE, Ivory Coast (BP)—For 10 years in Clinton, Miss., dentist Charles Deevers treated toothaches and attended church. He had a flourishing practice and a good life. But God had a better idea for the Deevers family.

Now assigned by the Foreign Mission Board to a mission point at Bouake on the Ivory Coast of Africa, Deevers still treats toothaches and attends church.

Today, however, many of the patients who come to him go from a pain in the mouth to a peace in the heart and the church Deevers attends is likely to be one that has sprung from his dental practice at Bouake, or from his work in the local prison there.

Both Deevers and his wife, Diane, were quick to acknowledge to Rosser McDonald of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission God's hand "is not shortened" in their lives. McDonald was on the Ivory Coast to film mission segments to be aired on "Our World," a weekly magazine-format program seen on the ACTS network.

Dental practice in Mississippi and on the Ivory Coast has some similarities—a toothache is a toothache in any language. But it has a number of differences.

In Bouake patients begin lining up outside the clinic at 5:30 in the morning. Deevers and his assistants will see 60 or 70 patients each day—8,000 to 10,000 a year.

The day begins at the clinic with Deevers and the clinic staff sharing devotions. That is followed by another devotional time with the people outside, waiting in line for treatment.

"We try to follow Jesus' example of healing the whole person—physically and spiritually," Deevers said. "We want the people to be physically healed but we also want them to hear the good news of Jesus."

After the devotions, as patients begin arriving, Deevers screens each one and then, under his direction, many of those patients are turned over to one of his seven assistants who are trained to give injections and extract selected teeth. The patients with difficult problems are reserved for Deevers' attention.

"These assistants aren't educated in terms of university degrees, but they have learned very quickly and are very capable," Deevers said. "They are all soul-winning Christians, able to disciple the patients. I believe God had a hand in guiding every one of them to us."

The assistants have all come to their jobs by different routes. Deevers told of one, a fellow church member, who came to him asking for prayer for "a problem."

"I asked him what the problem was and he said he would tell me after we had prayed about it," Deevers said. "So we prayed, asking God to solve his problem. After the prayer the man said, 'My problem is that I want to work in the clinic with you as one of your assistants.' That man is now a very capable assistant."

The clinic serves as more than just a dental office, Deevers said. "There is a reading room here that is open in the afternoon and evening with one of the assistants on hand to talk with people who come in."

And from that reading room, and the ability of Deevers and the seven dental assistants to disciple new believers, has emerged a church with 150 members. Services are held a block away from the clinic.

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That is not the only church which has resulted from Deevers' ministry. "There's a prison here with about 2,000 inmates serving sentences ranging from five years to life," Deevers said. "We got permission from the authorities to go in one day a week to provide dental care for about 15 or 20 people at a time."

Inmate patients are given slips of paper with Bible verses written on them, told to memorize the verses and to return the next week if they want copies of the book the verses come from.

"The Bible verses tell the plan of salvation," Deevers said. "When we talk to the people the second time we share who Christ is. We've been able to start a Bible study in the prison and it has grown into a church with 125 or so people holding worship services under a mango tree in the prison yard."

The walls of that church are defined by pieces of string tied to several trees. When the church is holding services, one of the pieces of string is untied, to represent an open door.

"There's a sweet spirit in that prison church," Deevers said. "The prisoners are now witnessing to other prisoners and each week we're seeing the Lord add to our number."

As the new church is able to meet physical needs--a blanket here, clothes, medicine or food there, the opportunities to witness increase.

Such activities provide Deevers with his own deep heart satisfaction--a satisfaction which does not come by just working for material things. "The Lord's hand is not shortened," Deevers emphasizes. "We have what we need. We are completely content."

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Nevada Reelects Johnston;
Ups CP Giving To 21 Percent

Baptist Press
10/30/84

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Nevada Baptists, holding their sixth annual meeting of the Nevada Baptist Convention, reelected Jerry Johnston, Reno businessman, to a second term as president. He is the second layman to hold the office of president in the six-year history of Nevada Baptist Convention.

Robert Holmes, pastor in Henderson, was elected first vice-president, and North Las Vegas pastor Cal Collins was elected second vice-president.

One hundred eighty-seven messengers, the largest in Nevada Baptist Convention's history, voted a \$1,180,000 budget with 21 percent designated for the Cooperative Program. This is an increase of one percent. Messengers also approved for the second year the formation of the Nevada Baptist Foundation. During the coming months, a charter and other founding documents will be drafted for this first separate agency of the Nevada Baptist Convention.

Resolutions passed during the convention included themes of pro-life and anti-pornography.

Messengers also voted their approval of the resolution encouraging Christian citizenship and a resolution supporting active involvement in Planned Growth in Giving. This resolution was supported with testimonies given by state staff members regarding their commitment to Planned Growth in Giving.

The seventh session of the Nevada Baptist Convention will be held in Winnemucca, Nev., Oct. 22-23, 1985.

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~~CORRECTION~~---In (BP) story "Statistics Show Mega Focus City Successful," mailed 10/19/84, in fifth paragraph please delete Los Angeles as one of the first Mega Focus Cities and replace it with Miami.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

81 Missionaries Commissioned
By HMB To Serve In 24 States

DALLAS (BP)—The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board commissioned 81 missionaries for service in 24 states and Canada during Oct. 28 morning worship services at Cliff Temple Baptist Church, Dallas.

The commissioning climaxed a week-long orientation at a downtown Dallas motel.

The board holds two orientation and commissioning services each year, with one in a city other than Atlanta where the agency is based. The fall commissioning service was held at the church where Jerry Gilmore, Dallas attorney and chairman of the board for the HMB directors, is a member and deacon.

Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, of Birmingham, Ala., led the prayer of dedication and Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner challenged the 81 missionaries to understand and be sensitive to the needs of hurting people in the world.

"Our land is dying from a lack of compassion," Tanner said. "We've got to understand the needs of people who are hurting, and reach out to their needs in compassion."

Tanner and Irvin Dawson, director of the board's missionary personnel department, presented certificates to each of the missionaries following personal testimonies from three of those commissioned.

The commissioned missionaries already are on the field in 24 states plus Canada. The 81 missionaries include eight serving in Michigan; seven in Colorado; six in Texas, Louisiana and Florida; five in New England; four in Maryland, Arizona, and Missouri; three in Ohio, Alaska, Illinois, and Virginia; two in Pennsylvania, Nevada, California, Washington, New York, Kentucky, New Mexico, Minnesota, and Georgia, plus one in Manitoba, Canada.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers of states where missionaries are serving by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

Brotherhood Commission Approves
Program Changes, Elects Officers

By Mike Davis

Baptist Press
10/30/84

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)—Major changes in the Royal Ambassador and Baptist Men's programs were approved by the Brotherhood Commission during the commission's semi-annual meeting in Memphis, Tenn., Oct. 24-27.

Acting on recommendations from a committee which has studied Brotherhood programs for two years, the commission voted to divide Royal Ambassadors into three age groups—Lads, for boys in grade 1-3; Crusaders, for boys in grades 4-6; Pioneers, for boys in grades 7-9.

The commission also voted to change older Pioneers to High School Baptist Young Men and to create three new divisions in the Baptist Men's program—Collegiate Baptist Young Men, ages 18-29 who are college students; Baptist Young Men, ages 18-29 who are not college students, and Senior Baptist Men, ages 55 and up. The program changes become effective in the fall of 1987.

Missions Impact 2000, a select committee of state Brotherhood leaders and Brotherhood Commission staff, began a study of Brotherhood work in 1982. They identified 12 concerns and proposed action plans to the Brotherhood Commission for implementation.

Concern for low participation in Brotherhood programs by high school young men and by young men between the ages of 18-29 prompted the change in Pioneer Royal Ambassadors and the addition of two Baptist Young Men programs. Plans call for the development of materials and intensified publicity to boost older teenage and young adult involvement in Brotherhood.

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Other Mission Impact 2000 recommendations approved were: involving more non-English speaking Southern Baptists in Brotherhood work, expanding Brotherhood work in black Southern Baptist churches, utilizing current technology such as video and computers to involve men and boys in missions, strengthening Brotherhood work in new work areas, developing a coordinated standard of excellence for age-level Brotherhood programs in local churches, developing a curriculum for Brotherhood outdoor education and continuing to cooperate with other SBC agencies in reaching American cities.

In other action, the commission requested its lay advisory committee to help evaluate the commission's marketing plan and to help evaluate commission publications, heard year end reports from Brotherhood Commission's staff and elected new officers.

The advisory committee is composed of laymen who have offered their expertise in areas related to the work of the commission. Requests for help with a marketing plan stem from an effort to increase the use and sales of Brotherhood materials. The magazine study will relate to the new programs' structures in an effort to develop the best kinds of magazines for each age level.

Don Greene, a layman from Hickory, N.C., was reelected to a second one-year term as commission chairman; Norris Stampley, a Jackson, Miss., layman, was elected vice-chairman, and Les Aldro, a Jeffersonville, Ind., layman, was elected recording secretary.

The commissioners also heard a planned growth and giving challenge by Cecil Ray, SBC Planned Growth coordinator. Ray explained bolder mission thrust will require bold giving by Southern Baptists, and suggested SBC agencies should be willing to take the lead in encouraging Southern Baptists to increase their gifts to the Cooperative Program during the next 15 years.

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ACTS Designs 'An Olympic Flame'
As Church Youth Outreach Tool

By Greg Warner

Baptist Press
10/30/84

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Testimonies by Carl Lewis and other world-class athletes, highlighted in the ACTS broadcast "An Olympic Flame," will be used in Southern Baptist churches as an outreach tool to youth during November and December.

The one-hour television special, video taped during the XXIII Olympiad in Los Angeles, will be shown on the American Christian Television System twice Nov. 25 and once Dec. 2. The Sunday night broadcasts are designed for after-church fellowships for youth.

"'An Olympic Flame' can be used to reach young people both for salvation and Christian growth," said R. Edward Gilstrap, vice-president of counseling services for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, which sponsors ACTS.

Gilstrap said the commission is offering churches guidelines for setting up the fellowships, as well as discussion guides for youth and youth leaders. "The leader's discussion guide points toward a time of decision when the leader will encourage the youth to accept Christ personally or rededicate their lives to him."

To prepare youth for the presentation of the gospel, a TV program features testimonies from six athletes, most of whom were in Los Angeles to compete in the Olympics. The program was taped for ACTS Aug. 7 in a special service at First Baptist Church, Van Nuys, Calif. All the athletes who participated are members of Lay Witnesses for Christ, a ministry to athletes headed by Sam Mings.

"Our objective isn't to be a role model to young people," said Lewis, winner of four gold medals in Los Angeles. "It's just to show who our role model is...Jesus Christ in our hearts." In his testimony, Lewis tried to turn attention away from his achievements and toward his faith in Christ. "That's the one element that's going to be there today, tomorrow and forever."

Lewis was joined on the program by track stars Willie Gault, Valerie Briscoe Hooks, Calvin Smith, Madeline Manning Mims and basketball star Joe Ward.

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Mims, a four-time Olympian and now a recording artist, said she was glad to see Christian athletes finally taking their testimonies to the public. "For sixteen years of international competition, I felt like an odd ball because I would try to share my Christian witness, and no one wanted to do that but me."

The program will be aired on ACTS at 8:30 p.m. and midnight Nov. 25 and at 10:00 p.m. Dec. 2 (all times Eastern). It can be received over cable TV systems and television stations carrying ACTS or directly from the Spacenet I satellite.

"If for some reason the scheduled airings are not compatible with the churches schedules, they can consider video taping the program for later use," Gilstrap added. "They may also find it is appropriate for other age groups."

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Dedication, Commitment Mark
Puerto Rico Student Ministry

By Gail Rothwell

Baptist Press
10/30/84

PONCE, Puerto Rico (BP)--Every Friday afternoon a group of students from the Catholic University in Ponce gather under one of the large shade trees on the campus.

The group, one of seven Baptist Student Union Bible study groups on the campus, meets outside because they have been denied official recognition by the university and are not allowed to use campus buildings for their meetings.

The seven Bible study groups, with more than 35 students attending, have been started at the university since November 1982.

While the Bible studies are usually held on campus grounds, the group also meets off-campus for fellowships and other BSU-related activities.

Hiram Duffer, religious education director for the Puerto Rico Baptist Fellowship, said this determination and commitment are characteristic of student work throughout the island. "Student work is the newest Southern Baptist program on the island, but also the fastest growing," he said. "Despite barriers such as campus opposition, lack of personnel, inadequate funds and shortage of language materials the work continues to thrive."

A territory of the United States since 1898, Puerto Rico is a small island which boasts a population of 3.5 million people. Since Southern Baptist work began there in 1965, 40 churches and missions which report a membership of 3,000 have been started.

In 1981, Bob Hartman, New Work Consultant for National Student Ministries of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, approached Duffer about the possibility of starting some BSU groups on the island.

Because there were no funds or personnel available to support the program, it was decided student directors who would have to be volunteers willing to raise their own support. Francisco Juarbe, an accountant for a large supermarket chain in Puerto Rico, had been doing some volunteer youth work on the island. Hearing of the need for a student director, Juarbe resigned his position to assume the task of ministering to the more than 100,000 students there by trying to establish BSU groups on the island's 20 university and college campuses.

Appointed in late 1981 as a Mission Service Corps volunteer, Juarbe was assisted by National Student Ministries and the Home Mission Board in his work.

For the next two years, he and his wife Teresa traveled around the island introducing Baptists to the concept of student ministry.

In October 1983, the Juarbes were joined by Anne Windus, a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, who had been appointed as a MSC student worker to Ponce.

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Presently, all student directors in Puerto Rico are volunteers who raise their own support.

In December 1983, the Juarbes left Puerto Rico to attend Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

This past January, Efraim and Vivian Riveria were appointed as MSC volunteers to continue the work at Juarbe had started. Efraim had been a student at the Baptist Seminary in San Juan and Vivian was Duffer's secretary.

Vivian Riveria noted that this year, more than 100 students are participating in BSU activities on ten campuses. In October, when the third annual "state" BSU convention was held in San Juan, 103 students from campuses throughout the island participated.

Student work is dependent upon the support of the local church, Riveria explained. "We travel to the different churches to explain what BSU is and then try to find out if there are any interested students in the church," she said. "All the BSU groups started in Puerto Rico have been initiated through a church."

In addition to churches, this year the Riverias introduced the idea of student work to youth groups, the annual pastor's retreat and the Baptist Young Women's retreat.

Duffer said the potential of student work in Puerto Rico is unlimited. He cited a study conducted by Juarbe in 1982 which revealed 90 percent of the island's 100,000 students did not attend church anywhere.

Duffer and Riveria are excited about the future of student work in Puerto Rico, even though the Riverias will be moving to Texas in December. There Efraim will attend school at Mary Hardin-Baylor College, Belton, to prepare for Southwestern Seminary.

In January 1985, Windus will become the interim island-wide student coordinator until another MSC volunteer can be appointed to serve in San Juan.

"Even though directors will come and go, God will continue to work through students here," noted Windus. "Student ministry will continue to grow in Puerto Rico because the students have committed their lives to God."

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New England Churches
Plan To Be Pacesetters

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
10/30/84

PORTSMOUTH, N.H. (BP)—Southern Baptists in upper New England are reviving the old saying, "As goes Maine, so goes the country," only this time it has nothing to do with presidential elections.

Leaders of churches and missions in Maine and New Hampshire feel they are on the verge of unprecedented growth and hope to be denominational pacesetters in penetrating their communities with the gospel in the next decade.

Al Riddley, director of religious education for the Baptist Convention of New England, cited the results of a recent enlargement campaign, including 11 churches and missions in Maine and New Hampshire.

A total of 74 persons were enrolled in Sunday school, 379 prospects were discovered and 333 contacts made. In addition, leaders of churches in Lewiston, Maine, and Nashua, N.H., decided to begin Sunday school weekly workers' meetings.

"I'm encouraged by the response," said Riddley. "At the same time, the numbers are small compared to the population."

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For example, in Main where five Southern Baptist churches and two missions are located, there is only one Southern Baptist church for every 286,500 persons. The ratio in New Hampshire is one Baptist church per 159,500 persons. In contrast, the national ratio is one Southern Baptist church per 6,291 persons.

"We're talking about hundreds of thousands of prospects on our church fields," Riddley emphasized. Building credibility must be a priority for churches in New England, according to Riddley. However, this can be difficult with limited finances and personnel.

"It's easy for our churches to get preoccupied with what they don't have, but one benefit of the enlargement campaign was that it redirected our members' attention toward reaching people," said Riddley.

For example, a mission at Exeter, N.H., meets in a Grange hall and uses sheets to partition Sunday school classes. However, on the first Sunday of the enlargement campaign, a total of 42 persons were present and four new members were enrolled. Ten persons participated in the Sunday afternoon visitation and discovered 29 prospects.

"You have to get lost to find the church building, but we're building a church there," said Riddley.

New Hope Church near Concord, N.H., meets in a two-tiered barn with a wood stove for heat, but they enrolled 13 people in Sunday school the first day of the enlargement campaign.

"I had a negative attitude until a couple of weeks ago because we have reached a saturation point," said Pastor Al Page. "But now I feel like we'll do whatever we can to find space when we reach more people."

Riddley urged the pastors and Sunday school directors to be strategists. "We've got to think about more than our back yard. We've got to think about a whole area.

"We can reach people by going door to door and trying to enroll them," Riddley emphasized. His emphasis is a personal one because as a child in Chicago, his own family was reached through door-to-door visitation.

Riddley predicts a bright future for Baptist work in upper New England with priority being given to starting new Sunday school classes and new Sunday schools and missions, along with a strong emphasis on adult education.

"I'd rather be in New England than anyplace else in the world," said Riddley. "The Lord is teaching me so much about maturity and sacrifice. I like the challenges. New England is going to be a pacesetter."

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Snow No Barrier
To Maine Volunteer

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
10/30/84

AUBURN, Maine (BP)—"No, Lord, it snows up there," was Mary Beth Caffey's first response at the thought of moving from Waco, Texas, to help churches in upper New England strengthen their educational ministries.

Nonetheless, Caffey began work Sept. 1 as a Mission Service Corps volunteer, with her primary assignment for the next year being to help start eight Sunday schools in Maine where there are now five Southern Baptist churches and two missions.

She will lead in finding buildings and training workers for the Bible study units. "I'm like a minister of education for the state of Maine," she said.

Caffey, formerly minister of education at Park Lake Drive Baptist Church in Waco, also is a youth consultant for the Baptist Convention of New England.

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Caffey's move to the Northeast was the next step in a spiritual journey that began last February. "I came to a point in my life that I wanted to do whatever the Lord wanted—wherever he wanted me to do it," she noted.

Funds to support her two-year term as a volunteer were provided by the Virginia State Convention (partnership convention with New England) and from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's contract funds for starting new Sunday schools. Also, "churches and individuals in Texas have given sacrificially to help me," said Caffey.

Even though the 23 years of Baptist work in Maine often have been characterized by struggle, Caffey believes churches in the state are now in a position to grow. However, a lack of space and money to buy land and buildings remain two major barriers, she noted.

"It has amazed me the positive attitudes these people have," Caffey reflected. "Any space they can turn into a class they are using in our churches. They have a mentality of not making excuses. These people are raised adapting. I tell them they are troopers," she said.

While Caffey's seminary training and church experience are valuable assets in training workers, she is quick to emphasize she is gaining valuable spiritual insights from the people with whom she works.

"The folks in Maine are ready to see God work. They believe God is going to do something," said Caffey. "Anyone can get the education. These folks have the spirit. They know the God to whom they are praying. I'm learning from them to have vision."

Caffey, who spent 12 days in New England in May while deciding to make the move, said she came to Maine knowing the problems as well as the opportunities.

"They shot straight with me before I came up," she said. "They made sure I knew the way it could be. I knew what I was coming into. I'm extremely grateful for that."

Caffey said it is difficult to predict how many of the new units will become missions or churches. "I do know we're getting ready to grow. I don't know what that will mean numerically. If we gain two or three new churches out of this, each will be a group reaching people for Christ."

New units in Maine do not have the luxury of drawing from long-time Southern Baptist church members to help them get started, Caffey emphasized.

"They have to win people to the Lord. There is no Southern Baptist base to draw on. That's the kind of challenge these folks have," she said.

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

Missouri Baptists Speak
On Abortion, Education

Baptist Press
10/30/84

LAKE OF THE OZARKS, Mo. (BP)—A record 3,319 registered messengers and guests gathered at Tan-Tar-A Resort on Lake of the Ozarks, Oct. 22-24, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Between times of celebration, messengers adopted a record \$14 million budget, 35 percent of which will go to causes outside the state through the national Cooperative Program, the same percentage as last year.

Messengers also approved participation in the nationwide simultaneous revival effort for 1985-86 known as Good News America and the SBC stewardship emphasis, Planned Growth in Giving. Missouri Baptists will begin their stewardship emphasis in 1987.

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Equal pay for women who do equal work was one of the 12 resolutions approved by the convention. Other resolutions expressed opposition to abortion on demand and supported efforts by the Missouri state board of education to secure excellence in the state's public elementary and secondary schools.

The abortion resolution was adopted after messengers turned back repeated efforts to put the convention on record as opposing all abortions. Instead, the messengers approved language which permitted abortions to save the physical life of the mother and in cases of rape and incest.

Support for excellence in public schools was endorsed after an address by Missouri Commissioner of Education Arthur Mallory, a deacon in First Baptist Church, Jefferson City. In addition to supporting the state Board of Education, the resolution called on "citizens and educators to set new expectations for the achievement of excellence by students, teachers and local schools."

The resolution also asked increased funding for public schools.

Elected president of the Missouri Baptist Convention was John Gilbert, pastor of First Baptist Church in Poplar Bluff. He is a former member of the convention's executive board and is a trustee of William Jewell College, a Baptist affiliated school in Liberty.

The Missouri Baptist Convention will meet next at the new Omni Con Center in St. Louis, Oct. 21-24, 1985.

"Walking in the Truth" composed by Missouri Baptists' church music director Bob Woolley, was performed by a 900-voice choir. It was commissioned as part of the convention's sesquicentennial celebration.

Other historical highlights included opening a time capsule sealed at the centennial celebration of Missouri Baptists in 1934 and originally prepared by the semicentennial convention in 1884.

As part of the historical observance, special recognition was given those who have been Missouri Baptist convention presidents. Eighteen of the 20 living past presidents were recognized and presented memorial gavels symbolizing their years of service. The gavels were made from a tree grown on the site of Old Bethel Baptist Church. Old Bethel, located near Jackson, was the first permanent non-Catholic church founded west of the Mississippi River.

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Baptist Deacon Fights
Homosexual 'Virginia Woolf'

By Bonita Sparrow

Baptist Press
10/30/84

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—When a theater group announced plans to present a homosexual version of Edward Albee's searing domestic drama, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" Jim Norwood decided he wasn't ready for that kind of production in his city and thought his neighbors probably weren't ready for it either.

Norwood, a deacon at Tate Springs Baptist Church and a member of the Arlington (Texas) City Council, takes seriously both his Christian commitment and his community responsibilities. He didn't let being the lone dissenter stop him.

"As the story progressed I was joined by Richard Greene, another city councilman, who also was a member of the theater group's board," Norwood said. "Greene is a deacon at Fielder Road Baptist Church in Arlington. When he became aware of the situation he resigned from the theater board."

Another councilman, a Methodist layman, also raised his voice against the proposed production.

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The local newspapers gave their stand so much publicity the proposed homosexual production came to Albee's attention. The playwright sent a telegram to the theater group saying he had never intended the play to be presented in that form.

Norwood, who told his story in August on "Life Today" on the ACTS network, told host Jimmy R. Allen that in spite of censorship charges the production did close down.

Norwood, who owns four auto body and fender repair shops in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, said the flap did not hurt his business. But he has learned the local group for gay rights has targeted him for defeat when his re-election to the City Council comes up a year and a half from now.

That does not worry him. "The message I'm trying to send is that the Christian community needs to know the larger issues of the community and needs to be willing to speak up for morality," he said. "I think the pastors and local churches need to lead in this effort."

While he received some 350 communications about his stand—330 of them positive—Norwood only heard from two pastors. "And one of them was negative," he reported. (His own pastor was out of the country at the time.)

Norwood told Allen he is anxious for citizens not only to be knowledgeable about community affairs and willing to speak up about them but to alert civic and political leaders about problems of morality.

"Then, when that person speaks out, citizens need to be present to support him," he said. "I have become aware as a civic leader that numbers weigh decisions."

And, yes, if it were to be to do over, Norwood would do it again. "I was elected to serve the community and this was a way to do it," he said.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Radio and Television Commission