



BAPTIST PRESS

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October 31, 1985

85-135

Brotherhood Trustees, Staff
Experience Renewal Weekend

By Jack Childs

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--For the first time, trustees and employees of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, state Brotherhood leaders and their spouses participated in a lay renewal weekend conducted especially for them.

The two-day event concluded a combined meeting of commission trustees, staff and state Brotherhood leaders Oct. 23-26 in Memphis, Tenn., home of the Brotherhood Commission.

The agency's president, James H. Smith, said many trustees and some state leaders had never participated in a lay renewal event, even though it is a program of the Brotherhood Commission.

"We believed a lay renewal experience would not only provide exposure to the program for those who had never participated, it also would draw all members of the Brotherhood Commission family into a closer relationship," Smith said.

Lay renewal is an emphasis of the Brotherhood Commission, designed as a local church event in which a congregation considers its relationship to God corporately and individually. The emphasis has two phases: a Lay Renewal Weekend in which a person's awareness of God is emphasized and a Ministry/Evangelism Weekend in which the church's mission is discussed.

One commission employee said, "I have seen some of these people at meetings for years, but they were never more than names and faces before our small group meetings. I thank God for really letting me get to know them."

A state Brotherhood leader said it is a constant struggle for him to be an attentive husband and father while involved in his work in a world that is crying for his Christian witness. "It is helpful for me to know that I'm not alone in this struggle and that Christ gives me support through my friends and peers. I never quite felt that before," he added.

"Every woman in my Sunday school class had problems," the wife of a commission trustee shared. "And this meeting has helped me learn that I can better minister to them if I take the initiative to comfort instead of waiting for them to come to me."

To get greater participation of couples, the Brotherhood Commission paid transportation costs for wives of trustees and state leaders if the couple would agree to stay over the weekend, enabling the commission to purchase supersaver airfares.

By doing this, both the man and his wife were able to attend a cost equal to only two-thirds of one full fare. The results were participation by 189 trustees, staff, state Brotherhood workers and their spouses.

"Not only did we get the men and their wives involved in lay renewal, we helped the wives experience first hand some of the work in which their husbands are involved," Smith said.

Douglas Beggs, director of the adult department at the Brotherhood Commission and a staff person responsible for lay renewal, said he realized the same results could not be expected from the renewal experience of such a diverse group compared to the local church.

"However," Beggs said, "we did feel a closeness in small groups and began to understand one another's circles and what each one is trying to do with his life."

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"Many who had no concept of the renewal program began to feel comfortable with the transcultural intergenerational aspect of the program and how it cuts across all kinds of lines. I believe there was a definite bonding of the three groups which was one of the things I was hoping would come out of this," Beggs completed.

Norris Stampley, a retired executive with the Mississippi Power and Light Company, Jackson, Miss., who was elected chairman of the Brotherhood Commission trustees during the meeting, said he did not know what to expect since he had never attended a lay renewal event.

"I was eager to participate partly out of curiosity," Stampley said, "and now that I've experienced it, I'm really glad we did it. Besides being a warm spiritual experience, it was an excellent indoctrination for us trustees in lay renewal."

Fred Roach, Baptist layman from Dallas, coordinated the event. He and 13 team members, lay people from all over the Southern Baptist Convention, came to Memphis at their own expense to lead the small group conference.

The lay renewal experience was summed up by a Brotherhood Commission staff member who said, "It was a heart warming experience. I hope we do it again."

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Conferees Agree To Raise
Non-Profit Postal Rates

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
10/31/85

WASHINGTON (BP)--Non-profit mailers will face an approximate 30 percent postal rate increase Jan. 1, 1986, if Congress approves a conference committee compromise.

Senate and House conferees agreed Oct. 30 to a U.S. postal budget that includes \$820 million in federal subsidies to provide reduced mailing rates for non-profit publications, including state Baptist newspapers and church newsletters.

The compromise figure falls \$161 million short of what the Postal Service says it needs to maintain the present level of subsidy. The figure, however, dramatically exceeds the \$39 million proposed by the Reagan administration, which advocated terminating the subsidy altogether except for benefits to organizations that send materials to the blind.

Conferees did agree to retain an amendment by Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, that will delay the increase in postal rates for non-profit mailers from Oct. 1 until Jan. 1.

The \$820 million amount is four percent above the original Senate-approved figure, but 12 percent below that approved by the House.

Non-profit and other subsidized mailers are now at step 14 of a 16-step plan begun in 1970 to eliminate the postal subsidy. The proposed increase, however, would likely move non-profit mailers to step 16 beginning Jan. 1, six months before step 15 was scheduled to take effect.

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Southern Baptist Camera Crew
Films Documentary In China

Baptist Press
10/31/85

NANJING, China (BP)--A Southern Baptist film crew is producing a documentary on the Christian church in China which is expected to premiere at the 1986 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Atlanta.

The seven-person crew is interviewing Christians and documenting church life in the cities of Shanghai, Hangzhou and Nanjing during its trip to eastern China, which began in mid-October and ends in November.

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Sent by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, the team is interviewing both older Christian leaders who were trained before the communist era began in 1949 and younger believers who represent the new generation of Chinese Christians.

The interviews will serve as background for "extensive visual coverage of the day-to-day life of Chinese Christians," said film producer Van Payne. The documentary will emphasize the diversity of Christian worship, ranging from church services in cities to rural home meetings, with added coverage of the Christian seminary in Nanjing and the work of the China Christian Council. The council encourages religious education for church leaders and publication of Christian materials.

As much as possible, Payne said, narration and information in the film "will be relayed to the audience directly by the persons involved." That approach reflects the philosophy of the project, according to William R. O'Brien, Foreign Mission Board executive vice-president.

O'Brien described the documentary as "an attempt to gain insight on the church through the eyes of Chinese Christians, both older and younger...an effort to help raise the level of understanding of Christians outside China about what the Chinese church is, where it is, how it sees its future."

The documentary idea developed through a series of contacts between Southern Baptists and leaders of the China Christian Council. Besides communicating with Christians overseas, Chinese Christian leaders may use a Chinese-language version of the film to educate Christians in widely separated parts of China about the church as a whole.

The producers anticipate the completed documentary will run 30 to 40 minutes. Production will be completed next spring. The film, or portions of it, likely will be shown at the June 1986 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Atlanta and later at the annual Foreign Missions Conferences at Ridgecrest, N.C., and Glorietta, N.M. It will be available for screening by local churches and other groups through Southern Baptist Film Centers. The 16-millimeter film may also be transferred to videotape for distribution.

O'Brien hopes the documentary will attract the interest of the "larger Christian community" in the United States. "We view a 30-minute documentary as a window through which we can glimpse a bit of reality in the church in China today," he said. "Hopefully enough light will come through that window for real rejoicing because of what's happening, a better understanding and a renewed commitment to pray for our brothers and sisters in China."

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CORRECTION: In the (BP) story released 10/28/85, "Mexico Earthquakes Spawn Church-starting Project," please delete the final sentence of the 12th paragraph, which reads: "Still missing and presumed dead is a Baptist doctor from Guadalajara who was staying at the Regis Hotel in downtown Mexico City Sept. 19 when it collapsed." It was reported Oct. 30 that this man is alive and back in Guadalajara.

Thanks, BP

Ron Dixon Resigns
From RTVC Staff

Baptist Press
10/31/85

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Ron Dixon, vice-president of media services for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, resigned in October to return to the San Antonio, Texas-based agency, Atkins and Associates Advertising.

He was executive vice-president and director of that agency's management group when he left to join the staff of the RTVC in May 1981.

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Dixon, who has remained on the board of directors at Atkins and Associates, said his commitment to the American Christian Television System (ACTS) and its potential for spreading the gospel "has not altered. I believe I can serve ACTS better in promoting its advertising potential at this stage of its development by being a consultant and operating in the secular advertising field," he said.

At the RTVC, Dixon directed the activities of the broadcast services department, the marketing department and the promotion department. The department now will report to Luke Williams, executive vice-president.

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Conference Committee Drops
Amendment On Witchcraft

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
10/31/85

WASHINGTON (BP)--A congressional conference committee has voted to eliminate Senate action that would have taken tax-exempt status away from any cult or organization that promotes witchcraft or satanism.

Senate and House conferees agreed without discussion to exclude a Senate-approved amendment to the Treasury, Postal Service and General Appropriations Act of 1986. The measure now goes back to both houses for final approval.

The amendment, sponsored by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., stipulated that no tax exemption be allowed for any "cult, organization or other group that has as a purpose, or that has any interest in, the promoting of satanism or witchcraft."

A similar measure is still in the House Ways and Means Committee. That proposed bill, introduced by Rep. Robert S. Walker, R-Penn., would deny tax exemptions and deductibility for contributions to "religious organizations having a substantial interest in the promotion of witchcraft."

An aide to Walker said the congressman is working to have the Ways and Means Committee incorporate his bill into pending tax reform legislation.

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North Korean Christians
Survive, Visitors Say

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
10/31/85

PANMUNJOM, Korea (BP)--Once the strongest Christian churches in Korea flourished in the north. Today, while Christianity thrives in South Korea, visitors say not a single church building stands north of the 38th parallel.

The communist North Korean government claims enemy bombs destroyed the churches during the Korean War. But outsiders charge that the churches--and the people inside them--fell victim not only to war but to unrelenting communist persecution.

Many Christians in North Korea fled south after World War II. Many more left during the Korean War or died in the conflict. Others, as family members now in the south or abroad testify, were imprisoned or killed for their faith. Then a wall of silence encircled the North Korean church.

Are there any Christians left? Recent American visitors to North Korea say yes. At least three church-related groups from the United States traveled to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, last year and met with members of the tiny, government-approved Korean Christian Federation. The federation is said to represent just 5,000 believers nationwide out of a total North Korean population of 20 million.

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But the federation's president told visiting American Paul Wee, Lutheran World Ministries general secretary, "There are a great many more (Christians)...The church is growing. Although we have only 15 ordained pastors, there is now a three-year seminary course and seven new pastors are being trained. We have produced a new hymnal and a new translation of the New Testament. The Old Testament will be printed in a few months."

Christians worship in some 70 home meeting places, say federation leaders. Westerners have visited a few of the meetings, though always accompanied by representatives of the Korean Cultural Society for Foreign Countries, the advisory body to the government which issues invitations to foreigners.

The national constitution declares "citizens have religious liberty and the freedom of anti-religious propaganda."

North Korean Christian representatives have been allowed to attend a few conferences overseas. In May a North Korean delegation visited China at the invitation of the China Christian Council, which has sponsored Bible printing for Koreans living in northeastern China. It was reportedly the first face-to-face encounter between Chinese and North Korean Christians in a generation.

Foreign observers disagree about whether the North Korean church representatives now visible are courageous believers or helpless public relations tools in the hands of an anti-Christian government out to remold foreign opinion. The debate resembles the international controversies that have raged around government-registered churches in China and the Soviet Union. But given North Korea's self-imposed isolation, far less information exists to support either side.

United Church of Christ mission leader Paul Gregory, another recent visitor to North Korea, offers this perspective: "It obviously is a very weak church. It's very difficult on the basis of a very brief and admittedly superficial contact to make any judgments...They are people who have been pretty heavily oppressed over the last 30 years and are obviously people of deep faith. They have persisted in identifying themselves as Christians in a country where that is exceedingly unpopular."

The dominant belief system in North Korea flows from the state. It centers on Kim Il Sung, known as the "Great Leader," who has ruled the nation since the 1940s. Every citizen wears a Kim Il Sung badge or button. His status as all-knowing, all-loving father of the nation is drilled into all North Koreans from childhood. Kim's son and heir apparent, the "Dear Leader," Kim Jong Il, is now receiving similar adoration.

Christian observers hope the younger Kim, if and when he takes over, will allow Christians to increase their tentative opening to the outside world. If he does, perhaps the world will discover a church which has not only endured, but prevailed.

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

ETBU Names Lewis
Acting President

Baptist Press
10/31/85

MARSHALL, Texas (BP)--Harvey Lewis has been named acting president of East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, Texas, replacing Jerry Dawson, who was recently named director of the Texas Baptist Christian Education Coordinating Board in Dallas.

Lewis, who was vice-president for development at the university for eight years, begins his new duties Nov. 1, 1985. He said trustees hope to find a permanent president by mid-1986.

Lewis has been director of planned giving at ETBU since fall of 1984. He said he plans to retire after his time as acting president.

He is a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, Texas, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and was a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force from May 1942 to March 1946. He was pastor of churches in Marshall, Mount Pleasant, San Antonio, Kerrville, Cleveland and Port Acres.

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