



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 6, 1987

87-168

Battle Against Obscenity
Is Winnable, Experts Say

N-CO
(CLC)
By Tim Fields

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--A proliferation of hardcore and child pornography which is devastating lives and destroying families in America can be stopped by thorough education, careful planning and aggressive citizen action, four anti-pornography experts say.

The anti-pornography activists addressed a two-day conference of 150 Southern Baptists from four states and other church and community leaders, sharing stories of human tragedy linked to the production and consumption of pornography.

The conference, sponsored by the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission, also provided resources for participants to launch anti-pornography campaigns in their local communities.

Alan Sears, who directed the United States Attorney General's Commission on Pornography which reported its findings in July 1986, told participants the commission found there was almost no comparison between the material found in pornography outlets in 1968 by a similar government commission and the much more explicit material sold today.

Sears, now legal counsel for Citizens for Decency through Law, said, "Pornography has grown from a relatively small industry selling hundreds of million of dollars worth of materials each year to a multibillion-dollar industry which now has outlets in nearly every community in the United States where it is not controlled by law enforcement.

"In 1968 and recently, studies show that the largest category of consumers of all forms of pornography in America is 12- to 17-year-old children," he pointed out.

Sears said the pornographic materials which now fall into the hands of children are not the photos of pin-up girls that were occasionally seen on the walls of service station garages in 1968.

For example, he said, "There is now a whole series of best-selling video cassettes available in Mississippi and elsewhere that deals with the theme of incest. These videotapes, which are purchased or rented by parents and even teenagers, deal with sexual relations between mother and son, brother and sister and extended family members including aunts, uncles and grandparents.

"Other materials are even more explicit," Sears said. "I personally, with my staff, went into a store in Times Square, and we counted 45 different types of animals which were shown engaged in sexual acts with human beings.

"We also analyzed materials in 16 pornography outlets in six major cities. The overwhelming themes of the material commonly available in America today are degradation and humiliation of women and children and the rape myth which says that every woman alive secretly harbors a desire to be taken by force," he said.

Victor Cline, a clinical psychologist with the University of Utah, said he is counseling with a growing number of children who are becoming pornography addicts by calling dial-a-porn 900 numbers from their own home telephones and listening to erotic pornographic recordings.

Cline said one teenage boy, after listening to a dial-a-porn recording, went to a day-care center operated by his mother and raped a four-year-old girl.

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"There are two victims in this pornography-related crime," Cline contended, "the boy who listened to the pornographic recording and the girl he raped.

"Many parents do not find out that their children are making these phone calls until the phone bill comes," Cline warned. Other parents, he said, never find out because their children use the phone somewhere else.

He cited the example of children who called dial-a-porn on the phone at a church during an extended break between services. In another instance Cline counseled with a mother whose 13-year-old son, several neighborhood friends and her 10-year-old daughter listened to dial-a-porn recordings for 211 minutes and ran up a \$74 phone bill.

Immediately after the call the children began acting out the sexual acts they heard, and the son and several friends had sexual intercourse with the boy's sister after she asked them to "touch her" like the woman on the phone had described.

Cline said these same horrors are happening all over America and that children and adults alike are becoming addicted to dial-a-porn and other pornographic materials.

"Once these kids call dial-a-porn, they never stop making the calls," he explained. "It's addictive just like heroin or morphine, and children in nearly every household in America are just three seconds away from this kind of pornography. That's about how long it takes to dial the number," he said.

Cline cited examples of doctors, lawyers, judges and other community leaders who are becoming porno addicts. "It takes more and more explicit material to turn these people on."

Cline said porno addicts follow the pattern which includes addiction, desensitization and legitimization.

Jerry Kirk, executive director of the Religious Alliance Against Pornography, told participants, "America and its relationship with pornography is like the Titanic headed for the iceberg." He said he has asked God to raise up people to "go up on the bridge of the ship to turn it around."

Kirk said his organization had joined forces with groups like the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission to concentrate on stopping specific forms of pornography which are all illegal.

"I am committed to working with Larry Baker of the Christian Life Commission and others in mobilizing America to stop hardcore and child pornography," he said.

Kirk called on all Southern Baptists to join the war on pornography. "Families are being destroyed by pornography, and we need those to join us who won't put up with it," he said. "Our campaign against pornography is not a hate campaign, rather it is a campaign of compassion."

Rob Showers, executive director of the National Obscenity Enforcement Unit of the U.S. Department of Justice, told conference participants, "The fight against obscenity and child pornography includes two of the top seven criminal justice priorities of the United States Department of Justice as declared by the Attorney General last March."

Showers said this places pornography on the same level of concern as drugs and terrorism.

"One of the difficulties in fighting pornography is the relative lack of awareness among the general public and among law enforcement officials and prosecutors as to the gravity and harmful effects of this ever-increasing plague," he said.

Showers also cited a lack of understanding about current laws related to pornography. "The Supreme Court categorically stated that obscenity has never been protected by the First Amendment or any part of the Constitution and is not protected today.

"Yet, if you polled the citizens of this country, they would believe that it is protected. Even in law school for many years this myth was perpetuated," he said.

Showers said the legal definition of obscenity as defined in Miller vs. California came down to a three-point test. "That basically can be defined as patently offensive sexual conduct that substantially throughout the material lacks serious value and, therefore, violates community standards," he explained.

Showers called on conference participants to join with the Christian Life Commission and other organized groups to learn how to fight pornography.

"Citizens are the primary moving force in changing laws and attitudes in this country," he said.

"Citizens sent more than 200,000 letters to President Reagan on the pornography issue, which is more than on any other issue," Showers said. "This has had a lot to do with changes we are now seeing."

Showers also encouraged citizens to support their local prosecutors in obscenity cases. He also asked them to stay on juries which involve obscenity cases and not to ask to be excused because the materials they may have to see during the trial are offensive.

In a challenge to conference participants, Sears told them not to despair in their efforts to fight pornography.

"We are beginning to see that not only can we win the war against pornography, but that every state and community in the country that has chosen to do so is in fact winning the battle," he said.

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N-CO

Routh Diagnosed With
Inoperable Cancer

Baptist Press
11/6/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--Longtime Southern Baptist Convention executive Porter W. Routh has developed an inoperable malignant tumor in his abdomen, his doctors have reported.

Routh was executive secretary (now president) and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee from 1951 to 1979 and has held numerous other denominational posts.

He underwent surgery Oct. 30, when surgeons discovered the tumor. They bypassed the tumor with a colostomy and plan to treat it with chemotherapy as soon as he is strong enough to withstand the procedures.

His family and colleagues have said friends are free to send him cards and letters. He may be reached at Baptist Hospital, Room 8304, 2000 Church St., Nashville, Tenn. 37203. Inquiries about his condition should be directed to the Executive Committee; the telephone number is (615) 244-2355.

In addition to his leadership of the Executive Committee, he was secretary of Brotherhood and promotion for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, 1941-42; editor of the Baptist Messenger, Oklahoma Baptists' weekly newsjournal, 1942-45; secretary of the department of survey, statistics and information for the SBC Sunday School Board, 1945-50; senior secretary of the SBC, 1945-51; adjunct professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979-80; and interim executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, 1980-81.

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Texas, Virginia Okay
Pari-mutuel, Lottery

N-CO
(Texas, Va.)

Baptist Press
11/6/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--Voters in Texas and Virginia approved gambling proposals in statewide elections Nov. 3.

In Texas, legalized race track gambling won approval for the first time in 50 years as voters turned out in unexpectedly large numbers. The pari-mutuel gambling referendum, which would allow wagering on horse and greyhound races, led 57 percent to 43 percent.

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Virginia will become the 29th state to operate a lottery as a result of the vote, in which voters by 57-43 percent favored a state-operated lottery.

Pari-mutuel wagering drew heavy backing from the San Antonio area with more than 73 percent support, followed by Austin at 68 percent and Dallas, Houston and Fort Worth all at 57 percent. Statewide, proponents of pari-mutuel drew about 1.2 million votes, while opponents polled 927,000. It was considered a heavy turnout for an off-year election.

Supporters of pari-mutuel gambling claimed racing would be a financial boon for the state which has suffered economically because of the collapse of the oil industry. But Sue Cox, campaign manager for the chief opposition group Texans Who Care, said voters who favored the gambling issue may have been "duped by claims that pari-mutuel will bring economic prosperity.

"I think it was the lure of jobs to a state that has had a serious loss of jobs which made the difference," Cox said. "I think it's sad because they are going to be disappointed when the projections do not materialize.

"I am really grateful for the support of Texas Baptist churches," she said. "In a way this was a moral victory since in June most polls showed the anti-gambling forces to be trailing by as much as 40 percent.

"It is now our responsibility to be watchdogs of the industry, to be sure economic benefits are realized, animals are not abused and crime is kept out," she said.

Phil Strickland, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, noted that gambling proponents spent twice as much on their campaign as did Texans Who Care.

"Despite the fact we did not have as much money as the proponents of gambling, our efforts did succeed in communicating to Texans the problems that accompany legalized gambling and in broadening the base of concern about whether or not legalized gambling is good for Texas," he said.

In addition, Strickland noted the campaign has resulted in a high degree of unanimity and effort among the Texas religious community and he praised that spirit of cooperation.

"The Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission has been involved in numerous public policy issues for more than 30 years. We do not enter that arena with any promise that we will win them all, but with the conviction that we have to speak, as best we understand them, to the needs of the people of Texas. We will continue to do so," he said.

Texas Baptists were heavily involved in the campaign against pari-mutuel gambling, contributing more than \$326,000 to the effort and forming local committees across the state to organize people to oppose the referendum.

The Virginia vote ended a decade-long debate over the issue of a state-operated lottery. Although the state may begin the lottery on Dec. 1, it will be several months before the state agency which will oversee the games can be organized and a director and five commissioners can be appointed by the governor.

The victory by proponents came despite the opposition of nearly every state leader who took a stand, including most of the General Assembly, the attorney general -- and at the last minute -- Gov. Gerald L. Baliles. Three former governors, including Charles Robb, often described as the most popular politician in the state, also urged the lottery's defeat.

In addition, leading Virginia business figures and the state organizations of Southern Baptists and United Methodists opposed the lottery. Although the Episcopal and Catholic dioceses of Virginia did not take a position on the issue, both of their bishops warned the lottery would cause hardship to the state's poor.

The anti-lottery forces outspent pro-lottery proponents by about \$160,000. Of the \$400,000 raised by the anti-lottery camp, \$100,000 came from United Methodists and \$70,000 from Southern Baptists.

The pro-lottery camp spent \$240,000, \$200,000 of which was raised by out-of state gambling companies and related interests, according to the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Scientific Games Inc., a Georgia-based company that develops instant lottery games, contributed \$104,000.

The new law prohibits advertising to encourage people to purchase lottery tickets. But J.W. (Billy) O'Brien Jr. of Virginia Beach, a member of the House of Delegates who has been the strongest supporter of a lottery, promised to make an effort to abolish that limitation, which he called "an exercise in futility."

Although Virginia is only the second Old South state to approve a lottery, Florida also operates one. The nearby states of Maryland and West Virginia and the District of Columbia all operate lotteries and many Virginians have crossed state lines to participate in the games.

The referendum divided the state along clear urban-rural lines. The so-called Urban Corridor, stretching from the suburbs of Washington, through Richmond to Norfolk, heavily favored the lottery, while the farming regions of the southern and southwestern parts of the state rejected it, as did the isolated mountainous areas west of the Blue Ridge.

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(Contributing to this story were Jerilynn Armstrong of the Dallas bureau of Baptist Press and Robert Dilday, associate editor of the Religious Herald, newsjournal of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.)

Minnesota-Wisconsin
Adopts 5-Year Plan

By Louise Winningham

Baptist Press
11/6/87

N-CO
(M-W)

BROOKLYN PARK, Minn. (BP)--Messengers at the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Convention adopted a 5-Year Long Range Plan, approved a \$1,475,396 budget, and re-elected Larry Faus, pastor of Gospel Baptist Church in Sparta, Wis., as president during their annual meeting at North Center Baptist Church in Brooklyn Park, Minn.

The long range planning committee recommended five priorities for the 1989-1994 plan: outreach/evangelism, congregational growth, new work leadership development and stewardship/mission support. The report, which so far has taken two years to plan, will be brought back to the 1988 annual meeting for further action.

The 1988 budget calls for the 86 churches and 30 missions affiliated with the convention to contribute \$297,000. Of the budget, 25.5 percent will be used to support the worldwide causes of the Southern Baptist Convention, an increase of .25 of a percent from 1987.

The convention drew 191 participants, including 108 messengers.

Valley Baptist Church in Appleton, Wis., will host the 1988 meeting Nov. 3-5.

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BWA Commission Seeks
'Human Rights Day'

N-CO

Baptist Press
11/6/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist World Alliance's Human Rights Commission has asked all Baptist churches to mark Sunday, Dec. 6, as "Human Rights Day."

The day will celebrate the 39th anniversary of the United Nation's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The occasion will be marked world wide on national and local levels by religious and secular groups, BWA Communications Director John Wilkes said.

In a paper delivered to the commission, Per Midteide of Norway noted a gap between the ostentious concern of Baptists for human rights and the actual interest in churches.

The struggle for human rights is not really on the agenda of many Baptists, Midteide said. Human rights have not yet become an integral part of the mission of the church, and Baptists have been slow to discover that in participating in the struggle for human rights Christians are joining God's healing passion for the world, he added.

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World Baptist Publishers
Challenged To Excellence

By Irma Duke

FMB

EL PASO, Texas (BP)--Veteran Christian publisher Robert Reekie has warned world Baptists against reducing Christian publishing to a commodity.

"We're doing it faster so we can put twice as much junk on the market," said Reekie, president and co-founder of Media Associates International of Bloomingdale, Ill.

Reekie spoke to leaders from Baptist publishing houses representing 15 countries and 25 languages who attended the first Southern Baptist foreign missions-related publishing consultation in El Paso, Texas, Oct. 26-29. Christian publishers are likely to fail to communicate because of low content quality rather than the quality of their equipment, he said.

He pointed out the "awesome responsibility" of publishers as gatekeepers of ideas, quoting from 2 Corinthians 2:17 in Today's English Version: "We are not like so many others, who handle God's message as if it were cheap merchandise; but because God has sent us, we speak with sincerity in his presence, as servants of Christ."

The consultation was held at one of the oldest and largest Christian publishing centers. The Baptist Spanish Publishing House was established in El Paso in 1905. The 26 international Baptists and Southern Baptist missionaries who participated heard theories about aging inventories and made recommendations concerning networking, ways of decreasing publication costs and increasing sales, and more extensive distribution and utilization of Christian literature.

Reekie, who worked with the David C. Cook Foundation for more than 23 years before founding Media Associates, told the group why many Christian publishers find themselves with outdated, inadequate inventories:

-- Lack of training for writers, translators, editors and publishers.

-- A disproportionate amount of literature aimed at Christian believers. Only 10 percent of world Christian literature is written for non-Christians, who make up about 70 percent of the world's population, said.

-- Too much religious jargon. Reekie pleaded for Christian publishers to produce more literature on secular subjects written by Christians with an authentic world view. He mentioned a series produced in Hong Kong to help people find their way around the city using public transportation. The publisher earned the right to be heard by meeting the public's needs and then produced a book in the series about finding the right way for one's personal life through belief in Jesus Christ, he noted.

Conference organizer Alan Compton said one of the most exciting aspects of the meeting was to see publishers looking at publishing needs according to languages and cultures, not geographical boundaries. Compton is a media consultant for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, which works with some 27 publishing ministries worldwide that produce 1,083 periodicals, 1,217 book titles and 378 tracts.

Roberto de Souza, representing the Brazilian Baptist publishing house in Rio de Janeiro, said the consultation opened his eyes to the non-Portuguese speaking people in his country. His convention has strong home and foreign missions programs, he said, but admitted that as a publisher he had not looked at the needs of Koreans, Germans and other ethnics in Brazil. He promised to take back to the Brazilian convention's publishing ministry the need to help get materials to these people.

Baptists and missionaries at the conference talked about joint ventures they might pursue, such as sharing art, equipment, manuscripts and editors in order to get the gospel message out to more people at lower costs. Recommendations included:

-- Starting a newsletter to share sales and distribution information as well as upcoming projects to encourage resource exchange.

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-- Asking that representatives of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville share standards of productivity and their pricing formula.

-- Asking the Foreign Mission Board to study training needs and coordinate training opportunities.

-- Asking the Foreign Mission Board to look at the role of literature in its global strategy and consider publication programs in strategic planning at all levels.

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EDITOR'S ADVISORY: A feature story and photograph on Bill Moyers' television special "The Battle for the Bible" will be available next week. (A short news article was released through Baptist Press Nov. 3.)

Illinois Baptists Adopt
\$6.2 Million 1987 Budget

N-CO
(Ill.)

Baptist Press
11/6/87

SALEM, Ill. (BP)--Illinois Baptists adopted a general budget of \$6,182,675 and celebrated the 200th anniversary of Baptist preaching in their state during their annual convention Oct. 27-29.

The general budget represents a 3 percent increase over 1987. Messengers also approved budgets of \$947,265 for their Baptist Children's Home program and \$570,096 for the Baptist Student Center, a dormitory complex near Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Of the \$6.1 million budget, the 980 congregations affiliated with the Illinois Baptist State Association will contribute \$4,662,218, and will send 43.6 percent to support the worldwide missions, education and evangelism causes of the Southern Baptist Convention, the same as last year.

A proposed amendment to roll back by 2 percent the amount of CP funds which leaves the state was referred to the board of directors for consideration. Gordon Logan, messenger from Halsted Road Baptist Church in Rockford, appealed for the roll back to bolster church extension within Illinois.

Besides Cooperative Program gifts from churches, the state association expects to receive \$1,023,511 from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board; \$56,850 from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board; \$17,096 from the Southern Baptist Annuity Board; \$195,000 from Illinois Baptist Building lease income; \$75,000 from investment income; \$150,000 from the State Missions Offering; and \$3,000 from Baptist Foundation of Illinois earnings.

Seven hundred thirty messengers and 438 registered visitors were reminded that 200 years ago a Kentucky adventurer named James Smith first ventured into Illinois to preach the first evangelical message.

Among his converts were James Lemen and Shadrach Bond. Lemen later distinguished himself as an anti-slavery leader. Bond became the first governor of Illinois in 1818.

A resolution on AIDS was among those adopted by messengers. The resolution called AIDS a "worldwide menace" which reaches across all boundaries and brings suffering to all people with the disease, "as well as their families and loved ones."

The resolution also expressed opposition to "sexual promiscuity, marital infidelity and the failure of families to teach children to be morally responsible in matters of sexual relationships," and urged churches "to work with families in efforts to teach our children" sexual morality and responsibility.

A resolution on Ernest Mosley expressed gratitude to the former IBSA executive director and his family "for their love and labors." Mosley left the Illinois position to join the staff of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee April 1.

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Dale Clemens, pastor of Meadow Heights Baptist Church of Collinsville, was re-elected state president. Charles West, pastor of First Baptist Church of Bethalto, was re-elected vice president. Bill Lewis, layperson from Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church in Urbana, was elected recording secretary. Marti Bingham, layperson from First Baptist Church of Vandalia, was elected assistant recording secretary.

Next year's convention will meet Nov. 2-4 at Calvary Baptist Church in Alton.

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BTN Teleconference Addresses
Critical Parent-Teen Issues

By Terri Lackey

N-SSB
Baptist Press
11/6/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--The 11,000 or so parents and teenagers who tuned into a live 90-minute Baptist Telecommunication Network teleconference Nov. 2 bombarded a three-person panel with 225 questions ranging from dating, drugs and sexuality to responsibility, discipline and mandatory church attendance.

While time permitted dealing with only 40 questions on the air, teleconference sponsors and panelists agreed parental support groups represent one answer for dealing with ongoing concerns.

"You need to continue putting yourselves in support groups," advised Janice Siler, a panelist and family counselor from Raleigh, N.C. "You need to find someone who shares your values and talk to them."

"Hopefully, the teleconference created discussion and dialogue for the parents which created a trust factor in which they all could share," said Gary Hauk, manager of the family enrichment section of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department which co-sponsored the teleconference with the church administration department.

"Hopefully, participants will realize the church can be a resource for discussing and working through these concerns," Hauk added.

Calls from parents and teenagers alike kept telephone workers busy during the teleconference, which was broadcast twice from the BTN studio in Nashville -- once at 6:30 p.m. CST and again at 8:30 p.m. The double broadcast gave viewers from the East to West coasts a chance to conveniently tune in.

Questions came from 127 viewing locations in 25 states, including Sandy, Utah; Longview, Wash.; Geronimo, Okla.; Texarkana, Ark.; Greensboro, N.C.; Tallahassee, Fla.; and Gadsden, Ala., according to Hauk.

A Floydada, Texas, cable television company picked up the teleconference and made it available to all of its 4,200 subscribers, a representative said.

The panel included Ann Sullivan, assistant principal at Klein High School, Houston; Wayne Grant, a pediatrician from San Antonio, Texas; and Siler.

Anointing teens with love and affirmation was advice shared more than once during the teleconference.

"We need to love and affirm our teens," Grant said. "It is easy to hug and kiss a small child, but it is not so easy to show affection toward teenagers who pretend they don't need it.

"We must always remain the adult in our relationship with our teens," he added.

"Think before you speak and listen to your own words carefully," Siler advised. "Put-downs and insecure phrases go straight to the heart of a teen. When teenagers feel love and respect at home, they can cope with the world better."

Sullivan told viewing parents to calm intense worries over whether their teenagers "will make it through adolescence.

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"It's true, kids are having to grow up really fast, and they are making decisions at an earlier age that maybe their parents didn't have to make. But kids make it through adolescence every day. And remember, we made it through adolescence," she said.

Richard Ross, teleconference co-host and youth ministry consultant in the church administration department, said the phoned-in questions "represented very typical types of concerns. The panel offered some very fine insights, both practical and constructive, which we hope will motivate parents to come together and mutually support each other."

Reports from several churches indicated parents began support groups immediately after the teleconference. Many stayed a couple of hours after the broadcast to discuss what they had just seen and heard, Hauk said.

Ross said church youth ministers have already started a trend in the convention "to bring together parents of youth.

"We are just hoping the teleconference added motivation for more churches to gather together the parents of youth on a regular basis," he added.

Hauk said churches or parents interested in creating or continuing a support group for parents of teenagers may contact their state family ministry program leaders for advice on available literature or for training.

He also cited Parenting by Grace, a Lay Institute for Equipping Course developed by the family ministry and church training departments; a Convention Press book, Ministering to Youth and Their Parents, and a quarterly magazine, Living with Teenagers, as helpful resources.

The success of the teleconference has prompted the discussion of additional live conferences with more streamlined themes, Ross said.

While the number of viewing sites will not be known until viewers send in postcards with their site and attendance, Hauk said advance promotional packets were requested by leaders from more than 700 locations.

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

Utah Baptists Share
Their Faith Openly

By Jim Lowry

F-SSB

Baptist Press
11/6/87

SANDY, Utah (BP)--A bold urgency grips Southern Baptist parents in Utah who are determined to model Christian lifestyles for their youth in the Mormon-dominated valley around Salt Lake City.

When the recent Baptist Telecommunication Network live teleconference for parents and teens ended, 19 of the 21 persons present at the Utah-Idaho Baptist Convention Building pulled their chairs into a circle for another one and one-half hours of serious conversation.

They discussed living Christian lives as examples, peer pressure for youth, negative influence of television, forced church attendance and strengthening relationships through admitting mistakes to youth.

But along with these problems faced by youth and parents in every Southern Baptist church, the incredibly strong Mormon influence gives these youth an additional pressure which permeates their lives every day, according to parents at the meeting.

Of the persons attending the teleconference, one was a former member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or Mormon, and several were "transplanted" Baptists from Texas, Tennessee and New Mexico. They agreed that church members in Utah are generally more open with their commitment and ready to talk about their Lord.

Gary Misener, associate pastor for music and youth at Southeast Baptist Church in Salt Lake City and who was educated at a Baptist college and seminary in Texas, said boldness is not a choice.

"We've got to be more committed because we are smaller," Misener explained. "Our youth are confronted daily by those who are non-Christians."

The transplanted Baptists cited social, economic, business and personal pressure to attend the Mormon Church.

Pam Wolff, volunteer youth director at Alta Canyon Baptist Church, said youth find it difficult to date other Christians because they are surrounded by young Mormons who regularly invite them to attend activities at their churches.

Facilities of Southern Baptist churches cannot begin to compare with the Mormon worship and activity centers, which are completely paid for before the doors open. They have a certain attractiveness to offer youth which Southern Baptists here cannot afford.

The pressure to conform can also be felt by adults in the workplace. One woman at the teleconference said she was the only Christian employee in a suburban state government office.

Just when it would appear Southern Baptists in Utah should be ready to give up in a hopeless situation, a faith bubbles to the top which reveals an indomitable spirit of believing in the power of God to help them every day.

New efforts are being made by new faces in Southern Baptist churches in Utah.

Rhonda Cooper is a volunteer youth director at First Baptist Church in West Valley City, Utah, who moved to the Salt Lake area just a few months ago because "God said come here."

The Texas native supports herself as an independant consultant assisting in a study at the University of Utah on the stress of caring for aging, ill spouses.

She said missionary journeyman training in Japan helped her understand the role of Mormonism in the culture of Utah. Cooper and others at the teleconference agreed Utah could appropriately be called a foreign mission field in the United States.

Four youth directors at the teleconference pointed to a new unity among Southern Baptists in Utah. Wolff, who also is associational youth director, coordinates monthly events for Southern Baptist youth to give them a feeling of being part of the denomination.

Local church leaders plan events for youth to attend and then try to live like they expect the youth to live. They surround each other with care.

One parent at the teleconference expressed disappointment and frustration because she had been unable to establish a family devotion time.

It was 10 p.m. and everyone had started to leave. Immediate attention and support were given to the mother from all sides. The late hour was forgotten and the suffering was shared, support pledged, ideas offered and prayer promised.

Thirty minutes later, they joined hands for a closing prayer, ready to return to their families with new commitment and enthusiasm to face the same pressures tomorrow -- without compromise.