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N-HMB

Harwell Ousted As Editor

By GBC Executive Committee By Leisa Hammett-Goad and Jim Newton

ATLANTA (BP)--By a vote of 57-54, Jack Harwell was ousted as editor of the Georgia Baptist Convention's weekly newspaper by the convention's executive committee.

The action came during a closed executive session after more than an hour's debate Dec. 15. Much of the discussion focused on whether the 120-member executive committee or the 10-member Christian Index board of directors should deal with the question.

Less than a month earlier, messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention in Savannah expressed "profound gratitude and appreciation" for Harwell and voted overwhelmingly to "respectfully request" the 55-year-old editor to reconsider plans to take early retirement. The convention also voted to dismiss a review board that had threatened to fire Harwell if he wrote one more editorial it considered unacceptable.

Harwell had announced plans in October to retire after 21 years as editor because he felt he could no longer continue with editorial freedom and integrity.

At the convention in Savannah, Harwell told a cheering, standing crowd that in the light of the affirmation he had received, he would accept the invitation to reconsider his retirement, subject to negotiations with the Index board and the convention's executive committee.

The Index board met nearly three hours Dec. 14 concerning Harwell's employment and voted to refer the decision without any recommendation to the executive committee the next day. The Index board pointed out the executive committee is the final authority on personnel matters.

Committee members debated parliamentary procedure over what group has the proper authority to deal with the issue. The committee voted 57-40 to sustain the ruling of the chairman, Gene Tyre, pastor of First Baptist Church of Newnan, Ga., that the executive committee is the proper authority.

The executive committee then went into executive session for the first time in the memory of many members, voting 57-54 with one abstention against a motion asking Harwell to continue as editor and pledging to him the support of the committee.

Chuck Bugg, pastor of First Baptist Church of Augusta, Ga., who made the motion asking Harwell to remain as editor, said he is shocked and disappointed by the vote. "I think it was a severe mistake for the executive committee to disregard and ignore the strong sentiments expressed by messengers to the convention in Savannah," he noted.

Harwell said afterwards he is deeply disappointed and surprised: "I am truly sorry because I wanted to stay and thought the convention wanted me to stay, but I have to honor the vote of the committee. They are my employers."

Harwell will retire Dec. 31, with the benefits and severance pay previously approved by the Index board -- a year's salary, ownership of the Index car and medical insurance. His retirement pension will not be in effect until age 65. He is considering almost a dozen job offers, he reported.

Harwell told reporters "the issue (surrounding his retirement), is not Jack Harwell. The issue is editorial freedom and integrity."

The executive committee members wanted him out because he was controversial, he said: "They think when I'm gone they'll feel peace again. But the controversy is not settled, and I don't think it will end for a long time."

Tyre said he was surprised by the vote, but observed it was not a clear-cut issue of "moderates versus fundamentalists."

Many of the executive committee members were "tired of the controversy" in the denomination, and felt it would be best for Harwell to retire as he had planned so "we could lay it to rest," Tyre said.

Some executive committee members feared the action by the convention set a dangerous precedent by instructing the executive committee -- which has final authority over hiring and firing of personnel -- what to do with regards to the employment of specific persons.

Bob Claytor, pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church in Rome, Ga., added if Harwell had been allowed to continue, Baptists messengers would perceive they controlled all personnel policies, and that such issues cannot be handled effectively from the floor of the convention. "I think what this shows is that the perceived moderate turnaround was emotional," he said. "All the votes are still very close."

Both Tyre and Billy Smith, chairman of the Index board, said they did not consider the convention action affirming Harwell to be a mandate to the executive committee.

Tyre explained 57 members of the executive committee felt more strongly that Harwell should retire than they felt they should uphold the action of the convention. "That's the bottom line," he said.

Smith, pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga., said the convention did have the authority to abolish the Index review board but not to instruct the executive committee on personnel matters.

Kirby Godsey, president Mercer University, which also was affirmed and supported by messengers to the convention in Savannah, said the executive committee vote was "arrogant and inappropriate."

Godsey, who attended the meeting as an observer, said he felt it was "inconceivable that a committee of the convention would reject the will of the whole convention."

Jack Lowndes, the convention's director of church-minister relations, will become acting editor Jan. 1. Lowndes, a former pastor from Savannah and former executive director of the Baptist Convention of New York, has previously been editor of The New York Baptist.

A search committee composed of Nelson Price, pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta; Ron Gaynor, pastor of First Baptist Church of Tucker; Smith as chairman; plus Tyre and James N. Griffith, executive director of the convention, as ex-officio, will nominate an editor to the Index board and executive committee, Smith said.

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National Educator Expresses Concern
For Baptist College Accreditation

N-10
(Ed. Comm.)
By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press
12/16/87

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries could lose their accreditation if groups within the denomination undermine academic integrity, an educator warned.

Jim Rogers, executive director of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, expressed his concerns to Baptist educators attending the midyear meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools in New Orleans.

Rogers, a Southern Baptist layman and a deacon at First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Ga., noted many individuals do not understand that students should be exposed to different ideas and concepts "whether they are acceptable to us or not." What's more, some of those people may be constituents of Baptist institutions, he warned.

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"One of my greatest concerns as a Baptist layman is with the theological shallowness of many of the individuals in our churches today," Rogers said.

He reminded educators someone once said, "An unexamined faith is not worth living."

"I fear we have a number of Baptists who are trying to live just such a faith. They seem to fear exposure to concepts," he said.

Rogers told educators the Commission on Colleges, which accredits the majority of Baptist colleges and schools, has been monitoring recent events affecting Baptist educational institutions.

Although Rogers did not name specific institutions, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and Mercer University in Macon, Ga., have made national news recently related to trustee issues.

Rogers said he has been authorized by the executive council of the Commission on Colleges to send a letter to Baptist college presidents in the region informing them accreditation could be in danger if their trustees were to make drastic changes in the institutions' governance or academic programs.

Rogers read the letter, but asked that the contents not be released to the media until the letter has been received by the presidents. He emphasized the letter was written only to be helpful.

Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive secretary of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools, also expressed concern about accreditation: "Many Southern Baptists simply do not understand what accreditation is. If an institution were to lose its accreditation, many students would feel they must attend elsewhere."

Many professions, including public education, as well as graduate school programs require degrees from an accredited institution, said Walker, executive director-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Education Commission.

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N-SSB

Sunday School Leaders
Challenged To Face Task

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
12/16/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists are running behind in meeting convention-adopted Sunday school enrollment goals, but they "need to meet the problem head-on and win people to Christ," Harry Piland told state Sunday school leaders meeting in Nashville.

In a session to discuss plans for the next two years and review proposals and plans for 1990-95, Piland, director of the Sunday school division at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, called for a continued commitment to enrollment growth and new approaches to outreach and evangelism.

"We are right in the middle of Challenge 10/90 (a goal to reach Southern Baptist Sunday school enrollment of 10 million by Sept. 30, 1990). We stand at the edge of 8 million. We're a long way from 10 million. We have a mountain before us. The fact is, we are not on target. We are not where we ought to be," Piland said.

He cited a need for expanded concepts of outreach and visitation: "We cannot do business as usual. It simply will not get the job done. It is time for new ideas, new visions and new thoughts."

Outreach concepts should include regular ongoing visitation as well as a variety of other kinds of activities, he said. He cited Outreach Bible Study, short-term evangelistic Bible study groups outside the church. The concept and materials were introduced in 1986. Also, the Outreach Communication Plan will be introduced in March 1988 to provide a system for locating and communicating with prospects.

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The concept of relational evangelism encourages people to witness to people they meet in addition to witnessing through formalized programs, Piland pointed out.

While bus ministry has been de-emphasized in the past decade, the time is right to consider ways to effectively use bus outreach to involve children, senior adults and others in Sunday school, he said, noting, "We need to ask questions and find the answers for effective and creative bus ministry."

To develop a mindset for growth among church members and to reach people more effectively, each event or activity needs to have outreach or evangelistic potential, Piland said.

Earlier in the three-day meeting, pastors from three churches with rapidly growing Sunday schools discussed how their churches have achieved growth.

Jack Still, pastor of Fairfield First Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., for 11 months, said the church had declined from a Sunday school enrollment 27 years ago of more than 1,400 to 169 when he became pastor. It has now grown to 365 in enrollment with 42 baptisms last year.

Changing the attitude of the people to create an excitement for doing the basics of Sunday school work was the key to the change, Still said.

In six years as pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., Ken Hemphill has learned it takes a personal vision for reaching people to lead the church in developing a vision for growth. Since Hemphill became pastor in 1981, the church's Sunday school enrollment has grown from 800 to more than 5,000.

Tom Melzoni, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Oak Ridge, Tenn., said his church has grown by sharing love with people. Central was recognized in 1986 as having the fastest-growing Sunday school in Tennessee.

Plans introduced for 1988-90 include a final four-month emphasis for June through September 1990 to climax Challenge 10/90.

Improvements in Sunday school curriculum materials and program design expected to be introduced in 1991 highlight plans for 1990-95.

Proposals will be presented to Sunday School Board trustees in 1988. The proposals are based on an evaluation and planning process which began in March 1985.

The 1990-95 plans will be carried out under a five-year theme, "Breakthrough." The enrollment goal for "Breakthrough" will be 11 million enrolled in Bible study by September 1995.

Other goals will be developed in areas of attendance increase, number of non-Christians enrolled in Bible study, number of trained workers and number of people won to Christ in ratio to Sunday school enrollment.

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N-SSB

SSB Research Project Shows
Effects Of Building Programs

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
12/16/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--Construction of a new church facility fulfills neither the promises of spectacular growth nor the dire predictions of financial ruin, according to results from a research project conducted by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's research services department.

The results, said Gwenn McCormick, director of the board's church architecture department, indicate a new building is likely to affect baptisms, Sunday school attendance, tithes and offerings and Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget gifts. McCormick reported findings of the research project to state building consultants during their annual planning meeting in Nashville.

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While sociological factors such as economic recession may have influenced the specific years, 1980-86, involved in the study, the findings for churches that had built a new facility in 1983 included three years of decreased growth through baptisms, increased Sunday school average attendance, a lower increase in tithes and offerings coupled with a higher percentage increase in Cooperative Program giving than churches that had not constructed a new facility.

"The study reveals the need for much more aggressive follow-up to a building project," he said. "Significant growth rates for the three years before the building too often were followed by a declining percentage rate of growth. The 'we-have-arrived' attitude apparently leads to some complacency."

The limited research project involved information obtained from the denomination's Uniform Church Letter survey for the years 1980 through 1986. In an effort to focus on growing churches and evaluate the impact of a new building, denominational researchers identified 9,220 churches that had a 5 percent growth rate in baptisms from 1980 to 1983.

Of those, 188 churches constructed a building in 1983. A comparison was made of those churches that built in 1983 and those that did not, looking at baptisms, Sunday school attendance and gifts for the years 1983 through 1986.

Baptisms declined in all membership categories of churches with new buildings during the three-year period. However, churches with memberships of 200-299, 500-749, 750-1,499 and 1,500-2,000 had better records than similar churches that had not constructed a building.

In Sunday school average attendance, those that built averaged a 10 percent increase while those not involved in a building project averaged a 1.1 percent decrease. All those with new buildings, except in the membership range of 400-499, had an increase in average Sunday school attendance. Those that did not build experienced a decrease in Sunday school attendance, except those with memberships of 750-1,499 and above 2,000.

While Sunday school attendance in churches that built did show significant gains compared to those that did not build, even those churches that built new space grew at a slower rate for three years after building than they had for three years before building.

McCormick pointed out across-the-board decreases in rate of growth for 1983-1986 suggests the need for a more comprehensive study of sociological factors and related issues that may have more influence on Sunday school attendance than usually is recognized.

Generally, tithes and offerings and contributions to the Cooperative Program increased despite financial demands related to new facility construction. "As a whole, churches that build not only maintain their mission gifts but increase them at a faster rate than do their counterparts who do not build," he observed.

"The study clearly reveals a new building does not guarantee either growth or increased gifts. Neither will a building program within itself have a negative impact on mission giving. Growing churches that build to meet needs will also increase their mission giving as they create a stronger home base for mission support."

In the area of stewardship, churches with new buildings averaged a 7.2 percent lower increase in tithes and offerings but increased Cooperative Program giving 6.2 percent more than those that did not build.

Among churches with new buildings, the survey showed changes over the next three years averaging a 9.6 percent increase in tithes and offerings. Churches that did not build experienced average increases in giving of 16.8 percent.

Churches that built averaged increasing Cooperative Program giving by 23.3 percent over the next three years. Churches that had not built increased Cooperative Program contributions by 17.1 percent.

"Churches really need to gear up for unparalleled thrust and outreach once the building is completed," McCormick said. "A new building means the tools are now in hand, but we must strengthen our efforts to use them responsibly."

Religious Educators, Students Study
More Family, Discipleship Issues

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Religious educators are seeing an increased emphasis on topics such as the family, church growth, discipleship and multi-media learning, according to Art Criscoe, a manager in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department.

And learning through experience has become a major trend in religious classroom instruction, said Criscoe, who was keynote speaker at the annual meeting of Denominational Executives of Christian Education hosted in Nashville by the church training department. The group includes about 25 evangelical denominations.

Meeting participants studied and discussed trends and their implications for their churches. One of the foremost trends among the groups is a strong emphasis on the family, Criscoe said.

"Denominational publishing houses are really turning out the literature dealing with families and modern-day problems they face," he noted. "Family issues must be addressed by almost everyone, and dealing with them through a perspective of Christianity is the ideal."

Growing churches through evangelism or "reaching people" is a high priority on the lists of almost all denominations, he said.

"For example, the church training department has a course called 'Ingathering: Reclaiming Inactive Church Members,' designed to teach church members how to reach those who no longer attend," Criscoe said.

Discipleship is another area of emphasis in many denominations, he added, noting, "Discipleship techniques include teaching Christians how to study and apply the Bible to everyday life through quiet times, prayer and witness."

Religious education students today are learning more through "experiential learning. We are beginning to make more use of interaction," he said.

The Lay Institute for Equipping courses developed by the church training department are good examples of experiential learning, he noted: "We take a course, such as 'Parenting by Grace,' and teach parents Christian parenting skills which they are then encouraged to go home and apply. We don't just give them written materials to study."

Also, Criscoe said, religious education groups are beginning to "make more use of media."

"We have the technological capabilities and expertise (through television and computers) to reach people all over the world," he said. "We should begin to make greater use of these media, but we should never totally substitute 'gadget-type' learning for 'learning through touch.'"

The group also discussed trends in American education in general, including public schools versus private religious schools.

"There are more than 43 million enrolled in public schools and 5 million in private (religious and non-religious) schools," Criscoe said. "Christians should, rather than withdraw totally from public schools, become more involved in them."

"Christians should make their influence known. It's a way to penetrate society with Christian values."

'Georgia Boy'
Studies In China

F - FMB
By Erich Bridges

BEIJING, China (BP)--It's not too hard to find Bob Freeman at the Second Foreign Language Institute in Beijing, China. He's the only Georgia boy on campus.

Sixty residents occupy the foreign students' dormitory. But only one proudly displays a Georgia Bulldogs cap and a souvenir lunch box from The Varsity, Atlanta's legendary hamburger heaven.

Freeman, a 26-year-old graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., is from Roswell, Ga., near Atlanta. He says he isn't homesick. At least not yet. He just likes to keep a bit of home close by. Otherwise, he has immersed himself in things Chinese. He is a learner, not a teacher.

In fact, learning is Freeman's job in China. Unlike many Americans who are coming to Chinese universities to teach English, Freeman arrived in 1986 to study Mandarin Chinese for two years. But since most of the Chinese students at the institute want to learn English, Freeman is one of the most popular guys on campus.

"Ninety percent of the Chinese students here are studying English and are anxious for an opportunity to practice it with a native speaker," he explains. "It makes for good introductions."

There's a special cafeteria for foreigners, but Freeman eats at least one meal a day in the regular student cafeteria, where he immediately is surrounded by Chinese friends and acquaintances.

"Just sitting around the table I'm able to meet students, some of whom I don't see again after that one meal," he says. "But some I run into again and again in the hall or at other places, and maybe build friendships with them."

Friendships are as important to Freeman as his studies. He not only wants to know the Chinese language; he wants to know the Chinese.

About 1,000 students attend the institute in China's capital city. The school is run by the government's tourism department, and most of its graduates will work as tour guides, translators, hotel employees and the like. They study a variety of foreign languages, including French, German, Spanish and Japanese. But English is No. 1.

That creates a problem as well as an opportunity for Freeman. He could easily spend all his time speaking English, but he is struggling diligently to learn Mandarin. Does he become discouraged with the effort? Only after getting test papers back, he jokes.

"When I came to China, the only thing I could say in Chinese was hello and goodbye," he confesses. "That was about it. Now I can survive in the language and communicate when I have to buy something or travel somewhere."

"It takes a lot of practice writing the characters. You just have to repeat them over and over. I'm spending a lot more time than I would like to on writing. Writing is good, but you don't communicate in writing. You communicate by speaking. So a lot of what I'm learning about speaking I'm doing on my own -- on the streets and in the market and with friends."

One friend is a 20-year-old Chinese student who came to the institute with six years of English study already completed. "One day she just showed up at my door," Freeman recalls. "She said, 'You're an American and you speak English. I'm studying English and you're studying Chinese. So perhaps we could help each other practice our language studies.'"

Freeman was wary at first, since it is unusual for Chinese to take the initiative in a one-to-one contact. But the first meeting developed into a rewarding friendship. The student is very interested in music, so Freeman invited her to attend a church in Beijing to hear special music at Easter.

"She enjoyed the music, and afterwards she was asking some questions like, 'Do you really believe in God? Why do you believe?' I don't know whether she was more interested in why I believe or whether she may be open to those realities. But she's beginning to ask questions. She had never been to church before."

When the feeling of being a stranger in a strange land sets in, or he begins to wonder why he ever decided to study a language as difficult as Mandarin, Freeman remembers the relationships he has begun.

Although he relates mostly to young people, another friendship he cherishes is with an elderly professor at the Christian seminary in Beijing. The professor, who attends the same church as Freeman, suffered deeply before and during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, when many religious believers were persecuted harshly.

"He's not quick to speak of the suffering he has endured," Freeman observes. "That is something he endured for his faith, but he doesn't look upon those of us who have not suffered in a different light. (There are) a lot of things that we (American Christians) can learn from the Chinese Christians."

Freeman is learning. The Christian professor gave him a Chinese name -- Fu Huai Pu. Huai means to embrace or hold within. Pu is uncut jade. "So it means to have something special hidden within," he explains. "It has a good meaning for Christianity, having Christ within."

Or, he adds laughing, it also can be translated as a diamond in the rough. "There are a lot of times I feel like I'm kind of rough."

But with patience, the polished diamond is beginning to show through.

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

El Salvador Victims
Find Christmas Joy

F-10 (Mo.)
By Shari Schubert

Baptist Press
12/16/87

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--If Carlos Pineda and Jose Ponce were going to be home in El Salvador this Christmas, they would have tamales for Christmas dinner -- special Christmas tamales made of sweet dough with a raisin filling. But this year they'll have turkey with all the trimmings.

Spending the Christmas season in the United States is turning out to be a happy experience for the boys, but the circumstances that brought them here are tragic.

The boys were taken to Baptist Medical Center in Kansas City, Mo., for treatment of serious injuries they sustained as a result of guerilla warfare in El Salvador. The medical center is providing treatment and rehabilitation services in cooperation with Project HOPE, an international non-profit medical education and health organization.

Maria Sanchez de Ponce still cries when she talks about the accident last summer that caused Jose to lose his right hand and forearm. A neighbor in their village of Santiago de Maria had been involved in the guerilla fighting and owned a grenade. Exactly what happened -- or how -- is not known, but somehow the grenade got thrown out of the house and into the hands of 10-year-old Jose, and exploded.

Carlos was injured in 1983 during an armed guerilla raid in his village of Usulután. His father, Mario Pineda, said a bullet entered the family's house, struck the chair where Carlos was sitting, and, along with pieces of metal from the chair, went through the boy's left leg. Carlos' knee and parts of his tibia, fibula and femur were damaged.

Carlos' leg is severely deformed as a result of the injury. Now 8 years old, he has undergone surgery four times in El Salvador. He is receiving further corrective surgery, as well as treatment for infection, in Kansas City.

Jose will not require further surgery, but he will get an artificial limb and receive rehabilitative therapy at the medical center--more--

Carlos and Jose are among an estimated 650 civilians -- about a fourth of them children -- who have lost or injured limbs because of guerilla warfare and land mines in El Salvador, said Robin Ponce, press secretary for U.S. Rep. Tom Coleman. The congressman from Missouri's sixth district has been instrumental in arranging for several Salvadoran children to be treated in Missouri hospitals.

All medical services are being donated by the medical center and Baptist Health Systems' Goppert Family Care Center. The medical center also is allowing Pineda and Ponce to stay at the hospital with their children.

In addition to caring for the two boys, the Goppert physicians provided complete physical exams for the parents. They discovered Ponce has diabetes, and she now is receiving oral medication and training in how to manage the condition. Pineda was provided with eyeglasses, and has been "reading like crazy" ever since, said Herb McCowen, one of the Goppert resident physicians assigned to the cases.

In addition to providing medical care, medical center staff and volunteers from the community are trying to see that the boys and their parents feel comfortable in the strange surroundings. With the help of bilingual staff members and volunteers secured through Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association, the medical center is able to have translators available at all times for the Salvadoran guests, who speak only Spanish.

Covenant Baptist Church and North Oak Christian Church have provided warm clothing. Individuals have given toys to the children, taken them and their parents on outings, and invited them to their homes. Others have arranged for them to attend worship services at Spanish-speaking Catholic churches in the area. One hospital employee provided stationery for writing to family members and friends back in El Salvador.

The project "moves directly from one heart to another heart," said Ted Brockman, a biomedical engineer at BMC who speaks fluent Spanish and frequently is a translator. Brockman hopes the families will be able to return to El Salvador realizing the care that has been given them is not a political maneuver, but rather a genuine expression of Christian concern.

Brockman also hopes the families will return to El Salvador with an enhanced sense of their own worth. When the Salvadorans first arrived in Kansas City, "they had this tendency to think that we're very important people," he said.

"We had to squelch that right away," added Greg Hadley, music director and Hispanic minister at Kensington Avenue Baptist Church in Kansas City. Hadley, who also speaks Spanish and has been visiting the families regularly, recalled Pineda would say to them, "I'm just a campesino (peasant)." It was hard for him to believe that people he perceived as rich and important would receive him as an equal.

Hadley's visits have been enjoyed by Carlos and Jose, who call him "Tio Goyito," Uncle Gregg. Hadley has provided Spanish Bibles for Pineda and his son, and has found Pineda open to talking about his faith in Christ. Pineda often expresses thanks to God for the miracle of his son being able to come to the hospital and receive help.

Ponce also is grateful for the medical center's services. She said she is surprised at the individual care and attention given to each patient. She noted it is much different from the type of care available in hospitals in El Salvador. Also, she pointed out, the medical equipment often taken for granted in U.S. hospitals simply doesn't exist in El Salvador.

Surrounded with such things as color television, battery-operated toys and elaborate Christmas displays, "the boys are in a controlled version of heaven right now," Hadley commented. Coming from small rural villages where the major industries are cotton and coffee growing, Carlos and Jose "didn't even know what a Coke machine was," he recalled.

The children have had an easy time accepting new sights and experiences, Brockman explained. But the parents are overwhelmed, he said.

After the boys and their parents were taken to Kansas City's Country Club Plaza shopping district to see the Christmas lights, Pineda told Brockman that once in a while one might see a Christmas tree in El Salvador. "But here you have mountains of them!" he exclaimed.

Members of the medical center staff say participating in Project HOPE has been an unusual, but educational and gratifying, experience for them.

One of the difficulties involved in handling such a situation, McCowen explained, is communicating clearly to the patients and their parents about what the doctors can do for them. For instance, Jose came to the medical center with the impression that his prosthesis would be just like a new hand and was a little disappointed when he saw the hook-type device he will be getting, he said, noting, "He's still working through that."

But Ponce told Hadley Jose is happy about the new hand and eager to learn to use it.

One question that remains unanswered is whether the boys will be able to receive the follow-up treatment they will need after they return to El Salvador. McCowen pointed out Carlos will need follow-up treatment in about a year to achieve optimum results, and perhaps additional treatment in 10 years or so, after he has completed his physical growth. Jose eventually will outgrow his prosthesis and need a replacement.

Although there is no guarantee that all needed medical care can be provided in the future, Mary Huehn, a spokesman for Project HOPE, said that is at least possible. Doctors in the United States who work with Project HOPE children often maintain contact with the referring physicians in El Salvador, she said, and in some cases, patients have been brought back to the U.S. for follow-up care.

Also, she said, workers hope El Salvador's healthcare facilities, which have been adversely affected by war and earthquake damage, will recover and be able to provide services in the future that they are unable to provide now.

Even if follow-up treatment is not available, Jose and Carlos still will benefit from the treatment they are receiving in Kansas City, McCowen emphasized.

And participants in the project, who have shared their skills, technology, material resources and personal concern, also will benefit from having had a part in -- as Hadley put it -- "taking care of Christ in the form of these young boys."