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July 17, 1989

89-109

Staff cuts proposed in
budget reduction at HMB

By Mark Wingfield

N-HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--A possible reduction of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Atlanta staff will be one part of a cost-saving plan to be recommended to trustees at their August meeting by President Larry Lewis.

"No field missionaries cooperatively funded with states will be recalled by this action," Lewis said. "The number of Atlanta employees who would be negatively affected is minimal."

Positions being considered for cuts include some currently vacant and some currently filled, Lewis said. However, most of the current employees affected by the potential cuts would be transferred to vacant positions in Atlanta or on the field or would be offered early retirement, he said.

The proposed staff cuts are part of an \$8.2 million reduction in the agency's 1989 budget announced in March, Lewis said. Previous steps in the reduction included a \$6 million cut in the Atlanta staff's operational budget and negotiations with state conventions to cut nearly \$700,000.

The budget reduction and proposed staff cuts do not constitute a crisis but could prevent one, said Ernest Kelley, vice president of the planning section.

"On the positive side, there is no financial crisis at the Home Mission Board," Kelley said. "We do not have a deficit. We do have good reserves. Good management is when you know you have a problem coming and move to address it."

"The purpose of our reductions this year is to prepare for a change in anticipated income for the next two years," said Robert Banks, executive vice president. "If we had not acted this year, we would have faced greater problems in 1990."

The number of current employees affected by any recommended cuts has not been finalized, Lewis said, explaining negotiations still are underway with section vice presidents.

"This is a painful time for all of us, and we want to be sensitive to the concerns of our employees," Lewis said. "All employees who are affected by these proposed staff cuts will be personally consulted before the final recommendation is made to the board of directors."

"It is premature for us to finalize any public announcement until our board has had time to study the situation and act. They will have the final word."

When fully staffed, the HMB employs about 380 people in Atlanta. The proposed staff cuts would result in an annual savings of about \$500,000, Lewis said.

"Decisions about the proposed reductions were based solely on the priorities of the Home Mission Board and budget considerations," he added.

A preliminary report on proposed staff cuts was presented to the administrative committee of the agency's board of directors July 10. A final recommendation will be made to the full board in a scheduled meeting Aug. 9 in Atlanta.

In addition to proposed staff cuts, negotiations still are underway with state conventions to reduce field budgets, Kelley said. The HMB's four regional coordinators have been negotiating budget changes with state convention leaders since March resulting in savings of about \$650,000.

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Most of those cuts have come from field positions vacant for two years or more, Kelley said. In some cases, funds originally scheduled for projects in the states also have been deleted.

All reductions in state budgets have been made with the agreement of state executive directors and state missions directors, he added.

Lewis, Banks and Kelley said reductions in the HMB's current budget are primarily due to a decrease in anticipated income for coming years. HMB funding comes from two sources: the annual Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions and the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified missions budget.

They said a series of three events precipitated the current reductions:

1. 1988 Annie Armstrong receipts were less than projected.

Receipts for the 1988 offering increased only 2 percent above the previous year. In contrast, 1987 receipts increased almost 9 percent over 1986.

The 2 percent increase did not keep pace with the inflation rate for the year, which was 4.4 percent, Kelley noted.

2. A larger percentage of budgeted funds were actually spent in 1988 than usual.

Traditionally, the HMB spends less than 90 percent of the field ministries funds budgeted by state conventions, because of vacancies and frugal use of resources on the field, Kelley said. The amount not spent is carried over for use in future budget years.

Last year field programs broke the longstanding pattern and spent from 95 to 100 percent of budgeted funds, Kelley said. This left \$2 million less than anticipated for future use.

Additionally, the 1987, 1988 and 1989 budgets were to include income from prior years.

"The inflationary economy of the early 1980s caused carry-over funds from one year to another to rise," Kelley explained. "To best use these funds, HMB budgets for the last three years have purposely called for appropriations from prior years' income. This is a longstanding practice of the HMB.

"This was a planned, purposeful expenditure of carry-over funds," he said. "We determined to use these funds through cooperative planning to put more resources on the field.

"However, the amount now in this fund is at a minimum level and HMB administration does not feel it is wise to appropriate any additional funds from prior income for the 1989 or 1990 budgets," Kelley said.

3. Future Cooperative Program allocations have been reduced.

The 1989-90 Cooperative Program budget adopted by messengers to the annual Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., this summer will give \$551,647 less to the HMB than the current CP budget.

The 2.05 percent reduction is the result of newly adopted procedures for setting CP budgets. In making the change, the SBC Executive Committee said it would set more realistic budgets that would not leave capital needs projects unfunded as they have been in recent years.

The net result is that the budget at the HMB will take a sudden step backward next year and then start moving forward again at a slower pace, HMB leaders said.

"We didn't know until February of this year that the SBC Executive Committee would definitely recommend these changes," Banks said. "We had no way to prepare for this reduction in funds."

"It's going to be difficult for us to make advances in home missions in the next decade unless the SBC budget process is changed again," Lewis added. "Increased giving to the Annie Armstrong offering will be our salvation."

Messengers to the 1989 annual meeting approved a Cooperative Program allocation budget based on performance, rather than goals. The 1989-90 budget, based on the receipts of the last year of record, is 2.05 percent below the 1988-89 budget.

The new process was initiated in January by the Inter-Agency Council, composed of executives of convention entities. The IAC proposed the measure as part of a comprehensive plan to ease the SBC's growing capital needs deficit.

While receipts generally have been adequate to fund the operating budget, contributions have not funded the capital needs portion for several years.

The new process was designed to allow Cooperative Program recipients to plan budgets more accurately and to allow the convention to pay off its capital needs commitments.

Lewis said he is committed to operating within anticipated income to maintain a balanced budget. But he stated that he also is committed to reaching Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust goals of having 50,000 SBC churches and missions and 5,000 home missionaries by the year 2000.

Continuing to operate with a balanced budget and meeting Bold Mission Thrust goals will require more money spent on the field and less spent in Atlanta, he said. It also will require sacrificial giving by Southern Baptists to the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong offering, he added.

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Acteens make commitments
to 'light' world for Christ

N-60
By Marv Knox & Ken Camp

Baptist Press
7/17/89

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Teen-age girls from across the country have committed themselves to hold up the light of Christ in a world filled with darkness.

More than 850 girls responded to the challenge during the National Acteens Convention in San Antonio, Texas, July 12-15. The conference -- which attracted 13,600 teens -- was conducted by the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, which sponsors Acteens, a missions organization for girls in grades 7-12.

"You and I are the light of Christ. We have his flame in us," Esther Burroughs, national evangelism consultant for women for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, told the girls. "But if we have so much light, how come the world is so dark?"

Burroughs challenged the Acteens to "hold the light" for people stumbling in the darkness: "I want you to do only what Jesus has asked you to do. Carry the light of Christ. Be the light, dispelling the darkness in harmony with God."

The darkness of the world was displayed in a processional of "missing threads" -- a parade of 38 black flags representing nations closed or hostile to Christian missionaries.

And to illustrate the effectiveness of a single light shining in harmony with other single lights, the house lights in the arena were dimmed as Acteens turned on pocket flashlights they had received earlier in the evening.

"May we be a shining light to the nations -- a shining light to the peoples of the earth," Burroughs prayed. "Till the whole world sees the glory of your name, may your pure light shine through us."

The 850-plus girls who accepted Burroughs' challenge either announced faith in Christ, recommitted faith in him, stated intention to become missionaries or expressed other personal spiritual concerns, said Jan Turrentine, editor of Accent, the WMU magazine for Acteens. Information on each decision will be sent to each girl's pastor.

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The commitment service highlighted four days of events that centered on the convention theme, "In Harmony."

"We wanted Acteens to discover harmony with God, others and self, and as a result, to be challenged to bring others into harmony in those same ways," said Marti Solomon, the WMU's Acteens consultant.

"We wanted NAC to be a life-changing experience -- a time for Acteens to come together and fellowship with one another, draw closer to God, deepen their spiritual walk, strengthen their call to missions and maybe even be willing to follow God's call into missions."

The various components of the convention illustrated the harmony theme:

-- "Compositions," a series of Bible studies written by Rosalie Beck, associate professor of religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and presented by 17 leaders. The studies urged the girls to discover harmony in their lives.

A key is forming a proper relationship with God, she said: "We are made in God's image. The female is not secondary. Being woman is not accidental but deliberate. God looked at his creation and said, 'Very good.'"

Beck noted the "image of God" does not refer to a physical likeness but to the moral, religious, rational and emotional image of the creator. The image of God in humanity includes the capability to choose right or wrong, to give loyalty and love to others and to be responsible for decisions and actions, she said.

"He made us to do his will," she added. "We are not accidents but are deliberate, purposeful and loved creations, unique in our personhood and abilities. We reflect God to the world as his images."

-- "Collages," general sessions built around theme interpretations, missionary testimonies, music and other presentations.

"Sometimes it's not fun being a missionary: when people are hurting and I can't make it go away, when they ask tough questions and I don't have any answers, when there's not enough time or money or people or energy to meet all the needs we see every day," confessed D.P. Smith, a Southern Baptist missionary to the Ivory Coast.

"Those aren't my favorite times. But you know, sometimes the hard times are when I learn some very important lessons. God brings the harmony into my life. He's the source. He is the harmony."

Mildred McWhorter, a missionary in inner-city Houston, continued the theme, telling how God had enabled her to minister to people like Rachel, a Hispanic teen-ager who became a Christian after reading a Bible McWhorter had left for her family years before, and Debbie, a 16-year-old mother who came seeking a home for her 8-pound baby daughter.

"Acteens, the world can't do without love and get along very well," McWhorter advised.

Accent Editor Turrentine urged the girls to become missionaries themselves, even in their teen years. She told about Acteens Activators, a missions project program for teens that provides personal involvement in missions, and she encouraged the girls to pray for missionaries and learn about missions work.

"Through the Acteens organization, Acteens experience what it means to be in harmony with God as they learn to experience harmony with themselves and others," she said.

-- "Synthesizer," an exhibit extravaganza featuring 41 booths that highlighted world, national and local missions.

"We tried to get some booths and activities that would teach them about Baptist missions, about the world around them, about being a Christian and how to learn things about themselves," explained Cindy McClain, WMU products editor and Synthesizer organizer.

The exhibit area featured booths in which the girls could talk to missionaries, learn about specific mission work, tour a mobile disaster-relief kitchen, play educational games related to missions and hear the famous Bible verse John 3:16 in more than a dozen languages.

Synthesizer also featured an area where the girls could leave canned goods for the San Antonio Food Bank. Before the week was out, the girls had provided more than five tons of food for the bank, which feeds more than 150,000 people per month.

"We wanted to give the girls an opportunity to help people in the San Antonio area," McClain said. "The cans of food are an expression of their commitment to help others."

-- "Kaleidoscope," an international festival that featured food and entertainment in San Antonio's downtown riverside park, La Villita.

The festival was designed to help the girls see the breadth and variety of the world and to confront the mix of cultures that exist around them, organizers said.

Local coordination was provided by Tom Harrell, a staff member at St. Mary's Catholic Church. Kaleidoscope featured more than 150 entertainers and 57 food booths. More than 40 local organizations, involving more than 200 volunteers, helped stage the event.

-- Youth issues conferences, which forced the girls to confront such burdens of America's youth as suicide, sexuality, peer pressure, drugs, abuse and the occult.

The conferences were designed to help the girls cope with situations they face through their teen years, WMU leaders said.

Carolyn Jenkins, minister to college students and youth at First Baptist Church of Nashville, got to the point: "Christianity should be a lifestyle, not a label. Scripture shows us it's not what's on our lips, it's what's in our lives that matters."

In a closing ceremony, Acteens Consultant Solomon acknowledged the girls had a good week but urged them to carry their faith and the harmony it brings to their lives back to their homes.

"Now it is time to share the harmony. Now it is time to share the music," she said. "Let the song go forth."

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(Also contributing to this story were Karen Benson, Janet Cramer, Tim Nicholas, Keith Randall, Susan Todd and Frank Wm. White.)

Questions linger
over BJCPA funding

By Toby Druin

F- (O
(Texas Std.)

Baptist Press
7/17/89

DALLAS (BP)--Messengers to the 1989 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention refused to tamper with the amount of funds budgeted for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, but conflicting statements sent them home with lingering questions about just how much support the denomination is providing for the Washington agency.

The BJC is a religious liberty/separation of church and state watchdog organization composed of nine Baptist denominations in the United States and Canada.

On one hand, Sam Currin, chairman of the SBC Public Affairs Committee, the 18-member panel which is the denomination's representation on the BJC, said, "Southern Baptists provide almost 90 percent of the funding of the Baptist Joint Committee."

On the other, James M. Dunn, executive director of the BJCPA, challenged Currin's statement, insisting the SBC will provide only 53.7 percent of Joint Committee funds in the 1990 budget, is providing only 60 percent this year and said it was 70 percent last year.

Both were right, at least after Currin later redefined his terms, changing "90 percent of the funding" to "When you look at the denominational support for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Southern Baptist Convention has given something like 90 percent of the total."

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Messengers approved a \$391,796 allocation for the BJC when they okayed the 1989-90 budget. However, two motions to reconsider the budget and divert funds to other agencies caused debate over SBC support before the messengers refused the reconsideration effort by a vote of 6,034 to 5,198.

Currin raised the issue and made other charges about alleged Joint Committee fund raising efforts in presenting the report of the Public Affairs Committee.

The PAC was expanded to 18 members from 15 in 1987 when membership of the joint committee was expanded from 45 to 54. The PAC, which before had a voice only through the BJC was given power by the SBC to speak out "on motions and resolutions of the Southern Baptist Convention upon which the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs cannot agree and/or does not support."

Rancor between the PAC and the BJC has grown over a variety of issues, including the amount of money going to the BJC and whether it should be channeled through the PAC. The matter of funding surfaced again in Las Vegas in questions put to Currin following his report as chairman of the PAC.

Responding to a question, Currin, who is a North Carolina Superior Court judge, said, "Southern Baptists provide almost 90 percent of the funding of the Baptist Joint Committee," but charged the PAC is "unable to get an accounting from the Baptist Joint Committee on something as basic as where their money is coming from and how it is being spent."

Currin further charged the BJC is "circumventing the Cooperative Program in soliciting funds. We are getting reports ... of anywhere from \$100,000 to \$200,000 being solicited outside the Cooperative Program from other Southern Baptist sources."

Dunn, later given three minutes to respond although it came after the convention had voted on the motion to reconsider the budget, said every meeting of the Joint Committee receives an outside certified audit of where BJC funds come from and how they are spent.

Dunn countered Currin's claim that 90 percent of funds come from the SBC, and noted that the \$391,796 to be provided by the SBC in the 1989-90 BJCPA budget of \$729,772 is 53.7 percent of the total. He said the SBC portion was 60 percent in 1988-89 and 70 percent in 1987-88.

Responding later, Currin changed his reference from "90 percent of the funding" in his original charge to speak of "denominational support."

Both men were correct in reporting the percentage of the SBC's support of the total budget. Currin when he referred to "denominational support" because Southern Baptists do provide 90 percent of the funds that come from the nine Baptist bodies.

Dunn provided a copy of the 1988 BJC audit to Baptist state newspaper editors. In that audit, the budget called for \$499,625 from the nine conventions and \$448,400 -- 89.7 percent, about as Currin had stated -- was to be from the 1987-88 SBC budget. But the \$448,400 was 70 percent of the \$638,210 BJC total budget for the year, as Dunn stated.

The 1988 BJC budget called for "contributions" of \$34,000 in addition to denominational support. This year's "contributions" were up to \$82,009 and the 1989-90 figure calls for \$144,604. (The balance of the 1989-90 BJC budget calls for the \$391,796 from the SBC, \$92,610 from the other eight conventions, \$45,862 from interest earned, \$17,900 from literature sales and \$37,000 from special projects, including the National Religious Liberty Conference.)

Currin's reference to "\$100,000 to \$200,000" being raised by the BJC outside the Cooperative Program from Southern Baptists apparently was aimed at the "contributions."

If all of the \$144,604 in contributions projected for 1989-90 were to come from Southern Baptists, that figure coupled with the \$391,796 from the Cooperative Program would mean 73.5 percent would be coming from Southern Baptists.

One action obviously aimed at getting at the source of those funds was Executive Committee approval in Las Vegas of a change in the SBC Business and Financial Plan requiring each SBC entity report annually to the Executive Committee "on any type of fund raising activities conducted by the entity."

Any special financial campaign would require endorsement by the convention or Executive Committee and no agency can "approach individuals or groups for special solicitations on behalf of the agency without approval of the convention of its Executive Committee."

Dunn says none of the contributions has come or will come because of solicitations in the SBC, forbidden by the business and financial plan except for appeals for endowment funds.

"It is a lie," to say the funds come from solicitation by him or the BJC, Dunn said in a telephone interview last week.

"There are those whose mentality is so conspiratorial, so dark and so manipulatively political that they cannot imagine the groundswell of support that has come to the Baptist Joint Committee simply because our budget was cut in San Antonio last year," Dunn said.

Many times since the San Antonio action, which cut BJC funds by \$48,400, Dunn said, pastors or church members have called him to say the Joint Committee had been placed in their budget for various amounts.

"And I didn't even know the person, the church, and didn't know it was coming," Dunn said. "They didn't ask us if they could, if they should, if we would take it. But I am just like anybody who has an agency responsibility -- I haven't sent a single check back. But I have not been soliciting funds."

The largest gift that has come to the BJC, Dunn said, has been from a Texas woman who prefers to remain anonymous. He would not even divulge the amount of her gift. Others, he noted, include \$10,591 from the Baptist General Convention of Texas approved by the 1987 convention in the event BJC funds were reduced last year in San Antonio; \$10,000 from the Southern Baptist Alliance, \$6,000 each from First Baptist Church of Amarillo, and the Baptist General Association of Virginia and another gift from North Carolina Baptists.

(Texas Baptist Executive Director William M. Pinson Jr. said last week the Texas Baptist administrative committee will consider the funds for the Baptist Joint Committee at its August meeting in Dallas.)

A more detailed list of contributors will be given to BJC trustees, Dunn said, but it may just include categories of gifts rather than names of churches or individuals to protect them from harassment.

"I am the designated 'hittee' right now," Dunn said. "Critics of those who would offer us support would like to add them to the hit list and they want to know how much we are getting from Southern Baptist sources so they could delete that much from our Cooperative Program support."

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Carolina Indians build church
for South Dakota cousins

By Bill Bangham

F-AMB

Baptist Press
7/17/89

ENEMY SWIM, S.D. (BP)--Wilbert Robertson wanted to go home, so some of his cousins gave him a hand.

His cousins -- members of the Coharie, Haliwa Saponi, Lumbee, Tuscarora and Waccamaw Siouan tribes from North Carolina's Burnt Swamp Baptist Association -- used their July 4th holiday to present the mission pastor with an unusual gift. In three days they erected a church building for him.

Although he had never lived there until now, home for Robertson is Enemy Swim, S.D. His mother grew up on nearby Pickerel Lake, part of the Wahpeton-Sisseton Sioux Indian reservation.

For the past 20 years Robertson has served as pastor for Southern Baptist Indian churches in other parts of the Dakotas. His family had moved from Enemy Swim to North Dakota before he was born.

At Enemy Swim Robertson is starting Southern Baptist's newest church in South Dakota. The work is just beginning and he has been here less than a month. "But this is home," he said. "I'm a member of this tribe."

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He came with no congregation, just a name -- Bethany Baptist Mission -- and a desire.

Now he also has a building.

Construction began early Monday, July 3. By Wednesday evening, Robertson led the first worship service at Bethany Baptist -- dedication of the nearly completed, 3,000 square-foot facility.

The involvement and support of North Carolina Indians is indicative of a new responsiveness among ethnic churches, said Oscar Romo, director of language church extension for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. "We're going to see more of this," he predicted.

Burnt Swamp association's involvement began with a Home Mission Board language missions conference. Robertson and Tony Brewington, a Lumbee Indian from the association, met several years ago at the conference and remained in contact. When Robertson expressed a desire to begin a mission at Enemy Swim, Brewington thought Burnt Swamp could help by providing a building.

The association is almost entirely Indian, crosses state lines and includes 56 churches and missions in North Carolina, South Carolina and Maryland.

Construction was initially to be a Baptist Men's project, but quickly became an association-wide affair after Robertson spoke in some of the association's churches last winter.

"He's a man who touched our heart," said Mike Cummings, Burnt Swamp's director of missions. "It was important for us that he could say, 'My people,' speak with authority and speak from the heart."

In the end, 49 churches contributed 70-80 workers and \$80,000 toward the project, Cummings said.

Among those who traveled the 1,600 miles from North Carolina, 26 men were construction professionals and experienced missions volunteers. Other men came to help as they could.

Women from the association held a Vacation Bible School for area children and cooked for the crew. There were also daytime adult Bible studies and evening evangelistic services under tents.

Cummings said Burnt Swamp's commitment will go beyond the completed building. The association will raise \$500 a month for Robertson's support over the next two years through their Woman's Missionary Union, he said.

The first Baptist work at Enemy Swim was a Bible study and children's program held several years by First Baptist Church of Sisseton, another Indian congregation 30 miles away. The Sisseton church is sponsoring the new mission.

"We see this as a partnership with First Baptist," Cummings said.

"It's almost an obsession with Southern Baptists to be missionary," he explained. "Being a minority people, maybe it has taken us a while to see that. But we're a responsible people -- a mature, sophisticated people -- and we're growing in our understanding of what Southern Baptists are trying to do.

"This hands-on missions involvement is the best way of educating people about that," Cummings said.

The eastern tribes represented in Burnt Swamp association are truly cousins of the Sioux, said Hubbard Lowery, a bivocational pastor and engineer who designed Bethany's new building. "We come from the same linguistic and cultural group," he said. "When the Sioux were pushed out of the east, we remained behind in small pockets,"

They also share a legacy of poverty, Lowery said. "It wasn't that long ago that we experienced the poverty of these people. You could drive our roads and pick out the Indian houses. But that's changed for us. God has blessed us."

"To see the poverty here touches us," Cummings added. "We remember. We know what that's like. A lot of things moved us to come here."

That's why as Wilbert Robinson watched Bethany's building rise from the prairie under the hands of his cousins, he saw the promise beyond it. It's more than the potential of a building, he said, or the two-and-one half acres of reservation land with a 25-year renewable lease.

"For too long we have depended on our white brethren," Robertson said. "This is Indian ministering to Indian. To me this is an answer to prayer in our efforts to minister to the native Americans in this area.

"My dream," he said, "is that when I retire, there will be enough ordained men out of this church to carry me to the cemetery."

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

Mentally retarded teach
VBS volunteers God's love

By Ken Camp

F - Texas

Baptist Press
7/17/89

ABILENE, Texas (BP)--As volunteers from area churches conduct Vacation Bible School among mentally retarded people at the Abilene (Texas) State School, teachers and students alike learn about the depth and diversity of God's love, according to Chaplain Chuck Webber.

This year marked the third annual Vacation Bible School program at the state school coordinated by Webber, a Southern Baptist chaplain. In those three years, 15 churches representing five denominations have participated.

Southwest Park Baptist Church in Abilene has participated each of the three years and has contributed the largest number of volunteers from any congregation.

"The kids of Southwest Park Baptist Church have learned to love and give to these retarded clients with a joy I seldom see as chaplain here," said Webber.

This year, the Southwest Park youth group led Vacation Bible School one hour each night from June 26-29 in a women's unit at the state school.

Under the direction of Minister of Youth Bobby Broyles, teenagers from Southwest Park taught songs, prayers, Bible stories and handicrafts to state school clients. Activities focused on dramatized versions of familiar stories, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan; repetition of familiar choruses; and recitation of familiar passages, such as Psalm 23 and the Lord's Prayer.

"This year, one of our talkative older ladies volunteered to do a prayer during prayer time and managed to recite the Lord's Prayer all the way through," said Webber.

"The Southwest Park youth group broke out into applause when she finished, because she has not made it all the way through before, and these young people have come to know her well enough to know when she has truly made a success in her efforts. Knowing her for three years has helped."

Involvement at Abilene State School is part of the overall missions program at Southwest Park, Broyles noted.

"We plan a major mission trip each year, and one thing we insist on is that the young people have to be involved in missions here in Abilene before they can go off to do missions," he said, adding that the young people also conduct local backyard Bible clubs.

"This is not a peripheral ministry. The impact of being able to give to somebody who really needs it makes a difference to our young people."

The youth were frightened and uneasy when they first became involved in the Vacation Bible School program among mentally retarded people at the school three years ago, Broyles recalled. However, he has seen their apprehension turn into acceptance.

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Initial fear and confusion is natural, but a growing feeling of acceptance and love for the mentally retarded is essential, Webber said. He noted that the clients at the state school do not learn through institutional methods as much as by example and emotion.

"I tell groups coming in here, 'How you feel is more important than what you say. Clients know that you are coming in the name of Jesus. How you behave and feel is what they'll remember. They'll either feel rejection in Jesus' name or pity in Jesus' name or love and acceptance in Jesus' name.'"

Webber stressed that the Vacation Bible School volunteers learn more than they ever thought possible about God's love through their experiences at the state school: "Ministry to retarded people, especially those who are so seriously affected, is a hidden blessing. At some place in your soul, you have to come to grips with who God values and whether you have values similar to his," he said.

"Working with profoundly retarded people is a wonderful blessing, because every person who tries such work will have to discover whether thinking and feeling are truly equal parts of being a human being. Does God love thinkers who rarely show emotion? He sure does, and he also loves those who feel deeply but rarely show organized thought.

"Jesus visits our clients in VBS. He comes embodied in the believers who volunteer to be here."

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Couple talk bluntly
to Acteens about sex

By Karen Benson

N- CO
(WMA)

Baptist Press
7/17/89

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--If statistics hold true, one in four of the 13,600 teen-age girls attending the Southern Baptist National Acteens Convention in San Antonio, Texas, July 12-15, has been or will be sexually assaulted during her lifetime.

For that reason, Bill and Deana Blackburn, leaders of a convention seminar on "Youth in Crisis: Sexuality" gave some plain talk and blunt warnings to the girls, who are members of the missions organization for Southern Baptist girls in grades 7-12.

The Blackburns' advice to the girls ran the gamut from setting sexual limits on a date; to praying before, during and after a date; to teen-age pregnancy; to incest; to date rape.

But they balanced their warnings with biblical teachings on sexuality. "Sex is a part of God's good creation" as long as it is within the context of a marriage relationship, Bill Blackburn said. He is pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Kerrville, Texas.

"Christian sexuality is a part of life," he said. God intended for sexuality to include companionship, intimacy, closeness and friendship, he said.

Their admonitions included:

-- Realize that "a part of a guy's sexual apparatus is his hands," he said. "When you're talking heavy petting, when you're talking hands on the breasts, hands on the genital areas, hands inside clothes -- you're talking about very dangerous stuff."

To prevent a difficult sexual situation, set limits before a date, he said. "That doesn't mean you have to shake hands at the end of every date," he noted, adding that knowing the limits beforehand will prevent problems later.

-- Be aware that most rapes are committed by an acquaintance of the victim. More than half of the rape cases reported, and by far a majority of the cases not reported, are cases of "date rape" or "acquaintance rape," said Deana Blackburn, who is outreach coordinator for the Hill Country Crisis Council in Kerrville.

-- "Trust your instincts," she said. "It's better to be rude than to be raped. Don't be too embarrassed to get out of a bad situation before it's too late."

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-- Be alert to the signs of a potential rapist. He is a person who is looking for an easy target or someone who is vulnerable, she said. He has more traditional or extreme views on the role of women, believing that the woman should be totally dependent on him.

"He doesn't want you to be with your friends. He only wants you to be with him, and particularly to be alone with him," she warned. "He will tend to be very, very jealous. That's someone to be very careful about."

A potential rapist also will be prone to extreme mood swings, she said. One minute he can be very angry. The next minute he can be very apologetic, thoughtful, even loving and caring.

-- Know what to do after being raped. "Your first instinct will be to get rid of that awful feeling of being violated," she said. "But tuck this in the back of your head: Don't do it. Don't take a shower. Don't go to the bathroom. Don't destroy the evidence."

Next, get help as soon as possible, she said. Talk to a trusted adult, go straight to an emergency room, or find some way of getting medical attention, she added. Modern medical technology has enabled doctors to treat rape victims with what is known as a "morning-after pill" which suspends ovulation and lessens the chance of pregnancy from rape.

Most importantly, get counseling, she urged, noting, "Even if the sexual assault happened three or five years ago, it's still important for you to seek help."

It's important, too, to remember two keys to a healthy recovery from a sexual assault, she said: "Know that you are not alone, and know that God is faithful. He will not desert you. He will see you through. God will not let you down."

-- If pregnancy occurs, know up front there are only three options for dealing with the pregnancy: abortion, adoption and parenthood.

"I encourage you to get all the information on all three of those options, and don't be swayed by your friends, your parents, or anybody to rush right out and get an abortion," she said. "It takes approximately one hour to end a human life through abortion. It takes much more time than that to get over an abortion experience."

Remember, too, that "from the point you find out you are pregnant, you are a parent," she said. "You are no longer an individual making decisions just for yourself. You are making decisions for two individuals who are formed in the image of God, and who are known to God by name."