

The Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers: (A Short History)

By Neal Schooley

The first annual meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers was held in Kansas City, June 12-13, 1977. The organization has held five such annual meetings and prepares for its sixth in New Orleans. All have been held in conjunction with the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention except this last year when the association met in conjunction with the Director's National Workshop in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. The early years always influence the personality of an individual or organization as either moves towards maturity. Even at this early point in ASBCM's formative years, a contemplative view is in order.

Steps Towards Organization

The Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers began as a dream in the minds of a few campus ministers. The first extensive discussions concerning the formation of a professional campus minister's association occurred during the Glorieta and Ridgecrest student conferences of August 1975. Because of the enthusiastic response at these first discussions, the founders made a decision to begin steps that would lead to organization. Dick Bumpass, Baptist Campus Minister at the United States Naval Academy, and Don Gurney, campus minister at the Air Force Academy, were key movers in the initial efforts to organize the association. These two campus ministers seem to have been the primary leaders in bringing the dream to early organizational stages, although others certainly made their contributions.

In late 1975, Bumpass invited twenty campus ministers to serve on the organizing steering committee. As of March 10, 1976, fifteen campus ministers had agreed to serve on the steering committee. They were:

Ron Brown	Paul Larsen	Meredith Moore
Bryan Edwards	Kirk Lashley	Gary Oliver
Don Gurney	Bill Lee	George Simms
Dennis Hamm	Glenn McCoy	Jim Sparks
Jamie Jones	Geneva Metzger	Jon Tadlock

In addition, Dick Bumpass, committee organizer and temporary chairman, served on the steering committee. The steering committee was organized into three committees: The Constitution and By-Laws Committee, chaired by Geneva Metzger; the Location Committee, chaired by Jamie Jones; and the Committee for Data Information, chaired by Meredith Moore.

The Constitution Committee met prior to an organizational meeting of the ASBCM which was to be held in Norfolk, Virginia. The members of the committee were to have a draft of a tentative constitution prior to the organizational meeting. Kirk Lashley, Ron Brown, and Geneva Metzger, the chairperson, edited the draft of the new constitution from suggestions submitted from the other members of the committee. They met in Danville, Virginia on May 4, 1976.

Some of the tentative purposes which guided the constitutional draft were as follows:

1. To promote the fraternal spirit among local directors.
2. Attempt to raise the level of competence in each director.
3. Discover areas which should have recurring emphasis in Southern Baptist student work.
4. Encourage professionalism of local campus directors, setting forth educational, experiential, and personal criteria for recognition.
5. Locate and identify capable/competent speakers for student meetings.

From the beginning of its inception, the ASBCM was viewed as a means of promoting the professionalization of campus ministers. One of the organizers, Dick Bumpass, wrote in the letter sent to those invited to serve on the steering committee:

Several of us felt that the formation of such an association might assist us in the professionalization of our particular vocation. Not that the campus ministry is not already professional, but all of us are aware of the fact that often times we receive less than professional courtesy and treatment.

He continues by stating that "the directors as a group might set some standards for what they consider to be a minimum requirement for one who is interested in becoming a campus minister." Early drafts indicate professionalization of campus ministers to be a priority.

An earlier concern of ASBCM founders was to secure the views of the various directors of state student departments. Two of the members of the Steering Committee, Dick Bumpass and Don Gurney, met with the state directors at their annual meeting in Denver, Colorado which was held in December 1975. According to Dick Bumpass,

Some of them received the news (formation of the Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers) enthusiastically. Frankly, some received the news less enthusiastically. Suffice it to say, I think we enjoy the support of most of them.

Three of the state directors provided the travel support for Gurney and Bumpass to attend the meeting, thus providing more than moral support in the effort to secure support and share information about the organizational efforts. Otherwise, mixed support was received by the infant organization as it began the steps towards birth.

The organizational meeting of the new ASBCM was held in conjunction with the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention which met in Norfolk, Virginia. The meeting of the ASBCM was held at the Baptist student center at Old Dominion University. The purpose of the Norfolk meeting was to review the tentative constitutional proposals and to prepare for the larger meeting planned for the Director's National Workshop in Clinton, Mississippi.

There is a sense in which a cluster of four meetings must be viewed as a preliminary excursion into new waters. The Norfolk constitutional discussion, Clinton Director National Workshop meeting, and the discussions with BSU directors at Glorieta and Ridgecrest conference centers during August all served to provide a platform for launching the new organization.

At the Clinton meeting the association elected Don Gurney as organizing president. Jamie Jones was to chair the discussions of the organization at Glorieta. Dick Bumpass was elected to serve as the treasurer. These men were elected to serve until the formal organization took place in Kansas City. The association adopted a \$5.00 annual initiation fee until the formal organization, after which the membership fee

for the association would be raised sufficiently to cover the expenses of the association.

Membership in the association was open to any person who ministered full-time to college students. An early constitutional revision eliminated any provisions for accreditation of members, opting instead for a more general membership.

In addition, the ASBCM adopted the term "campus minister" as the recognized title of those who serve as ministers on the campus. The term "campus minister" was viewed as a more professional title that recognized the ministry skills of men and women serving on campuses than does the more common title of BSU Director. In addition, the purpose of the association was affirmed. "The Association shall seek to give a sense of identity to Southern Baptist campus ministers who work on campuses throughout the United States and by appointment of the Foreign Mission Board."¹ Thus, as preparations were made for the first annual meeting of the association, admirable progress had been made in just over one year towards an ASBCM.

Following that cluster of four founding meetings in 1976, the steering committee took the lead in presenting the new organization to BSU directors, its prospective members. While it must be said that at this point the ASBCM was still received with some degree of caution, by September, 1976 there were between seventy-five and eighty-five new members.

The National Meetings

Every viable organization must devise a means by which its membership gathers as a corporate entity. Such was true of the ASBCM if it was to mature into an organization with potential for influence in the profession of its membership and in the Southern Baptist Convention. Thus, the constitution of the organization called for an annual meeting. While the constitution did not specify where or when the annual meeting shall be conducted, a pre-convention meeting prior to the annual Southern Baptist Convention has become the normal time of meeting.

The first annual meeting was in Kansas City on the campus of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The

date for the first annual meeting was June 12-13, 1977. According to Don Gurney, temporary chairman of ASBCM, "A final beginning step (towards the formation of ASBCM) will be taken in Kansas City in June 1977 when we formally organize, adopt a constitution and bylaws, elect officers, and transact any other business that is deemed necessary."²

The first session began with a discussion of the proposed ASBCM constitution and bylaws and the election of officers. Dick Bumpass, campus minister at the U.S. Naval Academy, was elected to serve as the president. A time of worship and celebration was led by Paul Larsen, BSU Director, UNC-Charlotte.³

In keeping with one of the major purposes of the organization, Dr. Lofton Hudson, at that time director of the Midwestern Christian Counseling Center, delivered the keynote lectures. He spoke on recent developments in the field of psychology which were germane to the campus ministers.

The first meeting proved to be a significant beginning for the ASBCM has held annual meetings since then. The following meetings have been held:

- 1978 Atlanta, Georgia
- 1979 Houston, Texas
- 1980 St. Louis, Missouri
- 1981 Arkadelphia, Arkansas

The officers elected at each of the annual meetings are:

- 1977 President: Dick Bumpass, Maryland
Vice President-Membership: Don Gurney, Colorado
Vice President-Publications: Ron Brown, Virginia
Vice President-Program: Geneva Metzger,
North Carolina
Vice President-Administration: Mike Lundy, Texas
- 1978 President: Don Gurney, Colorado
Vice President-Membership: Sam Carothers,
Tennessee
Vice President-Publications: Ron Brown, Virginia
Vice President-Program: Geneva Metzger,
North Carolina
Vice President-Administration: Mike Lundy, Texas
- 1979 President: Ron Brown, Virginia
Vice President-Membership: Sam Carothers,
Tennessee

- Vice President-Publications: John Gilbert, Arkansas
 Vice President-Program: John Walsh, Missouri
 Vice President-Administration: Russ Arch, Colorado
- 1980 President: Geneva Metzger, North Carolina
 Vice President-Membership: Joe Cobb, Mississippi
 Vice President-Publications: Neal Schooley,
 Oklahoma
 Vice President-Program: Ned Walsh, Missouri
 Vice President-Administration: Russ Arch, Colorado
- 1981 President: Geneva Metzger, North Carolina
 Vice President-Membership: Dan Haskins, Tennessee
 Vice President-Publications: Neal Schooley,
 Oklahoma
 Vice President-Program: Skip Noble, Louisiana
 Vice President-Administration: Russ Arch, Colorado

The ASBCM annually invites theologians and other persons of expertise to address the membership at the annual meeting. Those who have delivered the annual addresses are:

- 1978 Andrew Lester—"Counseling and the
 Campus Ministry"
- 1979 John Newport—"Biblical Authority"
- 1980 James Dunn—"Ethical Issues for the 80's"
 Paul Simmons
 Glen Stassen
 Bill Pinson
 Harry Hollis
- 1981 Mahan Siler—"The Self-Care of Ministers"

It has become the practice of the ASBCM to include the annual lectures in one of the semi-annual issues of **The Campus Minister**. This practice should continue, thus insuring an adequate chronicle of the content of the meeting. In addition, by including the annual addresses in **The Campus Minister**, the ASBCM is able to share in the dialogue on current issues in the Southern Baptist Convention and the SBC campus ministry. For example, articles have dealt with such matters as the debate over biblical inerrancy (the Houston convention) and ethical concerns (the St. Louis convention). The 1982 annual meeting will deal with matters pertaining to issues in higher education.

Early Accomplishments

As the association approaches its sixth annual meeting, it is appropriate to review the accomplishments of the organization. Has it begun to meet the early objectives?

The founders of ASBCM seemed to have several views on what the organization should be. Some argued for a very extensive form of accrediting campus ministers through continuing education. Ron Brown, a former president, writes, "I still believe such an accrediting process for student/campus ministers would be one of the best services the association could offer its membership." (See Charles Lillard's article in this issue of **The Campus Minister**.)

All the former presidents of ASBCM seemed to desire increased professionalism among campus ministers. These dreams are fueled by the desire to be more influential in Southern Baptist life and to promote recognition of the campus minister as one called to a profession within the larger calling. Even after the first annual meeting, eligibility for membership still concerned the founders. The issue seemed to be, "How can ASBCM best promote professionalism in campus ministry—through general membership or a more restricted professional constituency?"⁴

Dick Bumpass notes that there were five dreams of the founders.

- 1) The existence of a strong, viable organization with the majority of campus ministers participating.
- 2) A professional journal—**The Campus Minister**.
- 3) The compilation of data concerning campus ministers.
- 4) Full cooperation with the State Directors Association.
- 5) The complete professionalization of the campus minister.

Most observers believe that the publication of **The Campus Minister** was one of the major accomplishments of the association. The journal has been published four years under three editors; Ron Brown, John Gilbert, and the current editor, Neal Schooley.

Where to Now

Looking back, the organization seems to have achieved the needed stability to continue existence. While ASBCM still continues to be limited in resources such as finances and a membership that includes only about one-tenth of those in Southern Baptist campus ministry, there is little doubt about its ability to survive. The real question is that of growth and maturity.

Dreams are always in the constant stage of being re-examined. The ASBCM is no different. Several issues will need to be addressed by the organization if it is to prosper.

1) How can such an organization serve its constituency in a professional manner? Some members have left the organization because adequate membership services were not provided, such as correspondence with the membership through regular newsletters. It is apparent that the leadership will need to address this issue if the ASBCM is to mature into a viable organization.

2) Will **The Campus Minister** continue to mature into a truly scholarly and professional journal? Since the editor is writing this critique and history, he leaves this question for the readers to ponder. However, articles that reflect research, truly scholarly work which enhances the practical ministry of the campus minister, and more extensive circulation is necessary. Indexing in relevant periodical indexes should be pursued.

3) Will the purposes of the organization be developed more clearly?

4) Will the organization become more influential in the lives of the campus ministers or will it continue to make its voice heard mainly at the annual meeting. It is the opinion of this writer that the ASBCM must become a continuing presence in the ministry of its membership.

5) Will the organization be able to "sell" its dream to a new core group of campus ministers that are coming on the scene? These men and women are skilled and committed. It will be necessary to involve them in ASBCM.

Certainly there have been accomplishments of note; they must not be overlooked.

1) The organization is gaining acceptance and credibility. More than one state director has said to this writer that he believes that the organization has a very valid role. Membership does seem to be on the increase and the hard questions raised about ASBCM indicate that the organization is being taken seriously.

2) The journal, though still young, has promise and has made a contribution to literature on the campus ministry.

3) The annual meetings have been noted by Southern Baptist leadership and have served to encourage campus ministers to attend the Southern Baptist Conventions.

4) The organization, as a result of action taken at the Arkadelphia meeting which encouraged an endowment for campus ministry in new convention areas, is beginning to be concerned about substantive issues in SBC campus ministry.

Finally, the membership, the founding leaders, the current leaders, and critics must have patience. ASBCM is just beginning to sense the presence of new muscle. The organization must allow itself the time to develop those muscles in a responsible and healthy way for the uplifting of the whole body of Christ.⁵

Footnotes

1. *The Campus Minister*, Vol. 1, #1, Winter 1978, p. 32-36.
2. Correspondence to the membership, written by Don Gurney.
3. *The Campus Minister*, Vol. 1, #1, Winter 1978, pp. 37-38.
4. Letter to membership written by President Dick Bumpass, July 11, 1977.
5. Acknowledgement: Former presidents, Ron Brown, Dick Bumpass, Don Gurney, and current president Geneva Metzger provided material from which this history was written.