

ASBCM --The Beginnings

by

Don Gurney

On a warm sunny morning in 1975 at Glorieta Baptist Assembly, the concept of ASBCM took form. Between sessions, Don and Lynne Gurney and Dick and Dixie Bumpass were sharing the time together when someone mentioned the most recent dismissal of another campus minister. We shared words and asked questions of each other about what we might do to help this person. We came to realize that there is very little that can be done when this happens except to individually contact any such person to express our concern and offer our limited help.

As we talked, we came to the conviction that we needed an organization among campus ministers across state and regional lines whereby we could reach out to those who have lost their place of ministry. We also recognized that such an organization could reach out to persons looking for places of service in campus ministry. Thus, the seeds were sown. This concept emerged as the first statement in our constitutional draft: 1. "To promote the fraternal spirit among local directors." This statement remained a high visibility concept in all the early planning meetings and actions.

As discussions continued that week at Glorieta, another concept emerged which centered on the idea of "professionalism" and the importance of being called to campus ministry. Both Dick Bumpass and I were serving in high visibility places at the Naval

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Academy and the Air Force Academy respectively. Both of us were under the appointment of the Home Mission Board. Yet, there was this "feeling," though never expressed, that one of these days you will grow up and move into a real ministry. The following personal experience demonstrates this idea:

I had attended the evangelism conference seeking fellowship and ideas that would help me do a better job of ministry. One of the excellent speakers worked for the Home Mission Board. After his presentation, I approached him to ask about an idea he had presented. During our conversation, I introduced myself as the Director of Student Ministry at the Air Force Academy. His immediate response was "Oh, you are one of our BSU Boys." Later as I reflected on that response, it began to bother me. Is that the view that others had of our God-called ministries? I was not a "boy." At that time I was over 40 years of age. I had left a successful pastorate in Northern Idaho. I was married with six children. But above all else, I felt very strongly that God called me to my position of ministry and that my ministry was making a difference in people's lives and helping grow the kingdom. Yet in the eyes of a very well spoken man on the evangelism program, I was a "BSU Boy."

The second plank of our proposed organization for campus ministers began to take shape.

From the beginning, Dick Bumpass put forth the idea that since we are professionals, we should publish a journal that would

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set forth concepts of our ministry. The journal would feature articles written primarily by and for campus ministers, thus providing a platform for sharing our views and ideas. In order to be professional, the journal would need to contain research on different areas of ministry on campus as well as "how to" ideas of what is working on various campuses. Ron Brown, then a Campus Minister in Virginia, took on the responsibility of putting together the first such issue. He set a high standard for following issues of the journal.

As the organization has developed, professionalism and the idea of promoting a fraternal spirit in our ranks have collided on occasion. We have tried to keep high standards of education, conduct, and dedication among campus ministers and, at the same time, keep the membership of our organization open to all those who work with students in a campus ministry setting. Sometimes these student workers are in new convention areas and their only qualifications are hearts burning to reach out to students. These were the ones we thought might benefit the most from the support and encouragement that could come from our organization. Hopefully, there will be a continuing "holy tension" between keeping high standards and a helping hand to all campus ministers.

A third plank that was present in our original "dreaming" sought greater visibility for campus ministry within our denomination. This idea was not expressed in the original five "purposes" that guided those putting together the early constitution and by-laws in the Danville, VA meeting. In our original discussions we were very aware of the convention meeting in

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Denver in 1970 when it was debated just where to put student ministries. The outcome resulted in National Student Ministries (NSM) becoming a "small department" (my interpretation) within the Baptist Sunday School Board. In the early 1970s, NSM was able to secure some time in front of the whole convention in annual meeting. However, by 1975 this time allotment had been eliminated and in our view, student ministry began losing its visibility within our denomination.

It was pointed out that since student ministry existed primarily as a state operated program, it would be difficult to do much promotion on a national level. We recognized the problem, but felt that a national organization meeting annually at the same time as the convention would keep student ministry before our national audience. Along that line, we began scheduling our annual meetings to coincide with the Southern Baptist Convention. For one or two years, we requested and received permission to have a student ministry booth in the convention exhibit area. Permission was denied soon thereafter because we did not meet all the criteria for having a display on our own and student ministry became a part of the overall Baptist Sunday School Board display. In my estimation, this was a first step toward the downsizing of student ministry as a high priority within our denomination.

One idea that was discussed in the beginning, but never surfaced in our final organization, was the hope that ASBCM could become a place to turn when someone was seeking a place of service in campus ministry. I mention it only with the thought that it was, and is, a good idea. It faltered along the way due to the fact

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that it would take a lot of time, energy and some expense to collect information on ministry openings in various states. If, or perhaps when, ASBCM is strong enough to have some paid staff that could give time to this kind of effort, I still believe it to be something helpful to those seeking to enter campus ministry.

An idea that has born much fruit and has had a strong positive influence on campus ministry is the involvement of local campus ministers directly with National Student Ministries and the Home Mission Board. Prior to ASBCM, local directors had very little direct contact with the leadership of NSM or the Home Mission Board. The state directors organization met on a regular basis with both these entities and so had influence with them. However, the local directors could only work through their state directors, who quite often wore several hats and were not always able to attend the annual meetings. The early thinking included a strong desire to impact programs and personnel selected for NSM's annual national meetings at Glorieta and Ridgecrest as well as the National Student Directors Workshop which was held every five years. With the advent of ASBCM, NSM and other planning groups invited our representatives to provide input in the planning process for many areas of campus ministry.

At the conclusion of the discussion and planning sessions at the Glorieta meeting in the summer of 1975, we decided it was time to test our idea. Initially, we presented the idea at the State Directors Association meeting in Denver in February of 1976. We contacted then-president Glenn Yarbrough of Tennessee and requested a spot on the program. Glenn was very gracious in his

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response to our request and three state directors even helped with Dick Bumpass' travel expenses to the meeting. Dick flew into Colorado Springs where we spent time preparing our presentation and sharing further plans.

We did not know what to expect from the SDA, but found them open and interested in our presentation. Some, generally from larger states with large numbers of directors, could not understand our feeling the need for greater support and contact with other campus ministers. There was no outright opposition to our idea though there did seem to be some apprehension about such an organization coming into being. One state director questioned our intention of perhaps becoming some sort of "union" to bring about higher wages for local directors. As the organization developed in the years ahead, several state directors became members and strong supporters of our organization and its goals and objectives.

After the presentation to the SDA, Dick and I returned to our home in Colorado Springs and began to make plans for the next step in the process of bringing into existence the organization that has come to be known as The Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers (ASBCM). At this time, about 20 campus ministers were contacted and invited to serve on a steering committee that would produce the first draft of the constitution and by-laws and suggest times and places for future meetings. The next meeting was held at the Director's National Workshop at Clinton, MS. Following the presentation at Clinton, there were many questions, much discussion and eventually affirmation of the idea of such an organization. Plans were made and people selected to

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share at both Glorieta and Ridgecrest Student Weeks. We now had a list of interested people along with a \$5.00 contribution from each person to fund the next step in the organization. That formal organization took place at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri on June 12-13, 1977.

My primary memories of the preparation for the meeting in Kansas City were times of genuine hope that we were helping to launch a very important event in the lives of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers. That sense, along with almost frantic calls to the Seminary, others on the planning committee and places where we would be needing lodging, kept us busy most of the fall of 1976 and into the spring of 1977. It all came together at Kansas City with a very fine program, over fifty people in attendance and a lot of attention from the press. The press attention was unexpected and interesting. Questions were asked like "Is this a protest movement?" Obviously, the winds of change were already blowing across our convention and the press seemed to want to make more of our organizational meeting than was really in our intentions. We were careful in our answers to the press, but worked hard to make the most of the interest and publicity that was present.

It has been twenty years since we were launched at the Kansas City meeting. I have written this story of the beginnings of ASBCM to try to share some of the feelings and dreams that led to the idea for the organization. Other histories have been, or are being, written that have much more of the factual data of our last twenty years. Hopefully, this story of "beginnings" along with the other histories will give the reader some appreciation of the roads

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we have traveled, the people who dreamed the dreams and those who have put much into bringing the ASBCM to where it is today. There is much to be done yet for ASBCM to be the force that it can be in campus ministry. Perhaps if we who dreamed the early dreams and got it all started can pass on to this present generation something of our sense of urgency, our strong desire to help each other and the strong belief that campus ministry is a "God Called Ministry," we can continue to make an impact in our world through campus ministry and ASBCM.

It has not been possible for Lynne and I to attend ASBCM meetings for several years. We plan to be present for the meeting in Ft. Worth this June. Let's make it a great 20th Anniversary!

It is my personal desire that this story be printed in memory of Mr. Dick Bumpass. Dick and I shared many hours of dreaming and working together to bring about ASBCM. Dick cared deeply for students (he died of a heart attack while serving at the Naval Academy), he cared for other campus ministers and he was a very good friend. We miss you, Dick. Rest Well!

Don Gurney is a Founding Member of ASBCM. Don serves as Volunteer Director (BSM) at Southwestern University, Georgetown, TX. He also pastors Fellowship Baptist Church, Liberty Hill, TX