
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

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Teen drug use on rise after 11-year decline

By Bob Allen

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ANN ARBOR, Mich. (ABP) -- Illicit drug use among American teenagers rose the last two years, reversing an 11-year decline, according to a study released Jan. 31.

More teenagers are using marijuana, LSD, inhalants and stimulants, researchers at the University of Michigan reported. Cigarette smoking is also on the rise, researchers said, while use of alcohol -- the most widely abused drug by teens -- holds steady.

Also, attitudes against drug use are relaxing, and young people associate less harm with experimentation, the study showed. Researchers fear that may indicate use will continue to increase.

And while drug use remains well below levels of the late 1970s, the rates "clearly represent a reversal of the declines we have recorded for more than a decade," the study's lead researcher said.

"Certainly the combination of drugs now growing in popularity -- marijuana, LSD and amphetamines -- is reminiscent of what was popular in the early days of the drug epidemic," said researcher Lloyd Johnston. "Other drugs then followed in popularity. I certainly hope that we are not seeing a rebirth of the old epidemic."

The study tracks survey responses about drug use among high school seniors annually since 1975. For the third year, it also includes information from eighth and 10th graders.

The 1993 study involved about 50,000 students in more than 400 public and private schools.

According to the study, more than 35 percent of seniors admit to having used marijuana some time in their lives, a jump of 2.7 percent over last year. More than 15 percent said they have used marijuana in the last month. Among 10th graders, 24 percent responded they have used marijuana. For eighth graders, the statistic is 12 percent.

Seventeen percent of seniors have used inhalants, 15 percent stimulants and 10 percent LSD, all increases over last year, according to the study.

Cocaine use remained unchanged at 6 percent.

Cigarettes were reportedly used by 61.9 percent of the class of 1993, a slight increase over last year. Alcohol use, surveyed at 87 percent among seniors, declined slightly but increased among the younger ages.

The perceived dangers of illicit drug use declined at every grade level. "The changes in use would worry me less if the underlying attitudes and beliefs were not also continuing to shift in a direction favorable to drug use," Johnston said.

Johnston described the study's findings as "an early warning to all sectors of society that the improvements of the last decade can't be taken for granted."

"Each generation of American youth is naive about drugs and has to learn the same hard lessons," he said.

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Rise in drug use prompts call
for churches, government to act

By Greg Warner

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Both churches and the government need to act to head off a recent surge in drug use among teenagers, two Baptist ethicists said Feb. 1.

A study conducted by the University of Michigan found illicit drug use by American teenagers rose during the last two years, reversing more than a decade of decline. More teenagers now are using marijuana, LSD, inhalants and stimulants, researchers reported. Cigarette smoking also rose, while use of alcohol -- the most widely abused drug by teens -- held steady.

Baptists who want to reverse the rise in drug use should take a cue from the highly successful "True Love Waits" campaign that encourages teens to delay sex until marriage, said Ben Mitchell, director of biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"We need to rebuild a community of abstainers from alcohol and drugs," he said.

The "True Love Waits" campaign, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, has attracted widespread media exposure by convincing thousands of teens to commit to sexual abstinence until they marry. "We need something as vibrant as that for alcohol and drug use," Mitchell said.

Christian teens endure the same peer pressures to try drugs as their non-Christian classmates, said Mitchell, who went through his own "mild experimentation" with drugs while growing up in the 1970s.

America is raising a new generation of teens susceptible to drug use and unconvinced of the dangers, he said. "Especially with some of the hard drugs, we're seeing a whole new experimentation phase," he said.

The Michigan study found that young people are less likely to view drug experimentation as harmful than in years past.

Mitchell said churches make a mistake by concentrating more on curing drug abuse than preventing it. "We have focused a lot on rehabilitation and treatment, but we have left prevention to school groups."

But more than an abstinence campaign is needed, said Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, a Nashville-based think tank. The government too must act to discourage drug use.

Perhaps the best way to do that, Parham said, is to impose steep taxes on the two most abused substances -- alcohol and tobacco. Those are the "gateway drugs" that frequently lead teens to more serious drug use, Parham

said.

"The increase in marijuana use and other illicit drugs may result from the social failure to discourage the illegal consumption of tobacco and alcohol among America's youth," he added.

It is a mistake to separate "hard" drug use from alcohol and tobacco consumption, Parham said. That, he said, was the misdirected policy of the Bush administration, which "refused to classify tobacco and alcohol as the major drugs of choice among American youth."

"Studies repeatedly show that increasing taxation on tobacco and alcohol products reduces consumption," he said. "We need much higher taxes on tobacco and alcohol products."

"And if Christians want to do something about alcohol consumption, they need to support the SAFE bill," advised Parham, referring to the Sensible Advertising and Family Education Act now before Congress.

The bill would require a system of rotating health and safety warnings on broadcast and print advertisements for alcohol products, similar to the warnings that now accompany tobacco ads. A vote on the measure by the Senate Commerce Committee could come as early as late February, Parham said.

Parham said Christians serious about drug abuse need to take a hard look at America's tobacco industry. He complained that the tobacco industry is targeting new markets among the urban poor and in Third World countries, all the while aided by the government's diplomatic and economic overtures abroad on behalf of tobacco companies.

In effect, the U.S. government is "promoting disease abroad," he said. "For example, more Colombians will die from American tobacco than Americans will die from Columbian cocaine."

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America's children under
violent attack, report says

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Gun violence kills the equivalent of a classroom full of children every two days in America, according to a new report that indicates homicide is now the third leading cause of death for children ages 5-14.

The Children's Defense Fund released the report, calling on Americans to "cease fire" in the gun war that has seized the nation and added to the problems of childhood poverty and neglect.

In its "The State of America's Children Yearbook 1994," the child-advocacy group said that juveniles account for a growing number of gun offenders, as well as victims.

"Our worst nightmares are coming true," said Marian Wright Edelman, a Baptist and CDF president. "After years of epidemic poverty, joblessness, racial intolerance, family disintegration, domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse, the crisis of children having children has been eclipsed by the greater crisis of children killing children."

She underscored her call with several statistics in the report:

-- A child in the United States is 15 times as likely to die of a gunshot wound as a child in Northern Ireland.

-- Between 1979 and 1991, 50,000 children were killed by guns -- the equivalent to the number of American casualties in the Vietnam War.

-- Every two hours a child dies from gunshot wounds; comparatively, a police officer is killed every five days and nine hours.

The CDF recommended federal, state and local legislation and regulation of non-sporting firearms, particularly assault weapons.

Gun violence is the latest and most horrifying of the ways in which America fails to protect children, Edelman said.

Three children die daily from child abuse, while another 27 die from poverty. The number of children in poverty increased to 14.6 million in 1992. More than 2.9 million children were abused or neglected -- triple the number reported 12 years earlier.

Children in foster care rose to 442,000 in 1992 -- 68 percent higher than a decade ago.

In an interview, the director of a Baptist foster-care provider blamed drugs, physical and sexual abuse, and the deterioration of the extended family as the leading reasons for children being placed in foster care.

Bob Gerstmyer, executive director of Baptist Family and Children's Services of Maryland, said experts disagree about how much abuse is rising and how much of the statistical growth results from increased reporting. Still, he said, "a large percentage" of children in foster care have been physically or sexually abused.

The agency of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware currently has 36 children in a treatment foster-care program called CHOSEN. Gerstmyer said that extended families once absorbed children who needed a home. Now, he observed, they either no longer exist or are unwilling or unable to care for them.

Edelman called on adults -- parents, clergy, community leaders and public officials -- to "give our children a safe start with nurturing homes, moral guidance, basic health care, decent child care and education and a stake in the future."

Gerstmyer added that churches are a key to solving this crisis. The private sector must begin to take responsibility for the nation's children, he said. But it is not enough for churches to talk about the importance of the family, he continued. They must demonstrate it.

If adults don't end their "hypocrisy," the CDF report indicates, the consequences could be dire by the year 2001, with 1 million babies born into poverty annually and 37,000 children arrested every week.

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School-prayer resolutions
worry Texas Baptist leader

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- More than half the counties in Texas have approved school-prayer resolutions in recent months, and that has some Texas Baptists concerned.

Resolutions urging that prayer be reinstated in public schools have been approved by commissioners courts in 134 Texas counties, as well as city councils in more than 50 municipalities and the boards of several school districts.

The resolutions demonstrate that some politicians are willing to trade religious liberty for social and religious control, said Weston Ware, citizenship associate with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

In effect, the resolutions propose that children in public schools be exposed to the prayers of whatever religious majority may control that school's board, Ware explained.

"Preserving religious liberty in our country is a lot more important than any perceived benefits believed to come from schoolroom prayers

determined by some political majority," Ware said.

Scott Arme y, Denton County Commissioner, introduced the first such resolution last June 22 and has spearheaded the effort to get other counties and local governing bodies to endorse the measure.

The resolution approved by the Denton County Commissioners Court stated in part that the United States "was founded on the freedom of religion and was not founded on the freedom from religion."

Reinstating public school prayers would move the nation back to its religious-based moral foundations, according to the resolution.

"There's been a deterioration of our school systems," Arme y said, adding there is "no value system, no morality, no direction, no place for faith in the schools."

While there are genuine problems in public education, the absence of classroom prayers is not their cause and the inclusion of such prayers would not be their solution, Ware countered.

"It is unfortunate that the issue has become politicized to the degree that many people feel that some form of politically determined religious guidance, perhaps including prayer, would save our schools," he said.

Arme y maintains that the goal of the resolution is to end "bigotry and intolerance" toward Christians who are told to "leave their faith at the door" when they enter public schools.

But the religious free-speech rights of students already are protected under the Equal Access Act of 1984, according to Ware.

Under the act -- upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1990 -- if a public secondary school allows student-initiated groups to meet on campus during non-instructional time, the school cannot discriminate on the basis of the religious, political or philosophical content of the speech at such meetings.

The act allows secondary school students to join together voluntarily for prayer, Bible study, devotions and religious instruction.

"How much better to call upon students at the secondary level to express their own freedom of religious speech as opposed to calling for a dangerous change in the constitution that could put the state in the business of religious instruction, which would threaten the religious liberty of us all," Ware said.

Although the various resolutions approved in Texas do not address specific legislation, Arme y said his goal is to convince federal lawmakers to approve a constitutional amendment on school prayer, particularly H.J.R. 173, introduced last March in the 103rd Congress.

The matter of school prayer, Arme y said, should be left in the hands of local communities.

"Local control means local majority control," Ware said. "As Baptists, we don't believe in a local majority religious group dictating the religious practices of that community."

"Anywhere the religious majority rules religious practice, the religious minority in that community will be the victim."

But the idea is popular. Arme y said the school-prayer resolution has received "grassroots support" and is gaining momentum.

"We are planning to begin to be more aggressive to get the remaining counties lined up," he said.

Both the Christian Coalition -- a conservative organization founded by televangelist Pat Robertson -- and the Rutherford Institute -- a legal network favoring more accommodation of the church by the state -- are being contacted to discover ways to "keep the momentum going," he said.

But at this point, Dick Wienhold of Bedford, state chairman of the Christian Coalition, said his office is directing all calls regarding the prayer resolution to Arme y.

"We reported on the movement in a newsletter late last year, but that

has been our only involvement," Wienhold said.

Regardless of who endorses the resolution, Baptists should be true to their history and heritage, rejecting any wedding of church and state, Ware said.

"Politicians love a bandwagon, and sometimes the less thought people give to an issue, the more willing they are to jump on board," Ware said. "Campaigns such as this are fueled by politics."

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Seminaries shaped by trends
in society, church, education

By Marv Knox

(ABP) -- Developments in the classroom and beyond are changing how Baptists train ministers, a half-dozen educators say.

Obvious changes can be seen by looking at Baptist schools. Several universities have opened divinity schools or seminaries. Moderate Baptists have started their own seminary. The Southern Baptist Convention's six seminaries have branched out; some even offer bachelor's degrees.

But as diverse as those schools may be, they share trends which are changing Baptist ministry training, the educators said. Trends affect:

-- Curriculum.

Fields of study and course offerings are expanding.

"The changing society in which we live calls for a broader curriculum," insisted David Dockery, vice president for academic administration and dean of the school of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"In the 19th century, theological education was focused on classical education," such as biblical studies, theology and church history, Dockery said. "In the 20th century, each decade has added a new focus."

He cited such areas as religious education, church music, missions, evangelism, social work and church growth as examples.

"Now it's snowballing and increasingly complex," he added. "Every seminary or divinity school must rethink its curriculum. That doesn't mean we will give up the classical disciplines, but we will focus on churches."

So, the schools must resolve their long-standing "tension between practical and theoretical" training, noted Steve Carleton, executive director of the SBC Education Commission in Nashville.

"The core (classical disciplines) will still be strong and necessary," he predicted. But the schools will try harder to "get people into hands-on situations to make them even better prepared to minister. In the next decade, the idea of separating the theoretical from the practical simply won't wash."

The distinction between theoretical and practical is being diminished, agreed Brad Creed, associate dean of George Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Truett Seminary, which will open next fall, is designing an integrated curriculum, he said. Professors from theoretical and practical disciplines will team teach courses specifically geared to help students grasp and utilize both spheres of learning.

Even in established schools, the practical and theoretical complement each other, added Bob Johnson, dean of Southern Seminary's Boyce Bible School.

"We help students think theologically; they say we're practical," he said. "We're theologically, philosophically and biblically based, yet we teach students how to baptize and do weddings."

-- Churches.

Ministry in local congregations is exerting itself as the schools' primary reason for being.

"There's an emphasis on how people can be prepared in a specific way, particularly to start and build churches," Carleton said. "It's not new, but the emphasis is stronger: How can we prepare ministers for the local church?"

Part of the answer lies in providing education which equips ministers for specific tasks, observed Gray Allison, president of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn.

"There is a trend in seminary education toward more and more specialization," Allison claimed. He cited training for specific vocations, such as the pastorate and religious education.

Preparing ministers for local churches is "very difficult because of the different models of church we have," suggested Dockery, who noted the styles of ministry, administration and worship of Baptist churches vary widely. "Seminaries must get in touch with what the churches are seeking."

But even being "in touch" doesn't fill the bill, he admitted, noting many students will serve in churches of various styles and sizes. Most must begin in single-staff congregations, even though many later will work on multiple-minister staffs.

Reclaiming relationships with local churches is a challenge, insisted Creed.

The answer lies in "intentional partnering with churches and places where ministry takes place," he said, claiming new schools have an easier time accomplishing that feat.

But an older school with a non-traditional format has succeeded, said Dorman Landtroop, vice president for administrative affairs at Luther Rice Seminary in Atlanta.

Luther Rice offers the majority of its training through "distance education" -- correspondence courses.

Because students are involved directly in ministry and choose courses they need, the seminary must stay in tune with the specific concerns of churches and their ministers, he said.

Church growth and leadership are emerging areas of concern, reported Boyce's Johnson. "It's taking more of a prominent place in the seminaries," he said. The movement started at Fuller Theological Seminary in California and has been boosted by church-growth centers at Southern Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, he said.

That emphasis has been founded on experience, Carleton said. "There is the constant worry about church growth, and we seem to have plateaued," he explained. "You can't just think about it. You have to do something."

But Johnson warned seminaries must not focus on growth for growth's sake. "Church growth must not be aimed just at the numbers but based in a traditional theological base," he said. "It's important that we be first of all a theological seminary."

-- Keeping up.

Ministers can't learn it all in three years. To be effective, they must continue their education.

"We used to hear, 'Don't study for just an exam but for a lifetime of ministry.' The implication was that a seminary student really could prepare for a lifetime," Dockery recalled. "Now we say, 'Study hard and prepare for the next 10 years.' Continuing education will be imperative; ministers across the board need to retool every five years."

He illustrated with the success of the growth style of Saddleback Community Church in Southern California. "Fifteen years ago, what seminary was preparing students to minister that way?" he asked. "Rick Warren (the church's pastor) wasn't even out of seminary then. The most inviting church

model wasn't even in existence 10 years ago."

Creed predicted continuing education, and even primary ministry training, will grow beyond the schools.

"The larger churches especially will take responsibility for training more of their leaders," he said. "These larger churches with resources -- not necessarily independent or fundamentalist churches but larger churches -- will do it themselves. They don't like what they're getting" from existing schools.

Echoing that theme, Carleton noted internships -- where a minister-in-training will work on a church staff with a ministry mentor -- will increase.

Some internships will be in larger churches, he said. But the Education Commission wants to link schools with churches to make internships available for many students.

Another form of continuing education is being seen at Bible schools, Johnson reported. "Our students are much more geared toward getting further education," he said.

-- Globalization.

Students must gear up to minister in a big, big world.

"The multiethnic composition of seminary student bodies is imperative because of the changing makeup of the population," Southern's Dockery noted. To illustrate, he cited the fastest-growing segments of several Baptist state conventions -- Hispanics in California, African Americans in Illinois, Koreans in Maryland/Delaware and French-speaking Haitians in New England.

"We're going to have to understand cultural and contextual issues and have a growing global awareness," he said. "We can't afford to be regional; we must be global and international."

Southern Seminary is sponsoring a global-awareness program to focus on African Americans, Hispanics and Asians for a year each. The seminary also is moving toward Korean-language programs offering master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees.

"Seminaries are coming to grips with the fact we live in a mission culture and no longer live in a church culture," Creed added.

"What will theological education need to be in terms of challenges for the 21st century? We live on a mission field. We're looking at an unchurched culture that may be interested in spirituality and religion, but not in a community-based, (church) culture. ...

"People live their lives as if church does not matter. We need missional leaders who will lead churches to focus outwardly."

-- Consumerism.

With all the options before them, students are more inclined to "shop around" for a seminary.

"In the last 20 years, the trend has become more consumer oriented," said Landtroop of Luther Rice. "They look for practical courses at a convenient location."

"As a reflection of society, the prospective theological student is a consumer," Creed concurred. "You're finding students who don't make an automatic decision to go to a denominational seminary."

Technology also is pushing the consumer trend, Landtroop added, predicting satellite television, interactive video and optical discs will change theological education and ministry itself.

-- Age.

Students may or may not be getting better, but they're getting older.

"Second-career people are coming back to school," Johnson said. "We're getting people who have strong skills as far as business is concerned, people with vocational skills who now feel called to ministry."

While this trend can bring more maturity to the ministry, it has its

"downside," Creed warned. "Seminary can become a therapeutic self-discovery process for many people. They go to seminary to 'find' themselves."

That's why the schools' connectedness to local churches is important, he said, because it keeps attention focused on "the larger side of ministry."

The trends described above were listed by multiple educators. Here are some that got one vote each:

-- "We're facing a complex web of ethical and social issues," Dockery noted. "The differences between church and culture will become more focused and intense. We must help people re-strategize for ministry in a post-Christian culture."

-- Spiritual formation is coming to the foreground, Creed reported. "We've seen an interest in spirituality in society over the past 10 years. Baptists are interested in their spiritual roots." Several schools have developed small groups designed to help students strengthen their spiritual lives.

-- "The students who are in seminary now, on the whole, do not have the same commitment that students had years ago," Mid-America's Allison charged. "There is not the same degree of commitment to a denomination there was a few years ago. Indeed, there is not the same degree of commitment, period."

-- "Funding will be a major issue," Dockery surmised. He predicted schools that depend primarily upon tuition "will not survive in the 21st century."

-- "Seminaries of the future will be smaller and more regionally based," Creed insisted.

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Two deans appointed
at Southern Seminary

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Two deans have been appointed at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, including one to lead the seminary's new school of evangelism.

Named to lead the new Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth was Birmingham, Ala., pastor and author Thom Rainer, a 1988 doctor of philosophy graduate of Southern.

The other dean, Lloyd Mims, will lead the seminary's School of Church Music. A faculty member since 1984, Mims replaces Milburn Price, who left the seminary last July, citing differences of opinion with the then-incoming president. Price now is chair of Samford University's church music department.

Southern President Albert Mohler announced the appointments at the seminary's Feb. 1 Founders' Day service, which marked the opening of the Louisville, Ky., seminary's spring semester.

Mohler said both Rainer and Mims bring "rich experience in ministry and a full measure of conviction" to their new positions.

Rainer, 38, will become first dean of the new graduate school -- the seminary's fifth, named to honor international Baptist evangelist Billy Graham -- on March 1.

Rainer has been pastor of Green Valley Baptist Church in Birmingham since 1990. Previously he was pastor of Azalea Baptist Church, St. Petersburg, Fla.; Hopewell Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.; and Hopewell Baptist Church, Madison, Ind.

A native of Alabama, Rainer is a graduate of University of Alabama. He earned the master of divinity degree at Southern in 1985.

He has written books on evangelism and church growth.

Mims, 43, completed the doctor of musical arts degree at Southern Seminary in 1984. He has served on church staffs in Kentucky and Mississippi. The Bradenton, Fla., native earned an undergraduate and master's degree at the University of Southern Mississippi and has done post-doctoral study at the Julliard School in New York City and the America/Italy Society.

Mims has been serving as the music school's acting dean.

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-- By Pat Cole and Bob Allen

Baptist editor concerned
about postal regulations

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Confusing and intrusive regulations concerning non-profit postal rates could pose serious problems for Baptist churches, a Southern Baptist editor testified in Washington.

Bob Terry, editor of the Word & Way of Missouri, testified Jan. 28 during an oral comment session at the U.S. Postal Service headquarters.

Terry, representing both the Southern Baptist Press Association and the Evangelical Press Association, spoke against proposed regulations for eligibility for third-class non-profit mailers.

The new regulations would require that all advertisements in third class publications, such as church newsletters, be "substantially related" to the purpose of the organization and that each non-profit mailing be accompanied by a letter verifying that fact.

That requirement, added in a draft of regulations prepared by the Postal Service, is inconsistent with the intent of a bill approved by lawmakers late last year to reform non-profit postal rates, Terry said.

It also would "work hardship on both the Postal Service and the religious mailers," he said. "Does the Postal Service really need more papers to check, more filing to do? Does the Postal Service have the excess work capacity in its present work force to absorb these extra tasks?"

"Present compliance with delivery standards indicates the answer to both questions is 'no.'"

The proposed test also would lead to inevitable church-state conflicts, he said.

"Does the Postal Service wish to get into the matter of determining what is 'substantially related' to the work of a church? It seems to me the Postal Service is treading on dangerous ground when it seeks to make such determinations," he said.

While most Southern Baptist state newspapers are second-class mailers and would not be affected by the proposal, the churches they serve would, he said. About 20,000 SBC churches mail to their members on a periodic basis, and the "confusing" guidelines would make it difficult for them to determine whether or not they comply, he said.

The regulations could prohibit, for example, a church using non-profit rates if a mailing contained an announcement that T-shirts ordered by a youth group had arrived and could be picked up at the church office, he said. The church and the Postal Service would disagree over whether or not this would be an advertisement, he said.

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