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### Heartbeat: A History and Statement of Purpose

Landon Brady Saunders

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HEARTBEAT:  
A HISTORY AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Millions of people listen to Heartbeat over the radio every day. In the Heartbeat program they find a voice of hope, love and someone who says, "I care." Every week hundreds of letters are received from people responding to the radio program. Young people, housewives, prisoners, teachers, businessmen, all kinds of people. Heartbeat is now in monthly correspondence with over 15,000 individuals as a result of its radio outreach. In seven evangelistic campaigns held during the last half of 1979, over 5,200 outsiders came to hear Landon Saunders. Over 3,000 of them requested to receive follow-up teaching materials. We know this is only a start!

As an evangelistic ministry of the Herald of Truth, Heartbeat is guided by the elders of the Highland church of Christ, Abilene, Texas. It is endorsed by church leaders across the brotherhood as one of the most effective outreaches in our fellowship today. Batsell Barrett Baxter recently stated, "Heartbeat is reaching people that never listen to our other radio and television broadcasts, or come to our church building. It is effectively reaching 'the market place.'"

Heartbeat is a comprehensive evangelistic outreach that is aimed at the non-religious American. By combining mass media, city-wide campaigns, group studies and one-on-one evangelism, Heartbeat is able to attract people who are not responding to other outreach programs. Heartbeat's radio spots are heard by millions across the country every day. In mission points throughout the United States, Heartbeat workshops in 1979 consistently drew crowds of 500 to 800--87 percent of whom were "outsiders." At present, thousands are involved in continuing teaching programs.

A) Brief History

Heartbeat began in 1971, growing out of a conviction that there was a need for a daily radio program which used short segments to

reach the rapidly growing secular audience. The first year was spent researching the medium of radio, the nature of the audience to be addressed, and the best approach to the task. From that small beginning, Heartbeat has become an outreach with a national scope and a carefully planned evangelistic strategy.

Landon Saunders began Heartbeat and is its administrator and speaker. He brings over 20 years of experience of observing and teaching people. He has travelled extensively in over 60 nations. With a constant pace of travelling and lecturing in cities from coast to coast, he keeps his hand on the pulse, the "heartbeat," of the nation.

B) Purpose and Strategy of Heartbeat

Heartbeat's goal is to see that the gospel of Jesus Christ is put within the reach of every person in the United States--and to do it in the most effective and efficient means possible.

The biblical model for Heartbeat is Jesus' approach to ministry. He had four basic steps:

- 1) He "did good" (helped people with perceived immediate needs).  
Application: Heartbeat helps people with daily problems like depression, loneliness and self-esteem.
- 2) He taught the "good news" to meet their deepest needs.  
Application: Heartbeat teaches the gospel to thousands through group studies, teaching materials and mail study.
- 3) He trained individuals for multiplication of impact as well as to insure the future.  
Application: Heartbeat gives special training to local congregations and works within other evangelistic training programs.
- 4) He created permanent community, the church, to provide for daily fellowship and support.  
Application: Heartbeat helps to establish new congregations of the church and accelerate the growth of existing ones.

C) Financial Support of Heartbeat

Heartbeat receives financial support from cash and pledge gifts from individual Christians, contributions from the Herald of Truth radio and television ministries, and "special church contributions" and monthly support. Support is also received from foundations as well as gifts of property and stocks. Over \$900,000 will be given to Heartbeat during 1979 in the form of free media time and services.

D) Chronological Highlights

Here are some of the more important events:

1972 - Heartbeat went on the air in January.

1974 - Heartbeat tripled its number of stations and developed a series of teaching letters, "Beyond Heartbeat," which were designed to meet the vital need for an on-going relationship with the listeners.

1975 - Landmark year--NBC network accepted the program. Heartbeat began broadcasting over NBC radio network in May, the first religious paid program ever accepted to be aired on the network. Also, this year follow-up meetings were held in cities where the programs were heard.

1976 - The first training program was developed in St. Louis to provide trained workers for follow-up activities and future evangelistic needs.

1977 - A strategy was developed to put the gospel within reach of every person in the United States (in ten years). Forty cities were visited in face-to-face evangelism. Houston was chosen as the "home" of Heartbeat.

1978 - Nine major campaign efforts were conducted in 1978, including the testing of Heartbeat's city strategy in two Massachusetts cities, Pittsfield and Lowell. Included in the nine campaigns was the establishment of two new congregations. A six-part audiotutorial follow-up course was developed. Special one-minute Heartbeat spots were heard by five million people during two of the holiday bowl games.

1979 - Building on the city strategy testing in 1978, plans have been laid and work has begun in cities all across America--from Oshkosh to Boston to San Francisco. The program is currently heard on 450 stations. The CBS radio network gave \$147,000 worth of free air time to Heartbeat. A 12-lesson cassette follow-up course was developed.