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**Astronaut made lengthy commute
for Baptist worship in Moscow**

**Baptist Press
4/24/96**

SHAWNEE, Okla. (BP)--When Shannon Lucid boarded Space Station Mir in late March, the media speculated how she might fare for five months with two Russian cosmonauts, both of whom are named Yuri and speak little English.

But several U.S. Baptists who came to know Lucid -- in Russia -- say the astronaut is adept at making friends wherever she is.

The astronaut became a friend of the International Baptist Fellowship in Moscow and Oklahoma Baptist University-Global Options workers in Russia during the months before Space Shuttle Atlantis lifted off March 22.

Lucid -- the daughter of former missionaries to China -- spent several months training for her Mir assignment in Star City, Russia. While there, she was involved with the International Baptist Fellowship in Moscow, a church started with the help of OBU-GO team members in early 1994.

"Even though it took her over two hours to commute one way by Moscow metro, train, and by foot, she was faithful to come to church whenever she was in Moscow," said Greg Long, an OBU-GO team member in the Russian capital.

Donald B. Deel, pastor of the Moscow fellowship, amplified Lucid's commitment to worship. In Star City, Lucid "would walk 15 minutes to the train station, ride a train to Moscow, walk to Metro, leave Metro and walk to Kino Center where the church meets -- a two-hour trip one way each Sunday," Deel said. "She was always at church by 10 a.m. for Sunday school and worship, then the two-hour trip back home each Sunday."

Deel added, "The only reason Shannon ever missed was that she was out of town. She also supported the church and our mission ministries financially. Shannon was a quiet person who didn't even let us know she was leaving 'til after the service on Sunday, Feb. 25 (her last Sunday with us). She never drew attention to herself, only to her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Deel, a missionary with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, is a native of West Virginia and former Indiana pastor.

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Lucid, a biochemist, became an astronaut in 1979 as one of NASA's original female astronauts. She and her husband, Michael, have been married nearly 30 years and have two grown daughters and a son.

According to a report in USA Today, Lucid was 6 weeks old when her parents -- Baptist missionaries in Shanghai, China -- became prisoners of war in 1943. The family spent a year in a Japanese concentration camp before being released in a prisoner exchange. They fled to the United States and returned to China when World War II ended, but had to leave again when communists took control of the country. Her parents were not affiliated with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Her father, J. Oscar Wells, a former chaplain to Chinese leader Chiang Kai-Shek, said his daughter as a young girl "wondered how she could be closer to the Lord than I was. So she decided to be an astronaut," according to a story in the Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel. Lucid learned to fly as a high school student in Bethany, Okla., where her parents now reside.

Oklahoma Baptist University's OBU-GO Inc. exists to facilitate Christian ministry efforts through long-term business and education opportunities around the world. OBU-GO opened an office in Moscow in the fall of 1993, staffed by recent Oklahoma Baptist University graduates and former employees, including Gary Hathcock, former OBU controller. Hathcock and his wife, Linda, were part of the first OBU-GO team to move to Moscow. They are members of Immanuel Baptist Church in Shawnee.

Gary works with OBU-GO's business consulting service. Linda, a hairstylist in Shawnee for several years, is chief hairstylist at the United States Embassy in Moscow. She became Lucid's hairstylist while the astronaut was in Russia. When Lucid prepared to leave for the United States several weeks ago, she paid a visit to Hathcock at her Moscow apartment for a hairstyling.

Lucid not only left an impression on the OBU-GO team as a fellow Christian and friend, she left behind eight large boxes of unused supplies for the team from Oklahoma.

"It was just like Christmas," Long said. "Shannon had given us everything from gumballs to spinach, as well as cleaning supplies and other necessities."

Lucid's late-March journey to Mir with five other U.S. astronauts marked her fifth space shuttle trip. She completed her first shuttle mission in June 1985. She was on a record-setting 14-day shuttle mission in the fall of 1993. She surpassed that U.S. space endurance mark at approximately 2:48 a.m. Central on the morning of April 5.

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Based on reporting by Marty O'Gwynn, Mike Creswell and Art Toalston.

FMB trustees elect officers,
upgrade computer system

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
4/24/96

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, meeting April 18-20 in Cape Girardeau, Mo., approved a major upgrade in home office computer technology, elected officers for a new year and heard a report on a noteworthy change in support for missionary families who have suffered the death of a spouse.

The meeting, concurrent with the annual meeting of the Missouri Woman's Missionary Union, culminated in the appointment of 37 missionaries in an emotional Saturday afternoon service on the campus of Southeast Missouri State University. The appointments bring the total number of missionaries serving in 129 countries to 4,173.

The trustees received a report on a significant change in missionary support in cases where a missionary's death leaves behind a spouse with dependent children.

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Previous policy reduced salary and benefits to the rate for a single missionary -- a 40 percent decrease -- three months after the spouse's death, said Carl Johnson, the board's vice president for finance. The new policy will continue to support the surviving spouse at the married couple level until the family's youngest child is no longer eligible for dependent benefits, Johnson said. Financial support will be retroactive to Jan. 1, 1996.

That change will immediately affect five missionary families. Among them are the recently bereaved families of Lynn Davidson, who died Feb. 29 in a plane crash, leaving behind her husband, Dennis, and three children, and Holly Larm, who died Oct. 14, 1995, during a bout with malaria, leaving behind her husband, Allen, and two children.

Trustees also approved spending \$2.5 million to complete the second phase of an upgrade to computer systems in the board's Richmond, Va., offices. The changes will complete a process begun in April 1995 to create an integrated system of networked personal computers at three work sites. They eventually will provide network access to mission offices around the world, said Bill Nance, director of the agency's management information office.

"Even individual missionaries will eventually be able to access data located in Richmond through the Internet," Nance said. "This will not just bring us up to date. It will strategically position us for the 21st century and the future."

Chattanooga, Tenn., pastor Bill Blanchard was elected to a one-year term as chairman of the Foreign Mission Board. Blanchard, pastor of First Baptist Church in Soddy Daisy, Tenn., since 1987, was elected by acclamation on a standing vote. The son of former missionaries to India, Blanchard is a veteran of volunteer mission trips to India, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa and has been a board trustee since 1990.

Also elected as officers for 1996-97 were Bill Sutton of McAllen, Texas, first vice chairman; Larry Weaver of Jacksonville, Fla., second vice chairman; and Karen Dishman of Petersburg, Va., recording secretary.

Trustees also received a statistical perspective on advances in starting churches and baptizing new believers during 1995. Jim Slack, the board's consultant on evangelism and church growth, told trustees a record 2,612 newly constituted churches in 1995 represented a 21 percent jump from 1994 and brought the number of partner congregations overseas to a record 39,073.

Membership in those churches topped 4 million for the first time in history, Slack said, and the 287,806 baptisms recorded last year represented one baptism for every 14 church members. In comparison, Southern Baptists in the United States baptized one believer for every 40 church members last year.

Cooperative efforts between the Foreign Mission Board and other evangelical world missions groups are producing new tools for taking the gospel to unreached peoples, said John Gilbert, director of the board's global research program.

Almost 1.7 billion people from 2,161 people groups make up World A, where people have little or no access to the gospel. In recent years, evangelical mission groups have tried to coordinate their efforts so the gospel can be taken to these people more quickly and without duplication.

Gilbert presented to trustees the most recent product of those strategic alliances: a world map that locates more than 7,000 people groups and color codes them according to their access to the gospel. Eighteen agencies cooperated in producing the map.

In a recent issue of "Mission Frontiers Bulletin," Ralph Winter, president of the U.S. Center for World Mission, praised the Foreign Mission Board for the resources it has brought to bear on global evangelization.

The trustee public relations committee watched a demonstration of the board's new "home page" on the World Wide Web. The site offers immediate electronic access to information about missions needs and opportunities for service. The site is accessible at <http://www.imb.org>.

Outgoing trustee chairman Leon Hyatt of Pineville, La., told the board he looks eagerly to the future. "I am absolutely convinced the years ahead are going to be years of spectacular advance," he said. "We are in for a breath-taking ride. The Lord is quickening his pace as he prepares to return, and I believe he has found a group he can use to shake the world. I urge you to join him in the ride."

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'Plead' with people for Jesus,
Rankin tells new missionaries

By Tim Palmer

Baptist Press
4/24/96

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. (BP)--"This could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship." In a variation of that famous movie line, Missouri Baptists hosted a Foreign Mission Board trustee meeting and the "Show Me, Send Me" missionary appointment service April 18-20 in Cape Girardeau -- events actually celebrating a friendship of more than a century.

FMB President Jerry Rankin pointed out Friday during a banquet at the Holiday Inn convention center that after the Civil War, currency devaluation had left the board so broke its existence was in jeopardy. Its leaders launched a fund-raising effort in the Show Me State; the sacrificial giving of Missourians helped keep the agency afloat.

Today, Rankin told the 350 people in attendance, 220 FMB missionaries call Missouri home. The state has been a pioneer in overseas partnership missions -- first in Taiwan and now in Belarus -- and in its prayer partnership with Lesotho.

The 37 missionaries appointed April 20 before 3,200 people in the Show Me Center testified of hearing God's call to foreign missions as Royal Ambassadors, as Girls in Action and Acteens, as MasterLife students, as participants in Centrifuge and Woman's Missionary Union events. They spoke of parents who prayed for them and of children whose need for a Savior inspired them to heed the Great Commission.

"We've certainly gained a sense of the aura of being a part of God's kingdom purpose," Rankin said in his charge to the new missionaries. Music from a 350-voice choir and a 63-piece orchestra -- plus a flag processional representing the 139 nations where FMB missionaries serve and those nations yet unreached -- launched a two-hour spectacle that was years in the planning.

Rankin said the Old Testament story of Esther reflects the drama of a kingdom purpose as well as any in the Scriptures: "Who knows but that you have come into the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). He cited examples of missionaries who found themselves in the right place at the right time, such as Charles and Jan Collins. They transferred from Guatemala to Chiapas, Mexico, four months before fighting broke out in the area, causing an influx of thousands of refugees out of whom five churches have formed.

Rankin reminded the appointees not to overlook the purpose for which they are going as missionaries: to plead with the people for Jesus, just as Esther pleaded with King Xerxes for her people. God says he will call all people unto him, Rankin noted. "Unless they hear and unless they know, they will perish."

Esther realized her people could be saved only if she took a risk, Rankin said, and there is a risk in going out as missionaries. The FMB trustee meeting included a memorial service for four missionaries who have died in the past six months, the president said. Yet those people had given their lives to Christ long before when they died to self and surrendered to missions.

Rankin pointed out this is a time of unprecedented harvest, and hundreds of workers are needed urgently. He asked whether God would desire the entire nation of Belarus have just three missionary couples to share the news of his kingdom. "Would you pray, 'Thy kingdom come -- through me?'"

Urging those who have felt God lay the needs of a lost world on their hearts to be obedient and go, Rankin said the power and protection of God will surround them, just as it did Esther.

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Rankin said sometimes older people tell him they felt the call to foreign missions years before, but they couldn't see the possibilities of that call and did not respond. To those who might feel such a call today, he advised, don't miss God's best for your life.

As the choir and audience sang "Wherever He Leads, I'll Go" for the hymn of invitation, about a dozen people, including several couples, went forward and met with FMB counselors.

Karen Nielsen of First Baptist Church, Harvester, sang in the choir of the Show Me, Send Me service. She described the experience as "awesome." Her daughter, Shelly, was a flag bearer. Another daughter was unable to attend, Karen said, but she and her husband are interested in foreign missions. "Maybe someday I'll be sitting out there watching them be appointed," she said.

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New missionaries recount
family's prayers, concerns

By Julie Nall

Baptist Press
4/26/96

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. (BP)--One of Mary Jo Merkel's favorite childhood memories is rising from bed about 5:30 a.m., then tiptoeing into the kitchen to see her daddy on his knees in his daily prayer time with God. Her ears would perk up when she heard her name, and she sometimes heard him ask God, if it was his will, to send Mary Jo as a foreign missionary.

Mary Jo's father went to be with the Lord many years ago. At the April 20 service in Cape Girardeau where she was appointed as a Foreign Mission Board missionary, Mary Jo looked to heaven and told her father one of his prayers had been answered that day. She and her husband, Gary, have been assigned to Stuttgart, Germany.

Gary, who was born in St. Louis, will be pastor of the International Baptist Church there. On a Germany vacation in 1982, the Merckels noted the coldness and darkness that seemed to permeate the country. On their flight home to Amarillo, Texas, they wondered together, "Wouldn't it be neat if God could use us there?" They were thinking of waiting until their retirement years, but God had a different plan. "Be careful where you go on vacation," Mary Jo warned.

Gary's parents, who are in their 70s, are rejoicing he is being faithful to his call, despite the difficulty of leaving the country where his family lives. They have prearranged funeral plans and they have a daughter in the United States, so they told their son, "If we die while you're on the field, just keep on preaching."

The Merckels' daughter, Holly, also supports her parents in their work. Holly, who lives in Florida, recently married a young man whose family is from Holland. Because their son-in-law travels to Holland once or twice a year, the Merckels expect to see Holly then.

Halfway around the world, meanwhile, John and Amy McKelvey will begin their missionary work in Nairobi, Kenya. They, too, were appointed at the service in Cape Girardeau. While the McKelveys look forward to their missionary service, their families have mixed emotions -- they support the young couple but dread seeing them leave their home in Overland Park, Kan.

Growing up, Amy's family prayed for missionaries every night. Her mother even displayed the flags of the countries where missionaries served. When Amy was born, she was named after Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India.

Amy said she feels the hardest part of being separated from her family will be the times easily taken for granted. When playing with her nephew recently, she wondered, "Who will play with my baby?" Her mother encouraged her, noting if God had called Amy to Kenya, he would fulfill all her needs.

Amy's sister, Cheryl Maqueda of Hattiesburg, Miss., said she always had an inkling Amy would be a missionary. Her parents, Fred and Peggy Hurst of Mobile, Ala., said they were fairly certain, too. They even engraved Amy's Bible with the words "God's Missionary" when she was a child.

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Little sister Alyssa Hurst feels only excitement. "I want to go help when I graduate," she said. "It's awesome."

John's mother, an active member of Woman's Missionary Union, often prayed for missionaries in the years he was growing up. But she never thought the Lord would call one of her own sons to foreign missions. John attended the University of Missouri, Rockhurst College, Avila College and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, all in Kansas City. He said it is easier for his parents to accept his call to work as treasurer and business manager of a mission because he previously served as a journeyman in Africa.

But his father is not in good health, and just being apart from his family will be the hardest part for him. He's hoping his parents, Glenn and Evelyn McKelvey of Olathe, Kan., simply will trust God to care for them.

"It's really hard to describe what it's like to leave a secure place and ask myself, 'Am I really positive this is what God wants me to do?'" John said. "We wouldn't be here if we weren't positive."

"We don't feel any more humbled or equipped than anyone else. We do this in the power of the Lord."

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Teacher: Firing helped
free him for missions

By Tim Palmer

Baptist Press
4/26/96

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. (BP)--In his seven years as a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Rodney Gene Duncan voted many times to appoint missionaries to career service.

On April 20, however, Duncan was one of 37 new missionaries appointed in Cape Girardeau, Mo. Besides representing a transformation from trustee to missionary, the ceremony closed another circle for the 42-year-old North Pole, Alaska, resident.

Three years ago, Duncan was fired from his 18-year job as an English teacher at a public high school, largely because of his openness in sharing his Christian faith. After an unsuccessful attempt to overturn his termination through the courts, Duncan took a teaching position at a Christian school, where he earned the kind of professional recognition that had marked his tenure in the public school.

His assignment as a missionary: teacher to missionary children at a school in Malaysia.

FMB candidate consultant Mark Harvey worked with Duncan through the appointment process. "He has a broad range of experience taking students and working with students overseas," Harvey noted. He added Duncan did an outstanding job as an FMB trustee.

Duncan recounted his dispute with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District in an interview following the commissioning service. The matter was reported by Baptist Press because Duncan, son of retired Alaska Baptist Convention Executive Director Bill Duncan, was an FMB trustee at the time -- the first from Alaska. He served from 1988-95.

Given as grounds for termination were sharing his religious beliefs with students and inviting them to church; talking to students about his sexual activities; giving Bibles to students away from the school; and engaging in horseplay-type wrestling with students.

Duncan took the position he was within his rights to share his spiritual convictions, especially on his own time away from school. As for the sexual activities charge, Duncan said he was leading his youth group at Cross Roads Baptist Church, where he was music and youth director, in a Josh McDowell study that advocated abstinence. When students asked him at school if he was a virgin, he said he was. "The last I heard," he recalled telling the school board, "virginity is lack of sexual activity."

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Duncan said the horseplay charge went back to the 1980s, and the football and wrestling coaches had backed him up on the harmless nature of his actions. The North Pole community was very supportive, Duncan said. Students conducted sit-ins and demonstrations on his behalf.

He considered appealing the court ruling against him, but he already had sold his house to cover legal costs and the school board was threatening to try to make him liable for its costs. So he went to work in 1993 at Lighthouse Community Christian School in Fairbanks, 15 miles away, which had investigated independently before hiring him. Harvey confirmed the Foreign Mission Board did extensive research into the proceedings between Duncan and the Fairbanks school board.

Duncan said he had always thought he would become an overseas missionary after he retired from teaching. But as a single man earning a \$55,000 annual salary, he admitted, he had become a little materialistic. Today he thinks his firing may have been God giving him the nudge he needed.

"My whole security and identity were wrapped up in my teaching job," Duncan said. He had been named "teacher of the year" and was listed in Who's Who of American Teachers. Six graduating classes in seven years had chosen him to be their commencement speaker.

"The Lord really taught me that my security and my identity is in him," he said. The Lord also is restoring some things because of Duncan's faithfulness in answering the missions call. Next month he will return to Fairbanks to deliver the commencement speaker for Lighthouse School. He is back in Who's Who.

Duncan recalled a student telling him in the midst of his trials, "God must love you a lot to let this happen to you." Over time, he came to realize the truth of that statement. "I wouldn't care to go through it again," he said. "But I thank God for it happening."

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**Make equipping Bible teachers
a priority, BSSB leader advises** **By Chip Alford**

**Baptist Press
4/24/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Looking for a strategy to propel your Bible teaching and reaching ministry into the 21st century?

Bill Taylor has three words of advice: emphasize leadership development.

"Christian educators are beginning to realize they need the same strategic approach to ministry that Jesus had -- teaching. An emphasis on events or new programs alone won't cut it. Without an effective ministry of teaching the Bible and reaching the lost for Christ, any ministry is doomed to fail. We have to make equipping Bible teachers a priority," Taylor, director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division, said.

The last half of the 1990s offers "one of the most exciting times in history" to be involved in Christian education, Taylor said. The dawning of a new millennium has created a new interest in spiritual things in America and new technology is making it easier and faster to communicate with large numbers of people. Church leaders must be prepared to take advantage of both of these trends, he said.

In his new book, "21 Truths, Traditions, and Trends: Propelling the Sunday School into the 21st Century," Taylor shares insights on how churches can keep on the "cutting edge" of Christian education. He discusses Southern Baptists' rich heritage in Bible teaching and offers practical suggestions for today on leadership development, mentoring, dealing with crisis, organization, effective communications, innovation and several other subjects.

In one chapter, Taylor encourages Christian educators to "give Sunday school back to Robert Raikes," an Englishman many credit with establishing the modern Sunday school in the late 1700s through the use of lay teachers.

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"One of the key distinctives about the Sunday school movement is that it was created by laypersons; developed by Sunday school pioneers who were laypersons; and under the leadership of the laity, experienced its greatest period of growth. ... We need to get back to that -- giving the work to the laity. They don't want our jobs as religious educators; they want the ministry and we've got to let it go."

In addition to offering practical helps, Taylor said he also wrote the book to encourage ministers of education and Bible teachers.

"The pressures and chaos of today's society can easily discourage people, but people have always needed encouragement. We have to offer that to our teachers and leaders and prepare them to take an aggressive stance in the battle," he said.

Taylor's book is part of a new system of interactive leadership resources being released in May by the BSSB. Designed to equip Bible teachers in all age groups for ministry, the "Teaching Today Leader Training Series" includes five new books and interactive training packs with teaching aids, audio cassettes, videos and a computer disk that allows people to sign on to SBCNet, Southern Baptists' private forum on the CompuServe computer network.

Doug Merritt, team leader for age-group resources in the Bible teaching-reaching division, said the new resources provide "everything a church needs to train age-group workers and general officers except the leader," adding they are aimed at encouraging "the kind of teaching that gets results."

The videos are not "talking heads," Merritt explained, but are designed to enhance training sessions through the use of mini-documentaries, interviews, demonstrations and dramatic vignettes that reinforce learning. "They are kind of like mini-movies," he said, noting several professional actors and well-known Christian leaders and artists were involved in the project. Contemporary Christian recording artist Steven Curtis Chapman, for example, appears in the youth video, "Connected, Committed, & a Little Bit Crazy."

"I have an enormous sense of appreciation for the impact that youth workers and teachers have in the life of kids," said Chapman. "I'm a real product of that myself. Getting involved in this project was a great opportunity for me to say to youth workers that I really applaud what they do."

Churches can order "Teaching Today Leader Training Series" resources through the dated literature order form or by calling 1-800-458-2772.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press. It also is posted in the SBCNet News Room.

Today's Christian music
making global inroads

By Tim Ellsworth

Baptist Press
4/24/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Christian music industry is gaining momentum in many areas worldwide, a panel of experts said at a seminar, "Turn Your World Around: Christian Music Goes Global," April 21.

Seven international panelists addressed issues confronting Christian music on the global scene during the annual Gospel Music Week convention in Nashville, Tenn.

Anton Bekker, president of a South African distribution company, said his company has grown 50 percent annually over the last three years. "American artists have the opportunity to impact a brand new society with truth," Bekker said.

Other panelists reported similar growth in their respective countries and stressed the importance of the church in Christian music's continued expansion.

"We have to go back and build our groups in churches again," said Garritt aan't Goor, a Christian concert promoter in the Netherlands. "We need more connection with churches."

Mark de Jong of New Zealand agreed. "Churches need to recognize those in the congregation with a special gift and special calling," de Jong said. "The church is always rewarded for that."

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David Green, brother of recording artist Steve Green who works with Steve Green Ministries, said the ministry has benefitted from being associated with local churches on international tours. "We've moved away from the American association and have gone in with local people who are tied to the church," Green said.

The panelists said international touring by American artists created much more publicity for the industry.

"If an artist will take his time and go there, he'll find friends," said moderator Kenny Marks, a Christian recording artist. "Going there opens an incredible amount of doors."

But international touring is expensive and many small countries can't afford it. "Our people want to see live bands but they understand it's too expensive to bring those bands in," Bekker said. "Secular bands have come in and done those concerts, so expectations in the Christian market is now lifted."

Arturo Allen, a Spanish Christian music consultant from Mexico, pointed to Kim Boyce, a recording artist who has made numerous trips to Mexico and not asked for money. Artists should have "a willingness and decision to go without receiving an income," Allen said.

Green said that was the motivation behind Steve Green Ministries. "Love compels us to go," Green said. "We're trying to give ourselves but are always receiving more."

But even with the availability and growth of American Christian music, people like to hear artists from their own country even more.

"People still want their own people," said Tessie Gwell, editor of a Latin American Christian music magazine. "Most Latin American countries have stopped being a mission field and are becoming a mission force."

The situation is much the same in New Zealand. "We want to see New Zealanders be able to communicate to their culture rather than just importing Christian music from all over the world," de Jong said. "They're starting to move up to the point where they can produce an international quality product."

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Environmental illness victims
find haven in Baptist church

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
4/24/96

HOUSTON (BP)--Going to church used to make Shirley Wassom sick. Joye and Ed Mace, too. And Norma Mintz.

But that was before they started attending the Canary Bible Fellowship Class -- a ministry for victims of environmental illness -- at First Baptist Church in Houston.

People with environmental illness suffer strong allergic reactions to a wide array of particles in the air, said Mintz, who led in the formation of the ministry. She cited carpet fibers, fresh paint, perfumes, deodorizers, pesticides, tobacco smoke, dry-cleaning solvents and automobile exhaust as just a few of the chemicals that provoke traumatic symptoms among sufferers.

Churches aren't immune from airborne toxins, and that keeps countless people away from worship and Bible study, Mintz said. "We discovered many, many people wanting to go to church, but they were unable to tolerate things," she explained.

That's why the Houston church launched the Canary class last fall.

And for Shirley Wassom, the new ministry was a godsend.

"I don't know if I can put into words what it's meant to me," she said, her voice choking with emotion. "I had felt like my church and fellow Christians had deserted me. This class has more or less given me new life."

Before the onset of her illness, church had been at the center of Wassom's life. She became a Christian as a child. She was a church secretary, taught children's choir and youth Sunday school. Her husband, Bob, also taught. "When our children were little and we would put them in the car, they would start saying, 'nursery!' They just knew we were taking them to church," she said.

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More than 20 year ago, she began showing symptoms of environmental illness.

"In order to get to church, I would have to walk through the smokers, and I was already feeling sick," she recalled. "And then if someone came in with tobacco smoke on their clothes or wearing perfume, I would have to get up and move, or I would be coughing and couldn't breathe."

Wassom's environmental illness grew so severe even an industrial respirator couldn't protect her from fumes that made her sick at church. So, from the 1970s until last fall, she couldn't attend church.

Joye and Ed Mace's story is much the same. He's suffered from environmental illness for more than two decades, and she's had difficulty for about five years.

"Prior to that, we were always in church," she said. "We raised our children in church. I always taught Sunday school; Ed served on committees. ... Church was the center of our lives."

But environmental illness "separates you from everything that's normal," and that includes church, she added. "It was hard not to have Christian friends and the fellowship of church."

Mintz has experienced the same frustrations.

"For 23 years, I was the average allergic person," she said. But just a few years ago, a violent reaction to a flea fogger put her to bed for six weeks. She also suffered strong reactions to dry-cleaning solvent, and building materials used in a remodeling project in their home also made her sick.

"It's a lonely struggle for anyone affected by their environment," she remembered. And like Wassom and the Maces, her loneliness was compounded by not being able to go to church.

"I prayed God would heal me to help others," she said. Her prayer was answered in phases: After a two-year search, she found help for her illness. And through extensive research and networking, she gathered information to help First Baptist launch its ministry to victims of environmental illness.

The idea gained enthusiastic support from the church as well as from Bernie Spooner, Texas Baptists' Sunday school director.

The Canary class began last November, meeting in "the Harbor," an environmentally protected area. It has predominantly brick and glass walls, with one panel wall, a separate outside entrance, separate air- and water-filtration systems and portable oxygen units and ceramic masks.

The class meets for Bible study each Sunday morning at 11:30 and has worship once a month.

"We're reaching out to Persian Gulf War victims and to people with chronic fatigue, complex allergies, implant syndrome and sick-building symptoms," she said. "We are attracting people of all denominations. ... They are so starved for the ministry of a church."

The class has 17 members and averages 10 to 14 in attendance. Mintz is trying to figure out how to be able to conduct a chlorine-free baptism and "how to have the Lord's Supper and not feel set apart and different."

The Canary class gets its name from the old coal-mining practice of taking canaries down into mine shafts. If dangerous gases were present, the birds -- more sensitive than the miners -- would fall silent, warning the miners to escape.

A class named after a songbird has added significance, at least for one member.

Shirley Wassom sang solos in church before she became ill, and when she couldn't go to church, she didn't feel like singing. But now that she's been able to attend church for several months, her outlook on life and her spiritual condition have improved, she said.

"Other members of the class see this, too," she reported. "They tell me, 'You've got your song back.'"

**Ministry options available
for the environmentally ill**

By Marv Knox

HOUSTON (BP)--First Baptist Church in Houston spent quite a bit of money preparing for its Canary Bible Fellowship Class. But churches don't necessarily need big bucks to create a safe place for environmentally ill worshipers, Norma Mintz insisted.

"The Harbor," First Baptist's environmentally safe space that houses the class, is ideal, "but you -- don't have to have the ideal to minister," said Mintz.

A victim of environmental illness herself, Mintz has researched and networked with both health-care specialists and ministries nationwide. She suggested a variety of steps -- some with large price tags and some inexpensive -- that can enable churches to minister to victims of environmental illness.

The Harbor has almost all the best options. It's located in a separate part of the church, away from tobacco smoke, perfume, hairspray and other toxins not necessarily harmful to people without environmental illness. It has a private entrance, separate air-handling system, purified water system, oxygen tanks and air-filtration masks. It's constructed with non-toxic materials, and fibers on floor coverings and curtains have been sealed.

Other less-costly options include:

- providing a class in a room with open windows, so fresh air can filter through.
- installing an enhanced air-filtering system and water filter.
- setting aside a special area of the church auditorium, such as a balcony or "cry room" in the back for environmentally ill people. "They need a place where there's not traffic," Mintz said. "And they need to be far-enough removed" from other worshipers.
- starting a "fragrance-free" service.
- removing or sealing carpets.
- switching to non-toxic cleaning materials and removing deodorizers.
- providing a separate entrance to the building.

A workshop, "Families in Crisis with Environmental Illness," will be held May 11 at First Baptist in Houston.

Representatives from the Baptist General Convention of Texas, as well as Union Baptist Association and various health organizations, will participate. The purpose is to "educate the medical community, professional counselors, health organizations and religious leaders of a serious hidden disability that has begun to affect large numbers of the American population," Mintz said.

For more information about ministry to environmentally ill people, call (713) 957-8821.

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**'C.U. at the Park' party
tells Phoenix: 'We care'**

By Jeremy Landes

Baptist Press
4/24/96

PHOENIX (BP)--Invited to "C.U. at the Park," more than 2,500 people responded.

Sponsored by the Central Association of Southern Baptists at Phoenix's Cielito Park, the block party's purpose "more than anything else was to have some wholesome activity to show that people care," said Don Eshelman, the Arizona association's director of church growth and development.

"The actual attendance and what was accomplished far exceeded my expectations ... we ran out of food twice," Eshelman said.

An estimated 50 people of all ages and backgrounds came to know Jesus as their Savior.

"Besides saving some people, which was number one, God also opened up the eyes of some Christians into seeing new opportunities to make contact with non-Christians," said Arnold Sorrells, pastor of West Phoenix Baptist Church and chairman of the associational evangelism committee which aimed at stirring individual churches to emulate the event.

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More than 100 volunteers helped during the March 2 gathering by giving testimonies, running game booths and distributing free lunches.

Chinese, Spanish and English-speaking representatives from churches across the Valley shared testimony while handing out free Spanish and English New Testaments.

"One of the witnesses told me it was the first time he'd had the opportunity to lead someone to Christ," Sorrells said.

First Southern Baptist Church was responsible for feeding the masses, who lined up by the hundreds to receive free barbecued beef, beans and soda. Leaders of other associational churches carried out key roles in promotion, community contributions, entertainment and games.

Upon exiting the stage, emcee Mike Gilbert was constantly asked by happy, incredulous onlookers, "Who are you? Why are you doing this?" His answer: "Because Jesus loves you and we love you, and we wanted to let you know that we care about you."

"A lot of people were amazed that anybody would provide for them this kind of activity that was clean and wholesome," Eshelman said. "We ran out of gifts for the games at about 1:30, and the kids lined up to play until 6 -- they didn't care if they got a gift or not."

A week prior to the block party, a prayer rally was held at the park, and volunteers received witnessing training from Nathan Pillow, evangelism director for the Arizona State Mission Board. Afterward, participants passed out 12,000 flyers throughout the neighborhood to advertise "C.U. at the Park."

Giving credit to the volunteers' efforts and prayers, Sorrells said, "We did not expect enough volunteers to show up so that the stations would always be covered. That exceeded our expectations. Something worked, because we didn't have anything stolen, no arguments or fights."

In fact, the three security guards hired to walk the grounds for protection said the peaceful gathering was one of the best they had handled.

"It just felt like the Lord was in what was happening, even in the distribution of the gifts," said Eshelman, relating how the prize drawings every hour always seemed to benefit the right people: a boy with size-9 feet won roller blades which fit him perfectly; a man whose television had just been broken received a replacement; a homeless person collected a gift certificate for a free meal.

People also were eager to be fed spiritually, collecting their free New Testaments and talking about their lives with Christian witnesses.

"It was a privilege to witness and harvest some fruit for the kingdom," said Flash Johnson, singles minister at West Phoenix Baptist Church. "I was impressed with the way people listened, instead of just taking their free Bibles and leaving."

Christian rock groups Michelangelo and the Difference and Everybody Duck were popular attractions for many young people not used to music with a love-inspired message. Two puppet acts kept kids and parents enthralled with sing-a-longs, clowns and Bible stories.

Now that many local churches know how enticing a neighborhood party can be, the association hopes to see smaller-scale examples soon. And, registration forms of C.U. at the Park participants already have been sent to Valley churches for outreach.

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Landes is a free-lance writer in Phoenix.

Congregation tells neighbors,
'a church ... cares about you'

By Mark A. Wyatt

Baptist Press
4/24/96

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (BP)--A California church hopes spending the day meeting and feeding its neighbors will open new doors for ministry.

An estimated 2,500 to 3,000 Bakersfield residents showed up for the "Community Care Day" designed to help area residents learn more about Panama Baptist Church's ministries and other community services. Hundreds of church members sporting T-shirts emblazoned with the church's name welcomed visitors and conducted a wide range of activities during the day-long event at a community park.

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"We wanted to minister to the people by letting them know of the many community services available to them, including a Neighborhood Watch program," explained pastor Larry Dotson. "Everything is designed to say to the community, 'There is a church in your neighborhood that cares about you and your family.'"

Many who took advantage of beautiful spring weather to attend the March 23 event were residents in two housing developments which flank the park. More homes are being built nearby, adding to nearly 1,500 constructed in the past few years.

Along with the rapid growth in the Bakersfield suburb have come problems such as crime. At least two daytime rapes have been reported in the park where the church held its community awareness day.

Several bands provided live music throughout the day and a local Christian radio station broadcast from the park for several hours. Law enforcement agencies displayed emergency response vehicles and offered fingerprinting services for young children. Crafts and recreational activities attracted youngsters and their parents, many of whom took part in companion 5K running and skating events. Basketball and volleyball tournaments drew participation from many older youth and adults.

A big attraction was a free barbecue lunch, enjoyed by more than 1,600, prepared by church members and California Southern Baptist Convention disaster relief volunteers. The aroma of 600 pounds of beef and 50 pounds of hot dogs cooking over an open fire added to the event's picnic atmosphere while popcorn, cotton candy, balloons, banners and face-painting lent a carnival-like appeal.

Two-thirds of the \$18,000 budget came from area businesses which contributed food, services, prizes and other items, Dotson said. "Donations from the business community, even including free rooms at the Marriott for members of an out-of-town band, have paid for nearly the whole project."

An open-air shelter at the park served as the hub for the day's activities. Upon arrival, residents were encouraged to register for prize drawings and received promotional flyers about the church along with "Good News" New Testaments. Everything was free, from blood pressure and cholesterol screening to a side of beef given away as a door prize.

The event followed months of prayer and preparation and was scheduled just before Easter to coincide with a "Friends Day" emphasis March 24. The church hopes residents who attended the community care day also will visit the church's worship services. Panama planned to make that easy for residents by conducting an Easter sunrise service at the same community park.

The church obtained the name of every family in the neighborhood, then assigned them to church members who prayed for each family by name. Three weeks before the event, church members held a "Jericho prayer march" through the neighborhood.

One week before the community care day, church members visited each home to leave a flyer and invite residents to attend. Flyers also were mailed to each home in mid-March, and the event was advertised on radio.

"We know that the radio and the advertising will attract people from other parts of the community, that's fine," Dotson said.

And the church was ready to receive all comers. More than 200 members attended a training session where they learned how to share their faith in the park.

Other follow-up is planned to serve the community now that residents know Panama Baptist Church is there for them. Family and marriage support group meetings have been scheduled. And copies of Home Life magazine with a special insert about the church's ministries are being sent to every home in the area.

Dotson said church members were pleased thousands in the community responded to the church's outreach effort. And they are eager to see continuing results. "We hope to see several hundred of them open their lives to God because of it," Dotson said.

**Samford alumnus' \$10 million
to endow pharmacy school**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Samford University alumnus and hospital executive R. Clayton McWhorter of Nashville, Tenn., has donated more than \$10 million to endow the university's pharmacy school.

It is the largest single contribution from a living individual in Samford history. The Birmingham, Ala., university will honor McWhorter by naming the school in his honor, the McWhorter School of Pharmacy.

In addition to recognizing McWhorter, the new pharmacy school name honors his brother Fred, a Chattanooga, Tenn., pharmacist and 1951 Samford grad, and other family members.

The gift is the largest known single contribution from a living individual to an American pharmacy school, based on an informal survey by Samford pharmacy dean Joseph O. Dean with the help of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy.

McWhorter is chairman of the board of Columbia/HCA Healthcare Corporation, the largest investor-owned hospital company in the United States, with more than 340 hospitals and headquarters in Nashville. Now 62, the 1955 Samford graduate has announced he will step down as chairman May 9, although he will remain a member of the board of directors.

"The Samford pharmacy school has a tremendous tradition," McWhorter said in an interview, "but apart from this, it has the strategic vision to become a leader in pharmacy education. This gift will help place Samford in a position to do so."

Pharmacy began at the Baptist-related college as a separate department in 1927. It is one of only two accredited schools of pharmacy in Alabama and, with more than 400 students enrolled, one of the largest of the nation's 76 pharmacy schools. In 1994 the school began offering only the doctor of pharmacy degree, a trend endorsed by all major professional pharmacy organizations. Only about 25 percent of the nation's pharmacy schools offer only the doctor of pharmacy.

Included in the McWhorter gift is core funding for a new structure and renovation of the present pharmacy building, Ingalls Hall. The new structure will adjoin Ingalls and provide for expanded pharmacy programs.

McWhorter said he sees the field of pharmacy moving from a dispensing to a clinician mode, predicting, "Pharmacists of the future will be more clinicians and consultants, dealing more and more with drug information and less with strictly dispensing, which will become automated.

"We're not there yet. But I saw an article recently that asked the question, 'Is your pharmacist a good doctor?' In the future, doctors will deal more with diagnosis, and pharmacists will be more and more involved with the decision-making related to prescribing drugs."

Even now, McWhorter noted, doctor groups across the country are hiring pharmacists to serve as staff clinicians.

McWhorter practiced hospital pharmacy for two years following his graduation, shifting in the direction of hospital management. After serving as a hospital administrator in Albany, Americus and LaGrange, Ga., he joined the Hospital Corporation of America as administrator of an Albany hospital in 1970.

He rose through the ranks of HCA, joining the executive management staff in 1976, becoming executive vice president in 1980 and being named president and chief operating officer in 1985. McWhorter took part in the formation of HealthTrust, Inc., in 1987 and served as chairman, president and chief executive officer until HealthTrust merged with Columbia/HCA in April 1995. He has been chairman of the board of Columbia/HCA Healthcare Corporation since.

A native of Hamilton County, Tenn., near Chattanooga, McWhorter said he was blessed with "strong mentors and with wonderful opportunities" which led to success.

"I came from a poor family," he said, "but my mother always stressed that everyone should give something back, no matter their situation. I have followed this advice throughout my life. I am pleased that I am able to continue this progress by making this special gift to my alma mater."

Campbellsville announces
university status, new name

By Marc C. Whitt

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Campbellsville (Ky.) College has announced it is changing to university status.

Now to be known as Campbellsville University, the Baptist-affiliated university will reach "heights never before imagined," said John Chowning, trustee chairman and a Baptist minister from Campbellsville, making his prediction on behalf of the trustees, administration, faculty, staff, student body and alumni.

Roger Davis, a banker and trustee from Horse Cave, Ky., who chaired the institutional name change committee, said some of the recent accomplishments setting the stage for change included:

- recognition of Campbellsville as a Level III institution for master's level graduate programs by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

- nearing completion of negotiations for the transfer of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Carver School of Social Work to Campbellsville.

- major advances in percentage of faculty holding terminal degrees.

- significant enhancement of library support.

- growth in enrollment of 106 percent during the past eight years to 1,366 students.

Trustees named the committee approximately a year ago to discuss and review the feasibility and desirability of moving to university status.

Also this year, U.S. News & World Report named Campbellsville as among the top 66 liberal arts colleges in the South, and the John Templeton Foundation included the institution among 124 colleges and universities named to its "Honor Roll for Character Building Colleges."

Kenneth W. Winters, Campbellsville president in his eighth year as head of the university, said he came to the college "sensing the Holy Spirit's guidance in my life to build a Christian institution worthy of the vision our founders had in 1906 when Campbellsville was established. These past few years have been challenging, exhilarating, frustrating, exciting, moving and even mind-boggling."

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(BP) photos available upon request from Campbellsville's office of public relations.

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