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November 16, 1971

**Literacy Missions Said to Be
Mushrooming among Baptists**

By Sandy Simmons

ATLANTA (BP)--Literacy missions--spreading the gospel by teaching people to read and write--is spreading rapidly among Southern Baptist churches.

That is the firm opinion of Mildred Blankenship, assistant secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of Christian social ministries.

"Literacy work is growing rapidly, like leavening," she said. "Someone starts a little literacy work, and suddenly, it mushrooms. I would say we have literacy work going on in every Baptist state convention."

More than 59 literacy workers met here recently for a three-day conference. Representatives from 21 states, including Alaska, attended the conference hosted by the SBC Home Mission Board here.

Mrs. Wanda Eckeberger of Houston, a worker in the literacy program at First Baptist Church of Houston, was among those attending the conference, explaining the program in her own church.

Houston's First Baptist Church has a program for internationals called the "Friends" program, involving more than 65 students and 40 teachers.

The Houston program with non-readers is not so extensive, Mrs. Eckeberger said, but she personally teaches one 15-year-old boy who is unable to read or write during the church's Sunday School hour.

Work with internationals is more common among Southern Baptist churches active in literacy programs than work with non-readers, recent trends indicate.

This is partly due to the fact that most work with internationals can be done in small classes teaching conversational English, or American citizenship, while work with the non-reader requires a one-to-one relationship. Most internationals are educated in their own language, while the non-reader often must be assured that he can learn to read from scratch.

"My fear," said Mrs. Eckeberger, "is that we will become so involved in work with the internationals that we will neglect the non-reader."

First Baptist Church in Houston has a street ministry that increases the size of its non-reader program. "Many times men come in and we find out that they can't read," said Mrs. Eckeberger. "We try to help them understand that they can learn."

"Sometimes they have a defeatist attitude; then we have to show them that they can accomplish reading skills," she continued. "They have to trust you before you can help them."

In Orlando, Fla., Mrs. Gaye Leininger works with 20 nationalities at the First Baptist Church of that city. Out of more than 90 students, more than 60 per cent are Cubans. Most of the South American countries are represented. Other nationalities are Oriental and European.

The classes are graded, including a citizenship class for those ready to receive American citizenship. For advanced students, American history courses are offered.

The Orlando church does not have to seek students. When Mrs. Leininger began the classes, she had one student. Within three months, there were 35 people on a list waiting for teachers.

Mrs. Lillian Isaacs, the woman largely responsible for involving the SBC Home Mission Board in literacy missions, boasts proudly that the church in Anchorage, Alaska, where she and her husband serve, has probably the oldest literacy student in the convention. The student, a native Eskimo, is 112 years old. She is affectionately called Grandma Tucker.

"Literacy gives a wonderful opportunity to respond to a special need," Mrs. Isaacs said. "There is a definite need in both areas of internationals and the non-reader. Literacy missions, for us, has been a feeder for other missions. Almost twice as many people have come to our missions because of this program."

Wendell Belew, director of the board's Division of Missions, received a phone call from Mrs. Isaacs in the early 1960's suggesting that the board might be interested in entering literacy missions. Belew was indeed interested.

"I thought in the early days that we would have a hard time convincing Southern Baptists that literacy work was missions, but there has been no problem," Belew said.

"It is really a people-centered and redemptive ministry. There will never be a word so lovingly spoken as, 'I'd like to help you learn to read.'"

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BP PHOTO to be mailed to state Baptist paper editors

Indiana Board Okays
Stewardship Campaign

11/16/71

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--The Executive Board of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana approved here a state-wide stewardship emphasis in consultation with the Stewardship Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Ben Gill, director of endowment and capital giving service for Stewardship Commission, will work with committees of the board in organizing the campaign, scheduled tentatively for kick-off at the 1972 Indiana state convention.

In other action, the board authorized the purchase of an additional 16-acre tract of land adjoining the 342-acre camp property near Monrovia, Ind., so that development of the encampment can proceed immediately. The land would provide adequate entrance to the main area of the proposed assembly.

The board's action on the stewardship campaign and the camp development came in response to motions approved by the state convention which met the previous week.

Leamon Blalock, pastor of Orchard Drive Baptist Church, Hammond, Ind., was re-elected chairman of the 30-member board.

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McDonald Named Religion
Editor of Arkansas Daily

11/16/71

LITTLE ROCK (BP)--Erwin L. McDonald, who recently announced his plans to retire as editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine here on March 1, 1972, will become religion editor of the Arkansas Democrat, the afternoon newspaper here.

The Arkansas Democrat made the announcement on Nov. 13 in an issue which carried the first of a series of columns written by McDonald for the paper.

McDonald, editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine for the past 14 years, will write a weekly column for the Arkansas Democrat's church page from now until he assumes the position.

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Brazilian Woman Brings
Woman's Lib to Portugal

By Ione Gray
European Baptist Press Service

LISBON, Portugal (BP)--A petite brunette from Brazil has invaded a man's world here, apparently unaware there is any such thing as woman's lib.

Miss Lucy Concalves Guimaraes, a Brazilian Baptist missionary to Portugal, has all the liberation she can use.

She teaches Hebrew and Greek at the Baptist seminary in Portugal, located in a Lisbon suburb.

Asked about her convictions regarding the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, she replied, eyes flashing, that she had found no need to be ordained. She quickly added, however, that she would have no hesitancy should ordination become necessary in the work which she believes God has called her to do.

Without ordination, Miss Guimaraes preaches with as much fervor as any minister, though she calls it "speaking" rather than "preaching."

A noted "speaker," she recently gave the only inspirational address at the annual meeting of the Baptist Woman's Missionary Union of Portugal, and earlier this year was the "preacher" for two of the 36 churches involved in a nation-wide Baptist evangelistic crusade in Portugal.

Her arrival in Portugal early this year was the realization of a 22-year dream.

The oldest in a family of 12 children, Miss Guimaraes dropped out of school after the third grade. As a teenager, after hearing the gospel in an evangelistic service, she said she had an experience with the Lord "so authentic" that she went back to school to prepare herself for Christian work.

The education she almost missed became so important to her that she decided to become a missionary teacher. But she did not want to teach children.

After college, she enrolled in the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and became the second woman to receive the bachelor of divinity degree from the school. (Other women had received degrees in religious education and music.)

Then she taught Greek in a seminary in Rio before her appointment for service in Portugal by the Brazilian Baptist Convention.

Portugal has been a mission field of Brazilian Baptists since early in the 20th century although Miss Guimaraes is the first missionary to be appointed to Portugal for several years.

Though Portuguese Baptists and Brazilian Baptists share a common language and use the same church literature, Miss Guimaraes says there is more contrast than comparison between the people of the two countries.

The Portuguese people are reluctant to change, she observed. Thus Portugal lacks the pioneer spirit of the newer country in South America settled by the Portuguese.

The Baptists of Portugal, also, are not as dynamic as the Baptists of Brazil, observed Miss Guimaraes.

If dynamism is contagious, the students at the Portuguese Baptist seminary may help to change Miss Guimaraes' evaluation of the Portuguese people.

Her influence is felt in all areas of Portuguese Baptist life. At the recent annual meeting of the Portuguese Baptist Convention, Miss Guimaraes asked for the floor several times to change votes by persuasion.

The 36-year-old missionary is indeed convincing, even to the men, or to those who do not know her language.