



-- FEATURES

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Sacred Christmas Music
Appreciated in Japan

By Lois Whaley
Southern Baptist Missionary

TOKYO (BP)--An avid interest in western Christmas music indicates Christian influence in Japan reaches far beyond the one percent of the population who profess faith in Jesus Christ.

Yoichiro Fukunaga, former orchestra conductor for the Fujiwara Opera Company in Tokyo and a Baptist Layman, says originally no hymn of praise existed in Japan. However, because of the influence of Christian music, even Buddhists developed such hymns for temple use.

Harmony is another unique contribution of the church. Traditional Japanese music has only a melody, and group singing must be in unison. But with the introduction of harmony through hymns and the classics, choral music has become very popular. Schools teach this type of music and civic choral groups attract large numbers of participants.

Fukunaga says Christian music was first introduced in Japan about 300 years ago through Christian missions. But it was completely eradicated during the period of persecution under the Tokugawa military regime.

About 100 years ago, when the Emperor Meiji's reforms opened the doors to the western world again, Christian missionaries brought music back into Japan.

Today, Baptist churches throughout Japan are experiencing a revival of praise through music. Southern Baptist missionaries have contributed to this ministry. Jean (Mrs. John W. Jr.) Shepard has taught organ and directing to a number of pastors and laymen through her work at Seinan Gakuin and the Baptist Seminary in Fukuoka. Miss June Cooper has helped organize and direct a department of church music through the Japan Baptist Convention. Darrell A. Mock teaches music at the Baptist Seminary in Tokyo.

In response to specific requests for music specialists, Michel S. Simoneaux, William P. Roberts and Thomas W. Graham promote church and associational music programs in central Japan. Journeymen Neil Sherouse and Terry Eades also reach into the Japanese community through their work in English language churches.

At this festive season millions of Japanese, in a nation with a small Christian minority raise their voices in praise as they join people all over the world in singing, "hallelujah, hallelujah."

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

Church Training Leader,
Margaret Sharp, Dies

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OCEAN CITY, N.J. (BP)--Margaret Sharp, 26-year employee of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department, Nashville, died visiting relatives here. She was 53.

Miss Sharp, prominent in Southern Baptist church training circles, was senior specialized training consultant in the church training department.

In January 1975, Miss Sharp was awarded the status of Career Professional Employee for her tenure of service and outstanding contributions to the ministry of the Sunday School Board. She wrote several books and numerous articles about church training work.

She first came to the board in 1949 as editorial assistant in the Training Union department. She became assistant editor of intermediate lesson materials in 1954, and in 1962 became audio-visual aids consultant. In February 1963, she was named consultant in Junior work. She assumed the title research and program design specialist in April 1970. She moved to her latest job in 1971.

A native in New Jersey, she held the bachelor of arts degree from Stetson University, D land, Fla., and the master of religious education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth. She did additional graduate study at five other institutions.

Funeral services were conducted in Nashville. -30-

Photo being sent separately to Baptist state papers by Sunday School Board



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Beirut Missionaries Stay Because of 'So Much Need'

By Ruth Fowler

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--Rockets fly overhead at night. The sound of gunfire often keeps them awake. Chaos and violence surround them.

But the David Kings and several of their missionary colleagues choose to remain in Beirut.

The Kings, like other southern Baptist missionaries, believe their witness, their presence, can be important to at least some of the people in war-torn Beirut. Besides, Beirut is their home of 15 years. To leave now would mean leaving behind 15 years of their life.

"It's because we have meaningful work to do and because we feel that this place is so much in need of the gospel," King said on a cassette recording recently received at Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board headquarters in Richmond.

"We realize that our influence is relatively small, but if we can just start a fire that will spread it will certainly have been worthwhile. We just hope and pray Lebanese Baptists' numbers may increase. We are here to help."

Several thousand have died in the street war. Many, many more have lost homes and businesses.

For a few months, the Ras Beirut area, mostly occupied by foreigners, was practically untouched by the violence; but now no area of Beirut is without at least occasional battles. Missionaries have been confined to their homes with fresh food and electrical services unavailable for intervals since June 1975.

Baptist work continues as much on schedule as possible with the Baptist seminary operating with nine students. Mortar and rocket fire are near, but no one has been injured.

One Baptist family lost their home, and another Baptist congregation lost the brother to one of its members. A British man was killed when he was mistaken by soldiers for an American, but no missionaries have been harmed.

Several missionaries and their dependents have evacuated to Jordan after the American consul recommended nonessential personnel leave. Hadath Baptist Church was forced by armed men to provide refugee housing for a while in part of the rented apartment in which it meets.

The American community school operates whenever possible for the missionary children remaining in Beirut, but the Beirut Baptist School has been open only for one short interval.

"We continue with our work on a regular schedule and a regular program," King said. "You know, when you hear all these sounds of war--and you know people are dying not more than a mile or mile and a half away from you, buildings are being destroyed, property destroyed, and people losing everything they have--it's just got to have an effect on you.

"It's not a feeling of fear, because we feel relatively safe. It's kind of a depression. But this is countered by our faith in God and in his ability to turn everything to his glory," King said. "We can't help but feel sympathy for those that are suffering so much and have lost so much.

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"We find when we take it to the Lord and talk it over with him, there is encouragement and strength. We ask for wisdom to know just what to do," King continued. "We just do what we can as the opportunity presents itself, and keep listening to the voice of the Lord direct our paths one step at a time."

The missionaries will stay as long as they feel they can help, clinging to the hope that tomorrow the fighting will be silenced.

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1,500 Receive Christ
In Philippine Crusade

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MANILA, Philippines (BP)--A crusade in Southern Mindanao, led by a team of 20 American preachers from six states, resulted in more than 1,500 public professions of faith, according to Southern Baptist missionary Robert N. Nash.

The team, organized by independent evangelist Gene Williams, led the crusade during the first two weeks of December. Williams was invited to lead the crusade effort by Southern Baptist missionaries in the Philippines. Missionaries and national Baptist leaders coordinated plans for the evangelistic campaign.

At M'Lang, professions of faith totalled 170, of whom 98 have already been baptized by Leo Salazar, a local pastor and president of the Mindanao Baptist Convention. Bill Tisdale, pastor of Casa View Baptist Church, Dallas, and a former missionary to the Philippines, was the evangelist in that city.

Ron Herrod, pastor of First Baptist Church, Kenner, La., worked among tribal groups where 134 accepted Christ.

Alan Mason, pastor of Leesville Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va., reported a total of 159 professions of faith during the two weeks. Mason baptized 79 of those.

Two laymen preached in areas which have no pastors. L. C. Bryant baptized 41. Richard Fears of Los Angeles, Calif., baptized 11.

Miles Seaborn, from Birchman Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Tex., preached at Matina Baptist Church, Davao, where 42 professions of faith were made. Seaborn, a former missionary to the Philippines, started the Matina Church several years ago while serving in Davao.

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Patrick Henry Wins Freedom
For Jailed Baptist Minister

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CHESTERFIELD, Va., 1773--(BP)--Patrick Henry, a noted Baptist defender, secured the freedom of John Weatherford, a Baptist minister who was confined and persecuted in Chesterfield County jail for five months here.

Henry, who first gained attention as a defender of Baptists in cases against the state church of Virginia, secured for Weatherford the liberty of the prison grounds, finally won his release, and then paid the evangelist's jail fees. Henry refused to accept payment for his services.

Arrested for preaching without a license from the state church, Weatherford was ordered to give security that he would not preach again in the county. When he refused, he was sentenced to close jail.

After Henry had gained for him the freedom of the prison bounds, Weatherford raised five pounds of gold, wrapped it in a handkerchief, and sent it to the lawyer, asking Henry to secure his release.

Henry won the prisoner's release and returned the handkerchief--with the gold still wrapped inside.

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But the jailer still refused to release Weatherford because of unpaid jail fees. Unknown to the minister, Henry also removed this barrier and Weatherford was freed.

In jail, Weatherford, continued to preach from his cell window to large crowds, although his opponents slashed his forearms with knives as he gestured through the grating of his window.

Later a stone wall 10-12 feet high was built to keep the crowds away from Weatherford's window. But his powerful voice was easily heard by those outside the wall who signaled when they gathered for a sermon.

During Weatherford's imprisonment, nine persons who were converted under his preaching were baptized one night, to avoid detection and persecution. The ordinance was administered at considerable risk by Rane Chastain, also a Baptist minister, at Weatherford's request.

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Prepared for Baptist Press by the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, Nashville.

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Really 'Dug' the Potatoes
At Church's Groundbreaking

ALTON, Ill. (BP)--The congregation of the First Southern Baptist Church here brought forth an unexpected harvest at the site of their new sanctuary-to-be.

Desiring something different in church ground-breakings, Todd Taylor, the church's pastor, suggested that every member bring his or her own shovel for the ceremony. Most of the more than 300 persons who attended complied, including small children with toy shovels.

When the participants dug their shovels into the dirt and turned them over, somebody shouted: "Look at the potatoes!" Nestled in the shovelful of dirt held by Mavis Taylor, the pastor's wife, were three good-sized potatoes.

Others then began enthusiastically turning up potatoes, until about a half peck had been unearthed.

The explanation? Last summer the church subdivided the 20-acre site into 52 garden plots for use by its members, who planted a wide variety of garden vegetables, including potatoes, some of which were still in the ground when the ceremony was held.

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