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Missionaries to Argentina
Blessed by 'Disappointment'

By Cathy Dubowski

VILLAGUAY, Argentina (BP)--Sometimes people are lucky and don't get what they think they want.

Ronnie and Glenda Reynolds, Southern Baptist missionaries to Argentina, have learned that lesson.

Two years ago these West Virginians were seeking missionary appointment by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "At that time," Reynolds said, "we had a growing concern for the Jewish people and our hearts were set to work in Israel."

They were soon disappointed, however. At their group interview conference in Richmond, Va., they learned that the Israeli Baptist Convention was not requesting Southern Baptist representatives to Israel, and the news left them unsure of what to do, of where God was leading them.

In the midst of their confusion, a board member who was a former missionary to Argentina came up and talked with them about their disappointment and asked them if they had considered that country. To the Reynolds' surprise, they learned that Argentina had the fifth largest Jewish population in the world.

They began to consider the possibility, and were eventually assigned to work in Argentina. They left for the country without knowing where they would serve.

On arrival in January 1977, the mission there suggested they consider the province of Entre Rios, and they toured the area with a missionary serving in the province. They visited many places and talked with national leaders about their ideas and the needs for missionary work. But the Reynolds felt something was missing.

"On the completion of our tour," Reynolds said, "we weren't really overly impressed with that special feeling that this is the place we ought to be. We saw some needs and we saw some places where we could plug in. But there wasn't that spark that says to you that, perhaps, this is where you ought to be."

On the trip home, the missionary suggested they all stop in Villaguay, a city of 20,000 people, to visit some Christian friends. The Reynolds were greeted warmly and after some visiting began to have a special feeling about the place and the people. When the church extended an invitation for them to serve in Villaguay, the Reynolds accepted.

It was only later, Reynolds recalled, that they learned the church had requested a missionary couple and that these people had been praying for 14 months that missionaries would come to their town and help them spread their faith.

The few problems they faced quickly dissolved. They initially had trouble finding a place to live, but a church member who had moved away offered them his home for six months--rent free.

The Reynolds were also concerned about their four children missing any more school. The new term had just begun, but it would take three to four months to get their transcripts from the United States, have them legalized and notarized by Argentine officials. The school's director, however, allowed the children to enroll while waiting for the transcripts to arrive.

The Reynolds will find many Jewish people here in Villaguay and the surrounding provinces to work with. Entre Rios is one of the first provinces to which Jews from Poland and Russia immigrated many years ago.

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**Board Selects Priority
Underevangelized Counties**

ATLANTA (BP)--Some 147 counties in 30 states have been selected as primary targets for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Bold Mission Thrust (BMT).

The counties are listed as "underevangelized," one of four areas of concern of BMT, which is designed to "evangelize and congregationalize" the nation by the end of the decade.

The 30 states include only one "Old South" state--Florida, in which three counties are listed in the first phase of the three phase project.

The other counties listed are in the North, Midwest and West.

All of the 54 counties making up four northeastern states--Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts--are included.

The first phase counties are: West Virginia--Preston, Taylor, Barbour and Tucker; Florida--Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin; Kansas--Nemaha, Brown, Jackson and Atchison; Nebraska--Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan and Box Butte; Maine--all 16 counties; New Hampshire--all 10 counties; Vermont--all 14 counties; Pennsylvania--Union, Northumberland, Schuylkill, and Montour; New Jersey--Camden, Gloucester, and Al Salem; Iowa--Story, Dallas, Polk, Jasper, Warren, Marshall, Marion, Madison and Boone; Arizona--Graham, Cochise and Santa Cruz; California--Mono.

Wendell Belew, director of the Home Mission Board's missions division, announced the priority underevangelized counties.

"Our effort will be in phases because we will move faster in some of the counties than we will in others," Belew said.

James Nelson, director of the board's rural-urban missions department and manager for the underevangelized counties project, added: "As we looked at the nation, we saw a large number of counties where we felt either evangelism was not effective or was non-existent."

"After receiving input from state Baptist convention leaderships, we zeroed in on a select group," he said.

Some of the counties listed as underevangelized also show up on the list of key cities, another priority target of concern of Bold Mission Thrust. An example is King County, where Seattle, Wash., is located. Seattle is listed as a key city.

A basic list of some 600 counties was selected through a computer study. Of that number, Nelson said, some 470 counties were listed as underevangelized.

"We want to underscore the 'under.' We are not saying these counties are 'un'-evangelized. We are saying they are '-under'-evangelized. Some people already are working there to bear witness for Jesus Christ."

Belew said the selection "does not minimize other Bold Mission Thrust opportunities."

Leonard Irwin, director of the board's planning section, added: "While these 147 counties will be given attention, it should be recognized that many other counties will be designated to receive priority attention by state conventions and associations. These counties are not the total. Many others will receive BMT designation by other organizations."

Nelson said approaches to evangelization and congregationalization will differ in each of the counties.

"We are working with the state conventions and associations, trying to put together kinds of evangelization and congregationalization projects which will be effective in their setting. We will rely heavily on already existing Bold Mission Thrust planning."

He added he does not "visualize large infusions of money" into the selected counties, but said much of the effort will center on consultation and planning.

Home Mission Board consultants have been named to work with state and local leadership in planning and discovery of resources.

"Some of the effort will emphasize the use of volunteers. Also, we will try to help the local areas discover resources which already exist but which they haven't been able to tap."

In describing the areas which will get top attention, Nelson said many of them "have had churches for many years, but for a long time the churches have not manifested an evangelistic stance. Thus, the areas must be considered underevangelized."

Many places have abandoned church buildings, where "churches just died."

Nelson, added the effort is not a "massive effort to start new churches," because not every place needs a new church. Some places are small hamlets where a large building and staff salary can't be afforded."

While approaches may differ, Nelson said the main point of the project is that "every person should have the opportunity to hear the gospel message."

He added: "We want to get the gospel to every person . . . to let every person have the opportunity to hear and accept . . . and then to grow."

While the effort is not a massive church starting effort, Nelson said it is "a massive effort to establish witness points in these counties."

The phase two underevangelized counties: Colorado--Rio Blanco, Moffat, Garfield and Eagle; Ohio--Marion and Morrow; North Dakota--Mercer and Oliver; South Dakota--Minnehaha, Lake Moody, McCook, Lincoln, Union and Clay; Wyoming--Lincoln, Sublette and Sweetwater; Montana--Lake and Missoula; Minnesota--Blue Earth, Freeborn and Mower; Wisconsin--Winnebago; New Mexico--San Juan, Santa Fe, McKinley and Rio Arriba; Utah--Morgan and Salt Lake; Idaho--Washington, Payette, Boise, Gem, Canyon and Ada.

The phase three counties are:

Michigan--Houghton and Iron; Illinois--Jo Daviess and Henderson; Indiana--Kosciusko, Whitley, Huntington, Wells, Adams and Allen; Massachusetts--all 14 counties; New York--Genesee, Wyoming and Livingston; Washington--Douglas, Ferry and Lincoln; Oregon--Sherman, Morrow, Wheeler, Grant, Harvey and Malheur.

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Mercer Univ. Gets
\$500,000 Grant

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MACON, Ga. (BP)--The Callaway Foundation, Inc., has approved a grant of \$500,000 to Mercer University to be used toward the \$1.25 million project to restore the Baptist school's historic 103-year-old administration building.

Approval of the grant was announced by Louie D. Newton, retired Southern Baptist leader and a Mercer alumnus, who has been leading an emergency committee for restoration of the building. Under terms of the grant, Mercer has received a check for \$250,000 and the remaining \$250,000 will be paid to the university on April 1, 1978. The Callaway grant brings to approximately \$900,000 the total amount raised so far in the restoration effort.

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Church Leaders Urge Doubling
Support for Bible Cause

NEW YORK (BP)--Sixty Protestant and Catholic church executives, attending the American Bible Society's (ABS) 1977 National Advisory Council here, called upon their people to double their support of the world Bible cause by 1980.

The council recommended the action because, it said, only increased support of the Bible Society's work would ensure an adequate supply of Scriptures for the ministry of the churches at home and around the world.

The executives, representing 52 denominations and church agencies, conferred with Bible Society officers about how the Bible Society could best serve the Scripture needs of the churches in the next 10 years. The call for increased support was one of 16 resolutions that the council passed at the end of its meetings.

In the first of its resolutions, the council affirmed its support of the Bible Society's publication of the "Good News Bible" and expressed its hope that one copy would eventually be in every American home. It also encouraged the Bible Society to develop similar common-language translations for all the nations of the world, saying that such translations "serve strategically in evangelizing the unchurched and nurturing those within the churches."

Another resolution commended the ABS for its Good News For New Readers program, which is preparing Scripture reading materials for newly literate readers, and asked that the Bible Society continue to place high priority on this program.

At a dinner for the participants, Porter Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, expressed his delight to see President Jimmy Carter unashamedly take his Bible to church every Sunday. He expressed his hope that "God would use President Carter's witness for the good of the whole world."

"I believe it is God's will that the Word of God be distributed to the ends of the earth," Routh said. But he also reminded his colleagues that unless the churches help to provide the resources, there will be no wide distribution.