

SPECIAL FEATURE

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SERVICE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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78-195A

Lottie Moon Brings Glow
To Western Union Wires

By Norman Jameson

NASHVILLE, Tenn.--Western Union wires between Nashville, Tenn., and Richmond, Va., must glow after the holidays as Southern Baptists respond to world missions.

Ada Ruth Kelly, chief bookkeeper for the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, keeps the wires humming with good news as she forwards funds received in the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

As chief bookkeeper for the SBC's administrative agency, Mrs. Kelly distributes all funds received through the 33 state Baptist conventions as contributions to the national Cooperative Program--the cooperative effort of 35,000 SBC churches to support world missions. Last year she sent checks totalling over \$100 million to the 19 Southern Baptist agencies.

But she was able to distribute major chunks shortly after Christmas and Easter because of the efforts of the Woman's Missionary Union which sponsors the annual mission offerings for foreign and home missions taken at those times.

This year's Lottie Moon goal is \$40 million, a long jump from the \$31.4 million received last year and a longer leap from the \$3,315 taken in the first foreign missions offering in 1888. But large offerings are necessary to meet the Bold Mission Thrust goal of reaching every person in the world with the gospel of Jesus by the year 2000.

This year's offering, named after a woman who gave her life to missions in China, represents more than three dollars for every man, woman and child in the 13-million member denomination.

All of the money collected from the churches goes to the state convention offices from where it is sent directly to Mrs. Kelly, who last year handled an average of \$395,000 every working day.

When the press of gifts for foreign missions comes heaviest in February, Mrs. Kelly and her assistant Betty Pollock, have deposited as much as \$4,468,364 for the Lottie Moon offering--in a single day!

"Sometimes we get quite amazed at the sums we send to the bank," says Mrs. Kelly, who likes to do her own share of amazing when she calls Carl Monfalcone at the Foreign Mission Board to tell him how much is on the way.

The Lottie Moon money is never held at a Nashville bank to collect interest but is sped directly to the Foreign Mission Board where it is utilized to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in the 93 countries where the board now has missionaries.

Because of the unique structure and efficiency of the Cooperative Program, 100 percent of the money collected from the Lottie Moon offering is utilized in the direct support of missionaries. The Woman's Missionary Union siphons none of the money for promotion of the offering and none of it is earmarked for administrative expenses in Richmond.

Mrs. Kelly wires the collections at least once a week, or every day if as much as \$100,000 comes in. Last year she wired money to the Foreign Mission Board more than 25 times as its designation surpassed \$100,000.

Occasionally the sums draw a long, low whistle from Monfalcone in the general accounting department at the board. "It's so much money at one time," he exclaims.

"Sometimes I'll see a letter from an elderly person who saved all year long or went without something," he says. "It'll say, 'Here's my \$100 for Lottie Moon.' That might be half their Social Security check.

"It's hard to explain. It's a feeling I get deep down that it's really worth all the work. I'm far removed from it all here, but I know I have a part."

Mrs. Kelly says, "I'm constantly fascinated with the way the system continues to work. There's really no one to tell people what they have to do. I've often thought that it has to be God's hand in it for it to continue to function like it does."

For missionaries around the world who depend on the Lottie Moon offering, which provides about 50 percent of the budget for the Foreign Mission Board, the response of Southern Baptists is vital.

Wilma Weeks, recently retired missionary to Indonesia, used to move her living room furniture for Sunday School, Monday Bible study and prayer service, Friday story hour and other church activities. Then Lottie Moon funds built a church building on land just a few minutes from her house.

"Through your gifts to the Cooperative Program and foreign missions you have been with us teaching in Sunday School clinics, attending associational meetings, WMU, Baptist Men and youth rallies, and the organization and foundation service of El Nonok Baptist Church...through your gifts to foreign missions you are reaching out and shedding God's light to people in darkness," said Jim and Mary Lochridge, missionaries in Cotabato, Philippines.

What's Lottie Moon to Pat Bellinger in Liberia? "Twenty-two persons were baptized Sunday afternoon in a very full creek," she said in a newsletter. "Purchase of land on Bushrod Island has been authorized for expansion of the work. The first class of the Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary will graduate next year."

"I'm surprised and thankful when I stop to think that I have a part in something so tremendous," says Mrs. Kelly. "It's a privilege."



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Court To Decide Indemnity In Church Camp Dispute

WASHINGTON (BP)--In the latest development of a legal battle dating to 1970, the Supreme Court will decide if the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America is entitled to nearly \$6 million for moving a church camp from property taken over by the government or just the \$740,000 awarded by a lower court as fair market price.

U. S. Solicitor General Wade H. McCree Jr., the federal government's chief lawyer, argued in a written statement that if the government is forced to pay the higher sum, it will violate church-state separation. If the Lutheran synod which owns the camp chose to use the money for other purposes, McCree elaborated, it could conceivably train missionaries, pay ministers, or even build new churches at government expense in violation of the First Amendment.

Earlier, the U. S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the synod had to meet a three-part test in order to qualify for the larger sum. It must prove that the condemned facility was operated on a nonprofit basis; demonstrate that it had been unable to purchase a "functionally equivalent replacement" at a cost roughly equal to the fair market value; and show to the court's satisfaction that the camping facility provided a benefit to the community that was not as fully provided after the property was taken over by the government.

In its legal brief submitted to the high court, the Lutheran synod objected to the government's raising the church-state question, pointing out that not once in the lengthy eight-year proceeding had that argument been made. "The fact that the property was owned by the ...synod...is immaterial," attorneys for the church argued.

For its part, the government also suggested duplicity on the part of church leaders by noting that in 1964, anticipating that its camp property was to be condemned as part of the new Tocks Island Recreation Project, the synod purchased 3,800 acres in the nearby Pocono Mountains as a replacement site.

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Court Refuses To Review
Abortion, Pregnancy Cases

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11/30/78

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Supreme Court declined to review lower court decisions upholding Cleveland, Ohio's ban on abortion clinics in business districts and a New York ruling that airlines may not force female flight attendants to take mandatory, unpaid pregnancy leaves.

Opponents of Cleveland's ordinance argued unsuccessfully that singling out abortion among all other medical and dental procedures fails to consider the constitutional provisions of due process and equal protection for women seeking abortions.

The city of Cleveland argued that despite the ban, abortion services in city hospitals are readily available.

In the New York case, United Airlines argued that federal laws require airlines to perform its operations with the public's safety in mind and that its policy to put pregnant flight attendants on unpaid leave has been upheld previously in federal courts.

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New York's Human Rights Appeal Board argued on the other side that the airline's policy violates state anti-sex discrimination laws.

The high court's refusal to hear the cases indicates neither approval nor disapproval of the lower courts' decisions but does have the effect of leaving in place the lower rulings.

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Christian Politician Works
To Change People's Lives

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11/30/78

WINDHOEK, South West Africa (BP)--As a Christian and physician, Dr. Benny Africa saw great needs among the people of South West Africa, needs that medicine alone could not meet. Now, as a politician, he's seeking ways to improve the life of his people.

Africa worked long days in his office and at local hospitals, then treated patients in his home in the evenings. But after treatment, he had to send them back to homes and villages where lack of good hygiene and proper nutrition created the same health problems over and over again.

He believed he could help his people more if he could improve their standard of living through political influence while improving health conditions through his medical practice. So in 1971 he entered politics.

Today, as events continue to chart a course for the independence of South West Africa (also called Namibia) from South Africa, the Christian physician leads the Baster delegation, made up of people of mixed racial heritage.

This is one of the tribal delegations that constitute the Turn-Halle Alliance, the more moderate of two groups seeking to rule the country after independence. The other is SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization), many of whose members live outside the country at this time.

But the doctor's concern is not just for the physical well-being of the people of South West Africa. While working to heal the body and improve the standard of living, he never fails to witness for Christ. On Sunday mornings he participates in a nearby Baptist congregation. He plays the accordion and leads nurses and patients in singing in the hospital. He is also part of a jail ministry.

The doctor is aware of the many problems facing his country and says one of them is that "Too many people in our land have a wrong relationship with God and this is demonstrated in conflict with our fellowman." He believes the church has a vital role to play in preparing a people, inexperienced in self government, to face the major political decisions ahead.

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(BP) photo mailed to Baptist newspapers by Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Glenn Igleheart, director of the department of interfaith witness at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta, has done extensive study into the influence and effect of cults on modern life. In the wake of the tragedy of the People's Temple in Jonestown, Guyana, he offers these thoughts and suggestions.

Jonestown: What Does
It Reveal About Cults?

By Glenn Igleheart
For Baptist Press

Baptist Press
11/30/78

The People's Temple began as a church and ended as a cult.

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The church Jim Jones started has been affiliated for the last 20 years with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a respected, full fledged Christian denomination. But press coverage related to the mass deaths of more than 900 people in Jonestown, Guyana, reveals how deviant the People's Temple group became.

But even though shocked by the mass murder-suicide, we should not accept at face value some of the overstatements printed by media representatives who have interviewed everybody in sight.

Those overstatements include quotes which imply that all cult groups are like the People's Temple in that they physically, mentally and morally abuse their members. Some do, but few are as suicidal and sadistic as Jones and his followers.

We also need to guard against overreaction. Parents with children in sect groups should not panic and take extremist measures to separate their children from these groups. They can use Jonestown as a prod to sect leaders to let them see and communicate with their children, but be cautious not to over-respond.

Another form of overreaction includes the call for government investigation of all religious groups in this country. The need for accurate information is imperative, but we need to be careful before we further accelerate political intrusions into religious life.

The events at Jonestown should burn into our awareness the dangers of this kind of cultish thinking. Many groups exist which began with a leader who claimed a heavenly vision with its derived authority, and who gathered a group of committed followers around him.

When he proclaims religious beliefs or practices which deviate from biblical patterns, his followers either do not recognize them as distortions of biblical teaching or else choose to accept them as a more valid truth. Members will condone questionable practices like faked healings or deceptive fund-raising because of the end it serves of getting new members and new money.

Christians need to be aware of the beliefs and practices of other religious groups in their community. They need to stand for the preservation of free religious expression, but also should be able to evaluate other religious groups and to speak out against deviant beliefs and abuses against persons.

Every Christian should examine religious groups in light of biblical norms. These include acceptance of the ultimate authority of God, the unquestioned lordship of Jesus Christ, the unimpeded right of each believer as a member of the body of Christ to communicate with God, and use of the Bible as the norm against which all religious doctrines and practices should be verified.

Public pressure causes groups to change. Public outcry was at least one element which forced changes in Mormon practices of plural marriage and in opening their church's priesthood to blacks.

Churches of Southern Baptists and other Christians are not immune from the kinds of ego-centered leadership and unquestioning membership seen in Jonestown. The potential for disaster lies within any religious group which depends on one person for direction and does not practice a healthy exchange of viewpoints in seeking God's will.

But most Baptists have a safeguard against the horrors of Jonestown happening in their church. It's called the priesthood of all believers, a doctrine held by a number of Christians. When this doctrine is taken seriously, it deters exalting the priesthood of one believer above others. God's leadership may come through the pastor, but it is to be confirmed by God's spirit in the total membership of the church.

Mutual searching for truth and direction, mutual criticism and correction need to be built into our church and denominational life.

The horror of Jonestown should prompt Baptists and other Christian leaders to renewed self-examination of their own motives, methods, and style of leadership. Even legitimate Christian leaders may cause cult-like devotion by manipulating people into following them blindly.

Resources for persons desiring more expertise in understanding other religious groups are available from several sources, including materials and conferences sponsored by the department of interfaith witness at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta.

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New Orleans Seminary
Purchases Student Housing

Baptist Press
11/30/78

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Housing problems have been eased somewhat at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with the purchase of a 64-unit apartment complex near the seminary campus.

The purchase marked the end of a lengthy search by seminary administrators and trustees to find solutions to housing problems brought on by the increasing enrollment at the seminary, which now has 1,145 students.

The complex, purchased for \$1.285 million from four New Orleans businessmen, has 52 two-bedroom apartments and 12 one-bedroom units, which will rent for \$210 and \$185 respectively. As with campus housing, the occupant will pay for utilities.

The additional apartments bring the number of housing units available to students to 368, with 304 located on the East New Orleans campus. The seminary has no current plans to purchase additional housing since the complex will solve most of the current housing problems, according to Carl McLemore, vice president for business affairs.

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Tharpe Will Direct WMU
Editorial Department

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Gertrude A. Tharpe, former Southern Baptist missionary to Hong Kong and Hawaii, has been named director of the editorial department of Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention.

She comes to WMU from the University of Alabama School of Medicine, where she has served as associate director of admissions.

As editorial department director, Dr. Tharpe will oversee the production of WMU's nine English periodicals and supplementary publications for WMU organizations in Southern Baptist churches. She will also lead in planning curriculum for WMU age-level organizations.

A graduate of Tift College, she received a master's degree from Furman University, Greenville, S. C.; a master's degree in religious education from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; and a doctor of education degree from George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tenn.

She has taught on the collegiate level, has been academic administrator and has done professional counseling.

A native of South Carolina, she is married to E. J. Tharpe. They are the parents of three children.

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