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SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

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Rhythm and Evangelism

Go Tog ther In Africa

by Gary Baldrige

LUSAKA, Zambia (BP)—In Zambia, where rhythm permeates life, Southern Baptist missionaries estimate that more than half of public decisions for Christ involve church ch irs.

Teen-agers and young adults, such as 22-year-old Abel Mwale, reach many people-f r- Christ with indigenous hymns and choruses.

Mwale, one of a growing number of young Baptists in Zambia who proclaim the Christian message through music, composes and sings gospel music which attracts Africans, esp cially youth.

Most Baptist church choirs in Zambia consist of young people between the ag s of 13 and 25, Music-attracts them to worship. Many--after exposure to gospel songs, biblical pr aching and Bible study--eventually commit their lives to Christ.

Music missionary Fred Allen, a Texan who has served in Zambia for 10 years with his wife, Joy, believes so strongly in the importance of music evangelism that he encourages admitted non-Christians to join church choirs.

"I've changed my philosophy from the time I came here," Allen said. "I used to f l that p ople should be baptized members of the church before they join the choir. But since music is such a strong tool for evangelism here in Africa, I now suggest that churches enlist n w peopl in their choir even before they join the church."

But Allen asks them to join a Sunday School class to be eligible for choir membership, and he encourages choirs to have Bible studies, visitation emphases and discipleship training.

Mwale, a non-Christian before coming under the influence of Christian music, testifi s to the validity of that approach. "This is the ministry the Lord has given me," he said about his compositions, many of which have been sung by his church's choir.

In Lusaka, Allen has seen a 400 percent increase in organized church music among youth.

"We had our first choir festival in January 1973," he recalled. "Eight choirs with 125 members from Lusaka churches participated. Now, eight years later, the festival dr w 20 choirs, four quartets and two trios, with a total membership of 515."

Churches affiliated with Southern Baptist mission efforts are known throughout Zambia for their high percentage of youth because of emphasis on the indigenous approach to church music.

Missionaries across Africa are discovering that Africans learn by ear and learn quickly and that the term "music" in Africa involves both eyes and ears. In fact, music involves ev rything. Indigenous rhythm instruments are universal. Participation is more important than listening. All-night musical festivals are common.

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Assisted by Kenyan Baptist musician Kenny Mwansa, Allen is developing a new program to equip church choir leaders to combine this musical interest with witnessing for Christ and leading Bible studies.

Mwansa, a recent graduate of the Baptist seminary of East Africa in Arusha, Tanzania, returned to his former work with Allen last April. Dedicated to using indigenous African music for evangelism, he believes that Christianity will not reach young Africans in the 20th century with 17th century western classics.

One of the most effective tools for outreach through music in Zambia has been the Singing Churchmen, a select group of 25 Baptist men from Zambian churches. Allen and Mwansa co-direct the choir and prepare special programs for use in radio and cassette ministries and in local churches. The group also functions as a demonstration choir in Zambian churches.

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Colorado Baptists Sell
Retirement Highrise

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DENVER (BP)--Louisiana Manor, a 100-apartment retirement complex, has been sold by Colorado Baptist Manor Inc., for \$2.1 million to the Champa Investment Co., a Colorado-based firm.

Intended as a potential Southern Baptist retirement community, the complex was purchased by the Manor corporation, a subsidiary of the Baptist Foundation of Colorado, three years ago for \$1.2 million.

Bill Landers, Manor president and executive director of the Baptist Foundation of Colorado, said the highrise was sold because equity had risen to \$1 million and, "we could not justify having that much money tied up with just one Southern Baptist living in the building."

It was finally determined, he noted, that with the lack of response from Baptists the equity could be put to better use in other areas of service.

The Manor corporation is carrying an eight-year note on the building, payable monthly.

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Costa Rica Missionaries
Urged To Start Churches

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SAN JOSE, Costa Rica (BP)--Don Kammerdiener, Foreign Mission Board director for middle America and the Caribbean, is urging Southern Baptist missionaries in Costa Rica to concentrate on the formation of new churches and the growth of new Christians.

"The chief task of any missionary is to lead out in church planting," Kammerdiener told the missionaries at their annual meeting. "Missionaries must be actively involved in forming new mission congregations, not belonging to 20- and 30-year-old churches which should not need their direct involvement on a continuing basis."

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Responding to the challenge, missionaries set a goal of establishing six new mission points within 15 months. They asked the board to transfer two church planters to Costa Rica to begin work immediately in the Limon and Guanacaste areas.

The meeting was the missionaries' first planning and strategy session since the Baptist Convention of Costa Rica broke official relationships with the group of Southern Baptist missionaries in December.

The convention recently aligned itself with the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., from which it now receives funds. Individual churches associated with the convention continue to request professional expertise from the 17 Southern Baptist missionaries on an individual and unofficial basis.

A number of Baptist churches which withdrew from the national convention and organized themselves as an association in April continue to welcome participation of Southern Baptist missionaries and financial assistance from the Foreign Mission Board to individual churches for property and construction.

"Time spent on the cutting edge of evangelism is our reason for being here and should prove more productive than getting bogged down in sponsoring denominational structures," Kammerdiener reminded the missionaries at the San Jose meeting.

He urged them to focus on the local church and encouraged church development specialists to accept invitations to help strengthen existing churches.

Missionaries responded by unanimously reaffirming the stance they took in December to cooperate with any local mission, church or national entity that solicits their services. They also reaffirmed their purpose in Costa Rica as one of spreading the gospel and strengthening Christians.

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Woods Face Odds
A Million To Two

By Irma Duke

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CUREPIPE, Mauritius (BP)--In 1978, the odds were a million to two.

Three years later, the numbers don't look much better, but Southern Baptist missionaries Norman and Jeanie Wood are encouraged about their work on Mauritius, a small Indian Ocean island with a million people.

Being a Baptist there is not quite the same as it was in Oklahoma, their home state, or in Texas, where they are on missionary furlough.

There are no Baptist churches in Mauritius. When they arrived, most people had never heard of Baptists and the few that had, considered them a sect or a cult. In fact, when the Jonestown Massacre took place in November 1978, one man expected Wood to go home because "his leader had died."

That was difficult to take for the couple who had spent 16 years as Southern Baptist missionaries. Before coming to Mauritius in 1978, they were missionaries in Zambia.

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"In the beginning, I felt my pride hurt. I really resented it," Mrs. Wood admits. "I have had to overcome wanting to just tell them about all Southern Baptists have done in other countries and what we could do here."

But the middle-aged couple have progressed beyond this feeling and are trying to help people on this 29-by-38-mile island, both physically and spiritually.

"Working with people is our mission task here," says Wood. "I suppose that is not a unique statement, but it is really true here in Mauritius, because we haven't got anything to work with but people. We don't have any schools, hospitals or mass media studios."

But there is no shortage of people and the Woods make every contact with them count. When they meet people in the Chinese shops or in the open market or at the bakery, they make friends. They start conversations, and soon people want to know what brings them to the Indian Ocean—their entree for presenting the gospel.

The Wood home has been the center of their ministry. On Sunday mornings, they hold Sunday School and worship with an average attendance of about 40. Bible studies, patchwork quilt classes, cooking demonstrations and religious film showings also are there.

Wood is coordinator for Southern Baptist volunteers trying to come to Mauritius to help the people's physical needs. The Mauritian government has indicated it would welcome Americans with skills in development to come and help its people raise their standard of living.

So far this has been worked out for only one couple, Asheton (Bubba) and Debbie Sawyer, from Fairhope, Ala., who are now covering the work while the Woods are on furlough. Sawyer teaches sports for the government's recreation department. Unemployment is high, especially among the youth; so he is providing them something to do. As opportunities arise, he also shares his faith with those he contacts.

In Mrs. Wood's patchwork classes she recently trained 10 women who in turn trained four each and they all were hired by a small quilting export industry that was begun by a Christian businessman. In addition, some of the quilting done by Mrs. Wood and her students has been displayed in a prominent place in Mauritius, stirring up more interest and more opportunities for witness.

"We see every contact we can make as something that is important for the Lord," Wood explains.

And even though Mauritius is small compared to many of the 94 other countries where Southern Baptist missionaries serve, the Woods consider their ministry to the island vital. He has baptized 12 persons since moving to Mauritius, and is encouraged because of the influence a few can have.

"Mauritians go all over the world," Wood stresses, "and if you can win one to the Lord and he goes to Hong Kong or Australia or wherever, you just can't ever measure what can happen."

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Adapted from August 1981 Commission magazine.

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

Summer Missionaries Coin
New Version of 23rd Psalm

PEWAUKEE, Wis. (BP) — "He restoreth my soul with mail" and "annointest my head with cold showers," write two students who spent the summer in Wisconsin as missionaries.

Denise Williams, an Auburn University student from Prattville, Ala., and Marty Harper, a Mississippi State University student from Vicksburg, Miss., were two of 1,447 college students from across America who gave 10 weeks to church surveys, backyard Bible clubs, groundskeeping, music, preaching, teaching, cooking and chauffeuring and a hundred other tasks to further Southern Baptist work.

They wrote the following version of the 23rd Psalm for all summer missionaries:

"The Lord is my supervisor, I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in musty church basements; He leads me around 57 buckets catching leaks in the church at 2 a.m.

He restoreth my soul with mail; He leads me in the paths of VBS parades for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk many miles to deliver church flyers, or sing Father Abraham a thousand times, or hold BBCs and Day Camps or call hundreds for Home Bible Study Guide, no hung-up phones; for Thou art with me; Thy peanut butter and jelly, they comfort me.

Thou dost prepare free time for me before we all become enemies. Thou annointest my head with cold showers; my cup runneth over with flexibility.

Surely good memories and happiness will follow me all my days as I think of my experiences as a summer missionary. And I will walk closer to Jesus, as a result, forever."