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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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MK Kicker Cut By Pros;
Takes Church Staff Job

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Missionary Kid Alan Duncan kicked a 50-yard field goal during a Philadelphia Eagles' exhibition game--his only attempt--but he apparently won't be playing pro football this season.

The Eagles cut Duncan, choosing to keep veteran Tony Franklin as their only placekicker. The Baltimore Colts picked up the rookie but released him after a quick look.

The same day he was cut by the Colts the affable MK got an offer to join the staff of First Baptist Church of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., as youth director.

Though other pro football teams have asked him to remain available, Duncan has committed himself to the position at Fort Lauderdale and was scheduled to begin work in early September.

"I put all this before the Lord when I started," he explains. "I said the only reason I played football was to use my talents for the Lord."

The son of missionaries to Kenya, Marshall and Margie Duncan of Tennessee, Duncan eventually plans to attend seminary and return to Africa as a missionary himself, probably combining talents in church development and agriculture.

But now, after a rigorous five-year combination of college football and university academics, he feels he needs a break from the classroom.

"I'd like to stay here (in the United States) awhile and get some experience in evangelistic church work," he says. He believes First Church, Fort Lauderdale, is a good place to get that kind of experience; he worked there as a summer pastoral intern a year ago.

Being drafted by the Eagles was a dream come true for the soccer-style kicker who earned three scoring titles and seven kicking records while at the University of Tennessee, but the dream was no obsession.

Duncan admits that when he was cut by the Eagles and Colts he was disappointed but not discouraged. "I'm not sure football is what the Lord wants me to be doing right now," he suggests.

And as for trying again next year, the young man known as the Tennessee Volunteers' "Preachin' Place Kicker" isn't really sure.

"I'll just have to wait and see," he says.

Trucker Accepts Christ In Rest Area 'Revival'

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. (BP)--A truck driver became a Christian during a rest area "revival" on Interstate Highway 35.

Kansas City Baptists conducted the unusual "revival" services in an effort to welcome truckers and other travelers who approached Kansas City along I-35.

The services offered light refreshment, conversation, music, copies of the gospel message and an invitation to attend services at a trucker's chapel at the associational office.

A trucker from Minnesota made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ after talking to Les Arnold, director of Christian social ministries for the association. Arnold said the man recounted having heard the gospel message on the radio but never before had a chance to ask about it personally.

Other volunteers prayed with a middle-aged man who cried as he heard the message and music. The man told workers he left his family and was undecided about what to do and where to go. After awhile, he tossed the remainder of a six-pack of beer into the trash, drank coffee offered by volunteers, thanked the team for helping him think about what was important in his life, and drove off into the night.

Four members of the Trucker's Mission Action Ministry committee, including committee leader Melva Rapp, were assisted in the four-hour project by 10 volunteers from four Kansas City-area churches.

Mission Service Corps volunteer T.R. Henry drove the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists Mobile Ministries Unit to the selected rest area. From the mobile CB "Samaritan Base," Lloyd Clark radioed the message to travelers that the facility was now open.

A group of volunteers sang Christian music and delivered welcome packets containing the gospel message to those who stopped.

The Trucker's Mission Action Ministry Committee plans to conduct a similar outreach each month, using the Mobile Ministry Unit.

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Missionaries Inadequately
Funded, WMU Chief Says

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Although Southern Baptists are giving record amounts to foreign missions each year, it has been more than 20 years since those dollars increased buying power for missions causes, Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, said.

Weatherford quoted Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board sources as saying combined gifts to the Foreign Mission Board through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering in 1980 represented a 13 percent increase over the amount given the year before.

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However, she said that since the average worldwide inflation rate was 20 percent, the dollar actually had seven percent less buying power than it had the year before.

The Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists' unified giving plan, and the annual Christmas offering are the Foreign Mission Board's two main sources of income.

"What we're doing is sending God's choice people around the world, but we're not providing them with the tools they need.

"And the same thing is happening at the Home Mission Board," she said.

Weatherford also said part of the problem exists because the amount of money given to missions hasn't kept pace with the number of missionaries being appointed.

"These inadequate funds are hampering the work of Bold Mission Thrust," she said.

She praised the women for their support of two missions offerings -- the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions -- but sharply criticized churches who combine these with other special offerings.

"We cannot achieve anything in a combined, once-a-year emphasis," she said. "Experience has taught us that when we combine emphases, we suddenly find that we don't have any emphasis at all. Remember that these offerings grew out of a sense of prayer. We pray forth the money and the missionaries," she said.

Although WMU showed a slight enrollment increase last year, Weatherford expressed concern that membership has not kept abreast with SBC church growth.

"We're probably the largest religious organization for women in the world. Look what we've done with 1.1 million members. Think what we could do for the Lord and for Bold Mission Thrust if we were to double our membership."

She said that unless WMU takes the lead in missions education the denomination will be made up of people who are "missions illiterates."

"WMU is needed to create an environment so people can hear and respond to God's call to mission service," she said.

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New Beginnings Possible,
Watterson Tells Singles

By Gail Rothwell

Baptist Press
9/8/81

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Being a Christian means persons can escape their pasts and make new beginnings, Doug Watterson told more than 2,800 single adults at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

"There is help and the possibility of a freshness and newness of life beyond our asking," said Watterson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn.

Combined attendance at the simultaneous singles conferences at Glorieta and Ridgecrest, N.C., topped 5,000 for the first time in history. More than 2,250 attended the Ridgecrest meeting.

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Watterson said one of the biggest problems in Southern Baptist churches is that "people have the institution of religion, but not the man of Jesus Christ. Many people know the plan of salvation, but are not making the person of Jesus Lord of their life."

Watterson told singles it is important for them to remember Jesus faced the possibility of yielding to sin, but resisted. "As you bear your problems it is important to know Jesus has been there before you and he really cares," he said.

"Remember, Jesus spent his life investing it in people, most of whom were broken and outcast," he said.

Watterson also said he believes Southern Baptists spend too much time concentrating on things and not on the real essence of sin. "The essence of sin is not smoking, drinking and dancing," he explained. "The essence of sin is saying no to God. It is saying I'll do it my way, not your way."

Ann Smith, director of the conferences and single adult consultant in the Sunday School Board's family ministry department, attributed the record attendance to a "growing recognition by the local church that single adults are persons of value."

Smith said she believes the role of single adults in the church has changed within the last 10 years as evidenced by the increased number of singles now serving in leadership positions. "I believe the church is now recognizing the potential gifts and talents single adults have to offer," she explained.

Single adults are also realizing the benefits of meeting with other Christian singles in a large community, she said. "They receive motivation, strength and encouragement from each other."

A folk musical written specifically for single adults, "The Picnic," by Rose-Mary Rumbley and Jeff Herrick, both from First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, was premiered by 19 members of the single adult group at the Dallas church.

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'Miracle' Pastor Brings
New Vision to Monticello

By Anne McWilliams

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MONTICELLO, Miss. (BP)—Riverside Church, Monticello, organized in 1947, was limping along in early 1980 with fewer than 10 in regular attendance. Then suddenly, since last summer, 62 have joined, 30 on profession of faith. One Sunday 105 came; five families could not find a place to sit in the tiny sanctuary beside the National Guard Armory.

Behind this growth lies the story of J. W. Baker, who became pastor at Riverside in May 1980.

Four years ago he was pastor at First Baptist Church, Noma, Fla., when he had surgery to remove a growth from his brain and to repair a severe aneurism. Two major blood vessels in his brain had grown together, he said, and the walls between them had broken, so that blood was being shortcircuited. Baker had blackout spells, and often stumbled.

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A doctor in Panama City told him, "If you don't have surgery, you won't live long. If you do, there's a 90 percent chance you will die or become like a vegetable. You have maybe a 20 percent chance to be blind or paralyzed, or both." He offered no hope for a complete recovery.

Baker, having heard that the doctor was an atheist, tried to witness to him, but the doctor said, "I respect your beliefs. You have a right to them, but I don't want to hear anymore about them."

He considered changing doctors—looking for one who was a Christian—but he knew this one to be good and somehow felt compelled to stay with him.

After the surgery, the preacher's right arm and right leg were paralyzed. His vision was almost gone. "All I could see was a tiny spot directly in front of me, like looking down a long straw," he said. He was told, "You must give up preaching. You may be able to get about a little eventually with a walker."

A nurse who had assisted the surgeon told him, "While the doctor was operating, he kept muttering to himself, saying over and over, there's something to what this man said about God. This is amazing. There's something to what he believes!"

A few days later, the doctor sat down on Baker's bed and said, "I must apologize to you because I would not listen to your testimony."

"It's true. There is a God and he saved your life. When I cut into your brain, I saw that what I had suspected was even worse than I had thought it would be. To operate on the brain, you must be careful to separate the cells in just the right way. If you make the slightest fraction of error, you can destroy a part of the body's function. As I lifted my scalpel to find the proper place to cut, the cells separated where I needed them to separate—but before I ever touched them."

Later the nurse told Baker that she never saw that doctor operate again without first stopping to pray.

The Bakers stayed in Florida for a while, but since he was not able to serve as pastor, they moved to Monticello, where their daughter lived. He never tried to use a walker, but kept pulling himself around as best he could without one.

In the spring of 1980 a member of Riverside invited him to preach at the church for a few Sundays. He could not see well enough to read, so he preached from memory.

The first Sunday, two came to Sunday School and six to preaching. The next Sunday, the same number. When they wanted to call him as pastor, he told the few, "I'll try, but if I accept, I want all of you to promise to come to church training, prayer meeting and all the other services." They did. Soon attendance grew to 15.

Though he'd been ordered not to drive, he sometimes drove short distances. In August 1980, he was driving the few blocks from his house to town when—bang—his whole vision opened up. He stopped the car and got out and looked all around him. He held his hands up before his eyes and stood there marveling.

"People passing by looked at me strangely," he recalled. "I guess they wondered why I was just standing there looking up and down and all around."

All the strength has returned to his right arm and leg, and all this summer he has been working full time on constructing Riverside's new building, a building demanded by growth.