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-- FEATURES

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Second Generation Missions:
Another Parks Appointed

By Erich Bridges

RICHMOND, VA (BP)--One of the 33 newly appointed missionaries challenged by Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks Oct. 13 was his own son Randall.

Parks, 27, and his wife, Nancy, will go to Egypt, whose government only this year granted permission for Southern Baptist fraternal representatives to live in the country and work with Egyptian Baptists.

For the younger Parks, hearing his father's challenge was a homecoming of sorts. He was coming home to missions.

"I grew up a preacher's kid, a missionary kid," he says. "But I've always been kind of independent. I didn't want to follow in my father's footsteps."

The eldest of four Parks children, he divided his youth between Texas and Indonesia, where his parents were missionaries. He committed his life to Christ in an Indonesian church, and felt the personal draw of missions. But adolescence brought questions, self doubt, the intense desire to find an individual identity and destiny.

After finishing high school in Richmond he went with his family to Singapore--where his father was based for a year as Southeast Asia area director--and attended the University of Singapore. Then he signed on an oil tanker for a series of cruises spanning the Orient and Middle East.

"When we took off for the Persian Gulf, that was it, there was no getting off," Parks remembers. "But it was good for me. Nobody knew or cared who I was. I was on my own and I made it."

Back in Texas for college study, he grappled with a sense of call to the ministry. "I struggled with it intensely," Parks says. "Partially because of a sense of inadequacy, and partially because my father was a preacher. Gradually, though, I came to the point that I was able to accept my own uniqueness as a person and a minister."

He met Nancy Halbert after entering Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Despite a youth spent in one place, she had waged the same inner war as he, sensing an early call to commitment in church mission organizations, but struggling to escape it.

"I got away from the Lord in college," she recalls. "I wanted to teach, but I got wrapped up in it as a career." Teaching Mexican immigrant children and Indochinese refugees in the Fort Worth area, however, revealed education as a ministry, and the human needs of other cultures.

"I love teaching these kids," she said. "I feel that this is where my talents lie. But I also realize that my call is to be a Christian witness."

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After a "whirlwind courtship," as she describes it, the pair married in 1977. That year Parks also became pastor of Red Springs Baptist Church in west Texas, the same small congregation his father led before appointment as a missionary. Last July a new member of the family, Jennifer Lee, arrived.

The Parkses enjoy challenges, and they'll find all they can handle in post-Sadat Egypt. Working with two other Southern Baptist couples assigned to the country, they hope to assist Egyptian Baptists in pastoral training, religious education, and other support ministries. Nancy may teach English in a university or secondary school.

"It took a long time for me to find out where the Lord was leading me, but I did," Parks said. "I've realized that world missions has never been an option for me. That's the challenge for us."

Assignment to Egypt, and a tight handclasp from his father, confirmed that decision.

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

Volunteer Fireman Matched
To Church, Other Blazes

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MANDEVILLE, La. (BP)--Police arrested a volunteer fireman as others battled the church blaze he admitted setting.

Keith Frosch, 20, admitted setting fire to Mandeville's First Baptist Church Oct. 11. He also admitted to setting several other fires in the community, because, said authorities, he liked to help put them out.

The church, recently appraised for \$250,000 and insured for \$120,000, was destroyed. New facilities, already under construction a mile and a half away when the fire occurred, will be completed early next year.

Just four hours after the fire, 180 persons were in Sunday School at the junior high school. "And one couple joined the church by letter during the worship service," said pastor Jerry Poston.

No one was in the building when the fire was set about 5:30 a.m. Police said no one has been injured in the fires. Frosch has admitted setting because he purposely set the fires at times when the buildings are unoccupied.

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New Missionary Standards Extend
Age Limit; Tap Pastors, Ethnic

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press
10/19/81

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Three changes in qualifications for foreign missionaries will "enlarge the circle" of Southern Baptists eligible for overseas service, especially in evangelism and church-starting assignments.

Adopted at the October meeting of the board, the changes include an extension of the maximum age limit for career missionary applicants from 39 to 45, and two modifications in educational standards and experience requirements for career and associate candidates considered for evangelism assignments.

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The result of a year-long task force study requested by board President R. Keith Parks, the new standards are designed to fill urgent requests from foreign fields. Sixty-five percent of requests for 1981, which call for 1,700 new missionaries, seek evangelists and church developers. In recent years as many as nine out of 10 such requests have gone unmet.

"We asked ourselves, how do you take advantage of the skills and talents of Southern Baptists?" said William R. O'Brien, executive vice-president and chairman of the seven-member task force. "We searched for a framework for utilizing Southern Baptist energies to the fullest, without keeping some of our channels clogged by default."

According to O'Brien, the task force concluded that the age limit extension for career appointment, from 39 to 45, would qualify many for a "second career" in foreign missions. Historically the board has not appointed career missionaries over 40 for several reasons. The cost of training, sending and supporting missionaries provoked a search for younger candidates who could serve longer terms before retirement. Also, new missionary couples with children in high school often encounter severe family adjustment problems on foreign fields.

However, 40- to 45-year-old appointees could serve 20 or 25 years before retirement, a term that exceeds the current average tenure of missionaries on the field, the task force found, and it learned that a considerable number of couples in that age range have children who have completed high school and left home.

A person with a master of religious education degree from a Southern Baptist-sponsored seminary and five years pastoral experience in a Southern Baptist church will now be considered for career appointment as an evangelist or church planter. Previous policy required a master of divinity degree in most cases for these assignments.

Persons 35 through 60, with at least 60 hours of college work plus an associate of divinity degree or diploma in theology from a Southern Baptist-sponsored seminary and five or more years of experience as a Southern Baptist pastor, will be considered for employment as missionary associates in evangelism and church planting.

Also considered for associate assignments in those categories will be Southern Baptist pastors with at least five years of church experience and a college degree, plus appropriate study at a fully accredited seminary.

The recommendations affecting the associate program (which employs candidates for renewable four-year terms) arose from analysis of Southern Baptists "where they are," said O'Brien.

"Research tells us that more than half of Southern Baptist pastors lack a full seminary degree," he said. "It would be tragic if we filter ourselves out of some of our best talent, when needs on the field are so urgent."

O'Brien also stressed the necessity for calling out qualified missionary candidates from Southern Baptists' rapidly growing ethnic membership, including blacks, hispanic-Americans and orientals. Many successful pastors in Southern Baptist ethnic churches lack degrees from Southern Baptist-sponsored seminaries, he said.

"We're not lowering standards for missionaries," added Louis Cobbs, board personnel selection director. "We're enlarging the circle, the pool that we can draw from."

Cobbs noted that the new standards are minimal, and that many field requests call for additional training or experience. Board staffers and personnel committees consider all applications for missionary service on an individual basis.

WMU Seeks Different Birmingham Location

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Woman's Missionary Union wants to move.

Carolyn Weatherford, WMU executive director, announced Oct. 16 in a letter to Birmingham area pastors and WMU leaders, that WMU is looking both for a buyer for its downtown building and 10 to 20 acres of land on which to build a new facility.

WMU purchased its current offices, the former Family Reserve Insurance building, at 600 N. 20th St., in 1951. It added two floors in 1961 and a rear expansion in 1977, and the building now contains 40,800 square feet of floor space.

The property, in the heart of Birmingham's financial and government district, was valued by a Birmingham appraiser at approximately \$1 million.

WMU is not interested in moving out of Birmingham, although that option was considered. "We wish to continue the fine relationships we have enjoyed here with the business community and the Baptist constituency," Weatherford said. "We know of no real advantage to us in moving to another city."

Growth in the national office staff, changes in publishing technology and need for more warehouse space prompt relocation, Weatherford said. A change in printing contracting relations caused WMU to have to store large amounts of its inventory, for which it now leases 15,000 square feet of warehouse space.

"We are finding it inefficient to work in this situation," Weatherford explained. "Although our staff and volunteer workers have handled the change beautifully, we can give much better service if we bring all our work back under one adequate roof."

She also reported that WMU is completing installation of a complete computerized type-setting system. Further computerization is to be phased in soon and a move to more efficient office space will help fully utilize the computer.

The WMU board executive first authorized a space study by an outside consultant and had appraisals made. Architects for the WMU building studied the possibility of building additional floors. Lease space in downtown was studied. All investigations convinced the board to pursue a move.

The relocation committee is chaired by Mrs. J. Frank Gilreath of Charlotte, N.C., who is WMU recording secretary.

The move could be accomplished in two years. Warren, Knight and Davis Inc., architects for the present WMU building, have been retained as architects for the future building.

WMU is a self-supporting auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention. It publishes 10 periodicals, in English and Spanish.

Its annual campaigns raise more money each year for the operation of the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission Boards than do gifts through the Cooperative Program.

WMU was founded in 1888 with offices in Baltimore, Md. At the invitation of Birmingham Baptists, WMU relocated in Birmingham in 1921.

Stewardship Commission
Names Conner To Staff

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Barbara Conner, a 15-year employee of the Southern Baptist Convention Stewardship Commission, has been elected to the commission's professional staff.

"This is a first for us," said A. R. Fagan, the commission's executive director-treasurer. "We have never had a woman in a professional staff position in this agency."

Conner was named publishing supervisor, replacing Paul M. Darden, who resigned.

The selection was one of three staff shifts in the agency. Harry G. Bonner, who recently joined the staff in the endowment capital giving division, was elected assistant executive director-treasurer, and Charles D. Vanderslice, a consultant in the Together We Build program for three years, was named special consultant for institutional fund raising.

The shifts do not indicate a change in the work of the agency, Fagan said, but is only "a change in personnel."

Conner, a former teacher in elementary and high schools, has been a secretary and editor with the commission. She is a native of Tulsa, Okla., and is married to Ray Conner, director of the church recreation department at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

In her new responsibilities, she will be responsible for the editing, design, printing and distribution of all materials produced by the commission.

Bonner, who was executive director-treasurer of the Northwest Baptist Convention Foundation prior to joining the commission, will assist Fagan and will coordinate all meetings in the stewardship development process and in the development of new materials.

He is a native of Streetman, Texas, and a graduate of Wayland Baptist College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Vanderslice will work with all agencies and institutions in the SBC in his new responsibilities. He is a native of Dallas, and a graduate of Southern Methodist University and Southwestern Seminary.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers.