



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Harry Piland Resigns  
As Sunday School Leader

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Harry M. Piland, director of Southern Baptists' Sunday School program for five years, has resigned effective Feb. 28 to return to First Baptist Church, Houston as administrative pastor and minister of education.

Before becoming director of the Sunday School department of the Sunday School Board in 1978, Piland, 54, had been minister of education at the Houston church for five years.

In his announcement Jan. 24 to the 150 employees of the department, Piland said his decision was reached over a period of many months and reflects his love for the local church and his conviction that "God has spoken to me and I must return."

Except for his assurance of God's leadership, Piland said, "I would with delight continue to serve as Sunday School department director for the rest of my days."

During his tenure, Piland saw SBC Sunday School enrollment increase by approximately 200,000 to 7.6 million. He also originated the idea for 8.5 by '85, a goal which includes plans to increase Sunday School enrollment to 8.5 million by Sept. 30, 1985.

"My commitment to 8.5 by '85 is enduring and strong," Piland said. "First Baptist Church, Houston, will set 8.5 goals and we will reach them." He said he would be available to "write, speak, encourage or help to carry the message of 8.5 by '85 whenever I can and anywhere on this earth."

Piland said he regrets that he will not have the opportunity to work with Lloyd Elder, if Elder is elected Feb. 1 as president of the board. "I affirm his (Elder's) nomination with my whole being. I know him to be a man of high integrity, great competence and deep compassion."

When Board President Grady Cothen brought Piland to the board, he called the post of Sunday School department director one of the most crucial positions in the denomination.

Morton Rose, vice president for church programs and services, and Ralph McIntyre, director of the Bible teaching division, affirmed that every facet of 8.5 by '85 will be continued despite Piland's departure.

Calling the 8.5 by '85 nine basics of Sunday School growth "the Piland Principles," McIntyre said, "the forces which Piland has set in motion are going to continue and achieve great things in the kingdom of God. We will honor every commitment and move forward."

Rose paid tribute to Piland's influence in strengthening evangelism through the Sunday School. Rose named McIntyre interim department director, effective March 1.

A native of Texas, Piland also served as minister of education at Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, and James Avenue and University Baptist churches of Fort Worth.

Threats Will Not Silence  
Romanian Evangelist Moldovan

By Norman Jameson

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When secret police booted evangelist Ioan Moldovan out of Romania they told him if he talked of this torture or of religious suppression in Romania they would kill him. That threat only fueled his fervor to bridge the communist chasm between free and persecuted Christians.

"It is very difficult to stay here and do nothing when I know what's happening back there every day, every hour," said Moldovan, a first semester student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Harsh persecution, intensified since spiritual revival began around 1974, only strengthens Christian resolve in Romania, according to the 32-year-old Moldovan. When a person becomes a Christian he knows he is accepting persecution.

"Amazingly, thousands of people continue to accept Christ, knowing the situation," he said. "They preach and go in prison. They teach and encourage persecuted brothers and sisters. They witness in schools, colleges and on their jobs, knowing with every word for Christ they risk loss of jobs, torture and imprisonment.

"Only Christ has control over this movement because only a few, few pastors encourage it. Our young Christians organize themselves in small groups, privately, in houses. This is not a leadership thing where you have someone back you and defend you. Our pastors encourage a silent witness. 'We have more freedoms than ever.' They say, 'Don't disturb things.' "

Moldovan cannot accept a silent witness. His evangelist father was run down by a truck six years ago as he left church. The driver took refuge in a psychiatric hospital where he was covered by doctors--evidence, Moldovan feels, the death was arranged by the secret police.

After being arrested himself for evangelistic activities, Moldovan was kicked, beaten in the head with rubber truncheons, denied food and sleep for several days and encouraged to become an informer, he said. His greatest fear during those days was that he would lose his mind and his ability to preach the gospel.

"As I was finally about to collapse, God strengthened me," Moldovan said. "Then I had the love of Christ and I saw my tormentors as victims. I had a clear mind and God presented the gospel to them through me."

Moldovan was convicted of treason, sentenced to 25 years in prison and locked away. Eight thousand letters from outside Romania protested his imprisonment and ultimately a scheduled visit of a United States human rights delegation secured his release and expulsion to America.

Romanian Christians are limited by the lack of theological education material. Bibles they can get, he said, but understanding remains elementary, so he will translate the best material he finds in the United States onto cassette tapes.

He encourages Christians to go to Romania and persecuted countries as tourists. "Wear lapel pins that say 'Jesus is the answer' or something like that to prompt questions. Although we cannot initiate conversations about our faith, we can answer questions," Moldovan explained.

Moldovan says free Christians who say persecuted Christians bring troubles on themselves through activities that are more anti-communist than pro-Christ, just do not understand.

"The churches communists allow open are museums to which they can point and claim religious freedom," he explained. "Our life is outside the church and that is what they take away from us. They want not only your body. They want your mind and your soul too. You can be a Christian but what kind of Christian can you be if you can't act, witness or preach?"

Moldovan spent his first two years in the United States in Maryland with Christian Solidarity International, a group organized to encourage persecuted Christians. He said he came to SWBTS with his wife, Anna, and three children because he "wanted a school that will help me put together all my knowledge about how to serve God, where I could build strong relationships with teachers and where there was strong interest in evangelism and missions."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Reagan Renews Pledge  
On 'Social Agenda'

By Stan Hastey

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WASHINGTON (BP)--President Reagan has renewed a pledge to fight for his so-called "social" agenda, including the restoration of group prayer in public schools, tuition tax credits for parents whose children attend nonpublic schools and a ban on abortion.

Speaking from Camp David Jan. 22 during his weekly radio broadcast, the president sought to reassure some of his most ardent supporters he has not lost sight of their primary concerns despite concentrating on fiscal matters the first two years of his administration.

Alluding to his State of the Union message to Congress and to the fiscal 1984 budget he must submit to lawmakers by the end of January, Reagan said, "I also want you to know w 'll not ignore the moral essentials in the coming months."

He promised to push again for a constitutional amendment which by White House admission would restore the power of state legislatures and local school boards to write and require the recitation of prayers in public school classrooms, a practice struck down by the Supreme Court in 1962.

But Reagan insisted in his radio address that what he seeks is "voluntary" prayer, saying, "No one must ever be forced or pressured to take part in any religious exercise." The White House has told reporters on previous occasions that what this means is that individual children who object to the public prayers could be excused from the classroom during their recitation.

The president added: "The public expression through prayer of our faith in God is a fundamental part of our American heritage and a privilege which should not be excluded from our schools."

On tuition tax credits, Reagan reasserted his often expressed view that parents whose children attend parochial schools are subjected to a form of double taxation because they pay taxes to support public schools and tuition to private schools. "I think they're entitled to some relief since they're supporting two school systems and only using one," he declared.

Reagan sought to answer criticism that such a plan would amount to another tax break for the wealthy by saying the majority of parochial school students "are from families earning less than \$25,000." He added that "in many parochial schools, the majority of students are from minority neighborhoods."

The president also renewed his call for a constitutional amendment banning abortion. Noting that he spoke on the tenth anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision striking down state laws that previously banned the practice, he stated the belief that "God's greatest gift is human life and that we have a duty to protect the life of an unborn child.

"Until someone can prove the unborn child is not a life, shouldn't we give it the benefit of the doubt and assume it is?"

During the last Congress, none of the three issues addressed by Reagan received final action. Although the Senate Judiciary Committee voted out a constitutional amendment on abortion, it never reached the floor for a vote.

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A bill providing watered-down tuition tax credits was voted out of the Senate Finance Committee but it too failed to come to a final vote. The proposed prayer amendment never came out of committee.

On the House side of Capitol Hill, no action was taken on any of the measures.

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Elder Says Search  
Process 'Satisfying'

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Lloyd Elder, nominated by the presidential search committee of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board to succeed Grady C. Cothen, called the process by which he was chosen "challenging and satisfying."

Elder said he was first contacted by the search committee in November. At first he was resistant, then open and finally certain that such service would be in God's will.

The discovery (interview) process was exhaustive, he said. At the preliminary interview the committee thoroughly discussed his life, beliefs and doctrinal stance. Then, he provided a 19-page report from a recent physical examination, was thoroughly investigated by an executive search company and underwent a full day interview/revaluation by a management psychologist.

According to BSSB officials, such a procedure is routine in selecting top management personnel. Elder said the "thoroughness of the search committee was challenging and satisfying."

He added that during the process he was not subject to pressure from any special interest group or individuals.

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Oldest Retired Missionary,  
Lelah Morgan, Dies at 104

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COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--Lelah C. Morgan, 104, Southern Baptists' oldest retired missionary, died Jan. 21 at home in Columbia.

Morgan retired twice from missions and ministry but she never stopped praying. Even after her 100th birthday her home remained a pilgrimage point for Christians wanting to learn more about the power of prayer.

"I keep the line open," Morgan said a few years ago about her ongoing conversation with God. "He knows when I'm going to talk to Him. I don't have to introduce myself. I pray all day long--even through my daily duties. I can pray as well when I'm scraping carrots as any other time."

Morgan and her late husband, Edgar, spent 27 years (1905-1932) as missionaries to China, where they knew and worked with Lottie Moon and other mission pioneers. They retired in the depths of the depression when the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board couldn't afford to send furloughing missionaries back to the field.

The couple started a second career leading prayer retreats and Bible conferences in the United States. They moved to a hilltop overlooking the Chauga River near Westminster, S.C., named it Chauga Heights and spent two decades praying and teaching on prayer.

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The Chauga Heights Conference Center produced numerous Baptist leaders, including the Morgan's son, E. Carter Morgan, a veteran missionary now working in the Phillipines. Now 69, he remembers two and three hour prayer sessions as normal in those days.

After her husband's death in 1965, Morgan continued an extensive prayer and correspondence ministry from her home. She allowed the Foreign Mission Board to declare her 100th birthday in 1978 a "Special Day of Honor" for her and accepted a nationally televised birthday greeting from NBC's "The Today Show" in 1981. But she never let the fuss over her age interfere with priorities.

"She spends her extra time in prayer," her daughter Constance said in 1981. "That's her interest."

Leah Carter was born in Atlanta Nov. 18, 1878 and attended Brenau College in Gainesville, Ga. and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. She married Edgar Morgan in 1904. The next year they were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board to Chefoo, China where they did evangelistic work and later worked with pastors, taught and organized churches in Laichowfu.

They moved to Tsingtao in 1921 where they co-edited the North China Baptist, a Chinese language journal, and he was editorial secretary of the Mandarin Department of the China Baptist Publication Society.

"Missionaries don't always know the results of what they preach and teach," she recalled decades later. "But through the ministry of that little paper I saw results--and heard of good things that happened."

Morgan is survived by her missionary son, daughter Constance Morgan of Columbia, and a grandson, Joel, of Pasadena, Calif.

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