



-- FEATURES

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Missionary Unwavering
In Return To Lebanon

By Art Toalston

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Whenever the strife in Beirut heats up, Nancie Wingo knows relatives and friends in the States "constantly wonder whether I'm in this explosion or that explosion."

"Until they hear from me, they have to wonder," says Wingo, a Southern Baptist missionary to Lebanon. "That kind of thing happens all the time in Beirut, and I'm just sorry they have to live with that (uncertainty)."

But she has had no second thoughts about going back to where she's worked for 15 years. "I have felt like that is where I should be," she says. She returned to Beirut in July after a furlough in Fort Worth, Texas, rejoining 15 other Southern Baptist missionaries in Lebanon. She again will supervise English instruction at the 800-student Beirut Baptist School.

Relatives and friends accept, as best they can, that "I have to do what I think is right and that, if I didn't, I'd be less than Nancie Wingo."

She acknowledges the danger but underlines the value of working in Lebanon. "We haven't been asked to love a safe world. We've just been asked to love the world. There are lots of places where life is difficult. I just think it's wonderful we can be in those places."

She says her work in Beirut is "not determined by world events, such as a hijacking. Life is going on for a great many people (two million in Beirut). God is still doing a lot of good things there. I try to think how we can be a part of that. That keeps me going."

The school is among the contributors to good in west Beirut, she says. With the students' lives disrupted, "the school is all they have left." About 70 percent of the students are Islamic, about 70 percent are male. "If missions is meeting a need, I feel the school is more important than ever...to show Christ's love to people where they are in need."

Still, in Lebanon, agony is an ever-present reality.

The mother of one of her best friends was killed when Israeli troops were trying to rout the Palestinian Liberation Organization in west Beirut in 1982. Israeli pilots bombed a building, causing walls in the woman's building next door to collapse. She died from internal injuries. "She had been a dear, sweet friend to me and almost like a mother. She was a Muslim lady and very, very generous. I went over to her home many times and ate with them. She was just one of those who loved to share what she cooks with her friends."

When civil war broke out in 1975, one of Wingo's former students, the yearbook photographer two years earlier, was killed. "He was a real friendly boy. He didn't want to fight." The Red Cross truck he was working in was hit by an artillery shell.

Classes at the school often are cancelled because of fighting between so-called Christian and Islamic forces. Once, during non-school hours, an artillery shell damaged the school. Windows must be replaced regularly.

At Wingo's apartment, a shell blasted off part of the balcony during intense fighting that forced her and other tenants in the eight-story building to take refuge in the basement for three days. While in the basement, Wingo often sees differences become less of a barrier as Christians and Muslims "huddle together, without any resentment toward each other."

"Part of us are Christian, and Christians may be shelling us, yet we're sitting with Muslims and they don't say anything about us. They don't feel we are personally responsible in any way. They know it's just the leaders.

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"Then when it's the other way around and the Muslims are shelling us, it's just amazing how we don't relate to them as enemies. We take care of each other...everybody is wonderful about sharing their food, blankets or whatever they've taken with them.

"It is not the Muslim population on a whole that is at war with the Christian population or vice versa," Wingo says. In Beirut, there are plenty of people "who want to get on with their lives, who want to do something good with their lives. There are more people who relate to each other in very kind and loving ways than those who are perpetuating all the meanness."

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

Forgiveness Required
For Social Issues

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
7/18/85

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--An attitude of forgiveness must be the overriding emotion for churches dealing with contemporary social and family issues, according to John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La.

Sullivan, who taught a class during Bible Preaching/Administration week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center on how the Bible deals with contemporary issues, said he tries to approach problems on the basis of love, mercy and forgiveness rather than legality.

During the conference Sullivan addressed the areas of marriage, divorce, abortion and the abuse of alcohol.

"The church has to deal with the problems of the family," Sullivan said. "When dealing with persons who remarry, the church becomes either a hospital or a firing squad.

"It's interesting, we are willing to forgive everything except divorce," he said. "In your church you have to answer if whether you are as ready as Jesus to forgive and reclaim the divorced and remarried persons. "On any moral or ethical subject, Jesus never deals in less than the ideal," Sullivan told the participants. "Divorce shatters God's ideal of marriage.

"The ideal marriage is for three, not two," he continued. "It includes man, woman and God. And, the ideal marriage is not free of problems, but has unrestricted love because of a proper relationship to God."

The reality of society today, however, is that "the family is in trouble." He said 38 percent of first marriages today will fail. Of those divorced persons, 79 percent will remarry and 44 percent of the remarried persons will divorce again.

"People are going to marry, even within the church, so they can fit back into society," Sullivan said. "We need to learn to have a forgiveness that releases from the bondage of guilt and helps us to live in a forgiving community."

Sullivan performs marriages between divorced individuals and holds the opinion, "If they ask forgiveness for the sin of divorce, they are not living in adultery."

Forgiveness also is the principle out of which Sullivan operates in considering the issue of abortion, though he believes "abortion for any reason is contrary to biblical principle.

"I believe from the moment of conception there is life and it should be treated as life," Sullivan explained. "It's a little idealistic, but we should start with the ideal and deal with exceptions," he said. "Most abortions happen because of an inconvenience to some adult. It is a tragedy because children are being destroyed. Inconvenience is not one of the criteria for destruction of life."

Sullivan said there have been 15 million legal abortions in the United States since 1973 and the surgeon general of the United States estimates there are two million abortions each year. "There have been more abortions in the United States since 1973 than the total number of Americans who have died from the Revolutionary war through the Vietnam war," he said.

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"In my opinion, the unborn child is new life and must be treated as a human being," he continued. "The fetus is a person—is life—not a nonentity. Life and death should belong to the providence of God, not a doctrine of convenience. Human beings are created with the possibility of eternal life with the Father. The unborn child is life with God's potential."

Moral and ethical issues have a bearing on all that a person is or expects to become, according to Sullivan. For many young persons, contextual ethics, or living by the demand of the moment, place too much responsibility for such short notice. Your young people had better make up their minds before the demand of the moment," Sullivan warned the church leaders. "Young people in our churches live with peer pressures and have to handle it in some way."

For Sullivan, drinking alcoholic beverages is not just a social problem, but a moral issue and an economic issue. He said the annual loss for American businesses because of employees who drink is almost incalculable.

"Alcohol is the number one drug problem in America today and the biggest problem we deal with among teenagers today," he explained. "It is a problem because Mom and Dad have become convinced that if you don't take a social drink, you are not with it. Children today need examples from parents, not sermons.

"Alcohol harms and dehumanizes the user and harms others," he said. "There is not one positive contribution that drinking of alcoholic beverages makes to the individual or to the church. It is moral hypocrisy to do in my home things I would not do in my study."

When dealing with social and contemporary concerns from the public, Sullivan said ministers have a responsibility to take a stand and be consistent with that stand. He said pastors need to make it clear, however, if a church member does not agree with the position of the pastor, the person knows he is still loved and can turn to the pastor in time of need. Your stand should not be used as a club later.

"Christians can't consider just themselves," Sullivan concluded. "It is a Christian's duty to think of everything he does in terms of how it affects others." When church members do not live up to the ideal Jesus painted for us, Sullivan said, it hurts our witness because the world expects better of us.

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Robertson Offers Testimony
On Civil Rights Legislation

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
7/18/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—Christian television personality M.G. (Pat) Robertson told a U.S. Senate committee July 17 the Southern Baptist Convention opposes proposed civil rights legislation designed to overturn a 1984 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on sex discrimination and said the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs "does not truly speak" for the SBC.

The high court decision, *Grove City College v. Bell*, held that colleges and universities—including those affiliated with religious bodies—must comply with Title IX of the Civil Rights Act forbidding sex discrimination. The court held further that only the specific program within a school that discriminates against women—not all programs—will lose federal funding when discrimination is proved.

Asked by Sen. Howard M. Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, to explain who he represented in an appearance before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, Robertson replied he holds membership in a Southern Baptist congregation.

Robertson is a member of Freemason Street Baptist Church, Norfolk, Va., a congregation affiliated with the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the SBC.

A church source said Robertson joined the church "about a dozen years ago" when he was called as interim minister of education, a position he held for a year, leaving to begin his television career. A church source said the last time Robertson attended a service there was two years ago for an anniversary program.

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"We certainly see nothing of him," the source, who asked not to be identified, said.

The Virginia Beach, Va., host of the "700 Club" told the Senate committee a Southern Baptist Convention resolution adopted in 1984 opposed similar legislation in the last Congress, a statement he said "pretty much carries over" to the present. The 1984 resolution, while expressing concern that Congress clarify wording to protect church institutions from undue government regulation, neither endorsed nor objected to the proposed law as a whole.

Sen. Charles E. Grassley, R-Iowa, with a copy of the resolution in hand, asked Robertson to repeat his understanding of the SBC position. Robertson answered, "To the best of my knowledge, the Southern Baptist Convention still opposes" such legislation.

Grassley, who along with committee chairman Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, has consulted with Baptist Joint Committee staff seeking language to alleviate churches' concerns about the legislation, asked the television personality if the Southern Baptist Convention is not a member body of the Baptist Joint Committee.

Robertson replied: "The Baptist Joint Committee does not truly speak for the Southern Baptist Convention." He said further the Baptist Joint Committee does not agree with "most Southern Baptists" or "the current leadership" of the SBC.

Grassley then asked Robertson if he knew the position of the Baptist Joint Committee on the proposed legislation. Robertson replied the committee is "probably in favor, but I haven't gotten their specific position." Hatch, who last year during Senate debate on the Civil Rights Act of 1984 quoted favorably from a Baptist Joint Committee statement, interjected that the Washington agency has in fact "raised serious objections" to any new civil rights law that does not recognize and meet churches' concerns.

Baptist Joint Committee Executive Director James M. Dunn called Robertson's statements to the Senate panel "unconscionable." "It is unconscionable that an independent television evangelist would purport to speak for Southern Baptists and an even greater affront to conscience that he would misrepresent the SBC resolution," Dunn said.

In a letter sent immediately to members of the Senate committee, Dunn noted the 1984 resolution did not oppose the primary thrust of the Civil Rights Act of 1984, but asked Congress to exempt church related colleges and universities that receive no federal tax dollars "from being defined as recipients of federal financial assistance under the Act."

Dunn also told the lawmakers: "Mr. Robertson was wrong in his stated assertion that the 1984 resolution 'pretty much carries over' to 1985. Resolutions adopted by messengers... attending annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention speak only for those attending that particular meeting and have no carry-over effect whatsoever."

Dunn said Robertson was "mistaken" in playing down the relationship between the Baptist Joint Committee and the SBC. Pointing to the SBC resolution's last paragraph, he noted the convention "specifically requested" his agency to inform Congress of the action.

SBC Christian Life Commission Executive Director Foy Valentine, whose agency's agenda includes civil rights, also reacted to the Robertson testimony. "For 25 years Southern Baptists have sounded a clear and certain sound in support of civil rights," he declared.

He added: "While the old political right and the New Religious Right are working like termites to undermine the legislation and reverse the progress of recent decades related to civil rights, Southern Baptists know such injustice cannot be defended with an open Bible. With necessary refinement, the proposed legislation would substantially clarify the American dream that all of us are created equal, that all of us stand equally before the law and that all of us live equally under the law."

The veteran Southern Baptist leader also declared: "I do not speak for all Southern Baptists, for no Baptist on earth speaks for any other Baptist on earth. Yet I do speak as a Southern Baptist out a lifetime of commitment to justice, the worth of every person, the civil and other human rights guaranteed to all Americans and the moral values without which no nation can long endure."

World's Missions Leader
Marie Mathis Dies

By D'Lesia Carroll

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Marie (Mrs. R.L.) Wiley Mathis, 82, past president of Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to Southern Baptist Convention, and prominent missions promoter died July 12, 1985, in Dalhart, Texas.

Mathis' denominational leadership in WMU work began in 1936, and continued over four decades. The Texas native's career originated in Texas WMU work, as executive secretary-treasurer and president of the organization. Close ties with Texas kept her at Baylor University for 26 years.

Mathis steadily climbed the ladder to president of WMU, SBC, and held the longest tenure in history—two terms totaling 13 years. Under Mathis' leadership membership in WMU reached 1.5 million women and children.

She was the first woman elected an officer of the Southern Baptist Convention, being elected second vice-president in 1963-64. Mathis was also the only woman ever nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

During her term as WMU president, Mathis held such positions as treasurer and president of the Woman's Department of the Baptist World Alliance and vice-president of the BWA.

She was the first woman to get honorary degrees from Mary Hardin-Baylor and Hardin Simmons universities and the only woman to address a seminary commencement at any Southern Baptist seminary.

She was program chairman for the 1970 Baptist World Congress in Tokyo, the only woman to perform this task.

Mathis was a key leader in allowing WMU's Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong missions offerings to be taken among all church members, a concept which helped make these the largest sources of funds for the Foreign and Home Mission Boards.

"I suppose this is the most significant contribution Mrs. Mathis made in Southern Baptist life. It not only made possible the expansion of missions work, but also gave more of us the joy in sharing in this great outreach," said Porter Routh, past executive secretary of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Mathis was a major force in the work of the Baptist Jubilee Advance, Crusade of the Americas and Baptist World Alliance.

Her dedication to the cause of missions and to Baptists around the world "rendered magnificent service in the cause of the Lord," said the late Baker J. Cauthen, past executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board.

"Mrs. Mathis and Woman's Missionary Union—they just go together! Through the years of leadership she taught us the true meaning of the WMU watchword: 'For we are laborers...,'" said Carolyn Weatherford, WMU, SBC, executive director.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Mathis Memorial Fund, Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, Birmingham, Ala., and the Mathis Memorial Fund, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Woman's Missionary Union

CORRECTION--In (BP) story, "Hunger Relief Giving Surpasses \$6 Million," mailed 7/15/85, please change the word vision in the final paragraph to division.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

(BP)

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