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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #7501
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Marv Knox, 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
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

September 17, 1986

86-134

More Preachers Sought
For World's 'Ripe Fields'

By Eric Miller

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The harvest of people needing Jesus Christ is abundant, but preachers going to the mission fields are too few, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials claimed during a Sept. 11-12 meeting.

Although people with skills in education, health care and mass media are much needed, people with evangelistic skills are needed the most, they said.

Area directors who oversee missions work outlined these needs in an annual meeting with the board's personnel selection representatives, who identify and process missionaries.

Southern Baptist missionaries in 107 countries are requesting persons to fill 412 additional assignments on the field for 1987. Singles as well as couples will be considered.

Missionaries are asking that half be people with skills in general evangelism. These missionaries are vital to the basic thrust of winning people to Christ and starting churches, said Bill Morgan, director of the board's missionary enlistment department. "They are core people," he insisted.

Far too few Southern Baptists are responding to this need for church starters, Morgan said. So far this year, he explained, "we're only filling one in five requests (for such preacher-evangelists)."

While the board needs church starters in the greatest numbers, it also has critical needs for other missionaries with professional skills, area directors said.

In The Gambia in West Africa, a dentist is needed so badly that the existence of "the whole mission could depend on whether we find that dentist," said West Africa Area Director John Mills. The government is allowing missionaries on the promise of a dentist locating there.

Each of the eight area directors categorized needs into the top 15 most crucial needs for their areas of the world. The lists show missionaries are needed to teach in seminaries in 12 countries—Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, North and South Brazil, Lebanon, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Macao near Hong Kong.

Thirty-one countries need missionaries to start churches. The needs stretch from Panama and Trinidad in Central America to the Philippines, Korea and Japan on the other side of the world. They encompass almost every continent where Southern Baptists have work.

People with agricultural skills are needed in Haiti and Guyana, while doctors and nurses are needed in Yemen, Gaza, Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Thailand and Indonesia. Dentists are needed in Guyana, Benin and The Gambia.

Requests consisted of: 202 missionaries to work in general evangelism, 99 others to work in church development, 22 in education, 41 in health care, 12 in mass media, 10 in business services and 26 in community development and support services.

Board officials noted increased specialization among seminary students could hurt missions. Broader seminary training is needed.

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Officials also noted "fewer are hearing a call to the Middle East," which "remains one of the more neglected areas." A nurse and midwife is needed at the Jibla Baptist Hospital in Yemen, where 600 babies are delivered monthly.

During the meeting, Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks said more attention must be directed toward the specific financial needs of Bold Mission Thrust—the goal of Southern Baptists to work with others in telling every person about Jesus Christ by the year 2000.

Officials said future global strategy could result in "mobile missionaries and volunteers" who would travel about to certain areas where full-time missionaries are not allowed.

Countries vary in the methods best suited for winning their inhabitants to Christ. Mills pointed out in West Africa, "you've got to do something to show you care about the man" who is to be won to Christ.

That is why a water developer, for example, is needed to drill wells and provide fresh water in Liberia. "Half of the physical ailments and illnesses in West Africa could be wiped out if they had safe water," Mills noted.

Further information is available through Louis Cobbs, director of personnel selection, or Morgan, missionary enlistment, Foreign Mission Board, Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230 or by phoning (804) 353-0151.

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Richard Harmon Resigns
From Home Mission Board

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9/17/86

ATLANTA (BP)—Richard W. Harmon, associate director of the interfaith witness department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, resigned Sept. 15, saying his resignation "is best for all persons concerned."

"I've come to the conclusion that I can no longer function well within the climate that I perceive enveloping the Home Mission Board," said Harmon in his letter of resignation.

Harmon, who specializes in helping Southern Baptists better understand other denominations and Christian groups, has been on the board staff since 1981, having previously been an editor and curriculum development coordinator at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn.

He did not announce any immediate plans for the future but said he is exploring several possible areas of future ministry and will announce those plans at an appropriate time in the future. "I feel I will be better able to fulfill my calling from God in other areas," he said.

Harmon said his resignation is "a personal decision I have reached on my own. I want to make it clear that I was not asked to resign. I believe this is best for all persons concerned. For me it is a matter of personal integrity."

In his letter of resignation, Harmon expressed gratitude "to the people of the Home Mission Board who supported me from my first day here. I could not have worked in a better or more competent department than interfaith witness or with finer people than my department colleagues. My life is fuller for having been here. I leave with much sadness but with hope for the future."

Harmon declined to amplify on his reasons for resigning, saying he did not think it would serve any purpose to say more than what he said in his letter of resignation.

A native of Texas, Harmon is a former pastor in Olney, Texas, and former youth director for churches in Dallas and Houston. He is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, and earned the doctor of theology degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

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Killing of Health Workers
Reported in Nicaragua

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (BP)—First Baptist Church in Managua, Nicaragua, held a memorial service Sept. 11 for Baptist health worker Nestor Antonio Castilblanco and three other men reportedly killed by contra guerrillas.

Surviving family members told representatives of Provadenic, the medical relief agency of the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua, that about 100 armed men came into San Jose de la Mula, an isolated mountain area in the province of Matagalpa, late on the night of July 31.

The men abducted Castilblanco, his brothers Daniel and Filemon and a brother-in-law, Jesus Barrera. Reports said the armed band also took clothing and valuables from each of the four men's homes and burned one home to the ground. One account added the band ransacked a small Baptist clinic operated by Castilblanco.

A search party found the bodies of the four abducted men the next morning. The bodies had multiple stab wounds and bore evidence of torture, witnesses said.

Provadenic officials in Managua, Nicaragua's capital, said they didn't learn of the killings for nearly two weeks because of the isolation of the region. A Provadenic delegation later visited San Jose de la Mula to confirm the killings. One report said some 400 villagers fled the area after the killings.

Castilblanco had worked in the Matagalpa region since 1981, according to Provadenic, helping improve health standards for children and families and promoting better food production. His two slain brothers worked with CEPAD, the Nicaraguan evangelical relief agency. Barrera was identified by Church World Service as a Roman Catholic social organizer.

Motives for the killings remain unclear. Contra guerrilla spokesmen consistently have denied charges that they kill or torture civilians. But they often accuse CEPAD officials and other religious workers of pro-government activities.

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Summer Conference Center
Attendance Up Slightly

Baptist Press
9/17/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A combined summer attendance of 60,676 at Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Centers recorded a slight increase over 1985 attendance of 59,284, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board records show.

The 1986 total represents an increase of 1,392, or 2 percent, over the 1985 attendance figures.

At Ridgecrest, attendance was 32,183, an increase of 4 percent over the 1985 attendance of 30,964; the Glorieta total was 28,493, an increase of 1 percent over last year's figure of 28,320.

A total of 16,373 persons attended nine Sunday school leadership conferences, an increase of 1,672 over last year. Four church music leadership conferences attracted 6,931, which was virtually the same as 1985.

Two student conferences recorded an attendance of 4,195; and two Bible preaching, church media library conferences recorded a total attendance of 2,787.

Centrifuge youth camps at the conference centers registered 10,847.

Church training leadership weeks recorded 4,162 persons, or an increase of 260 over 1985.

For 1987, the conference centers will return to a summer schedule in which all conferences will begin on Saturday night and conclude Friday at noon. The conference centers are operated by the Sunday School Board.

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73-Year-Old Canadian
Recycles Trip To Seminary

By Mark Wingfield

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The road to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary is rougher for some than others.

Gerald Ward chose to take some of the roughest roads twice.

Ward, a 73-year-old retired minister from Lethbridge, Alberta, returned to the seminary campus Sept. 9, exactly 50 years after he first came as a student. He traveled from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Fort Worth, Texas, the same way he did before--on bicycle.

Cheering students and friends greeted Ward on the seminary oval drive as he finished the 2,500 mile journey through eight states. He rolled to a stop and said, "It's still quite a long ride."

In 1936, Ward was a Canadian Baptist minister with little money but a strong desire to attend Southwestern. Because of the Great Depression, Ward decided his one-speed bicycle would be the cheapest transportation.

With the encouragement of family and friends, Ward set out for Fort Worth on Aug. 17, 1936. He sent his few belongings ahead by freight and took with him the \$100 he had scraped together.

Ward recalled the seminary at that time encouraged prospective students to "get \$100 and a lot of faith and come on."

The first trip took him 19 days and cost \$10.52. The second took 24 days and a lot more money.

But this time he helped raise funds for others, including Southwestern Seminary, the Canadian Hunger Foundation and his hometown Kiwanis Club. Friends and other interested people pledged certain amounts per mile.

On his first journey, Ward spent the night wherever he stopped each day. Because of the depression, "many people were on the roads," he said.

For the second trip, Ward meticulously plotted his course and stayed in motels along the way. Family members accompanied him by car on most of the trip.

Although the 12-speed bicycle he used this time is more suited to long-distance rides than his old bike, it is "a very ordinary unit," Ward said. The Lethbridge Kiwanis Club gave it to him for the trip.

Along the way, Ward patched about a dozen leaks and wore out two rear tires. But that was more pleasant than 50 years ago, when he had to air up leaky tires every three hours from the Texas border to Fort Worth, he said.

Lavelle Kennedy was one of the first to meet Ward after he arrived in 1936. Kennedy, who became Ward's roommate, came back to Southwestern to greet him on his second arrival.

Kennedy recalled Ward would often ride his bicycle 90 miles to preach at Lois Baptist Church near Gainesville. Ward said bicycles weren't "a popular means of getting around," but continued to be economical for him.

Ward met his wife, Velma, while at Southwestern. He received the master of theology degree in 1941 and they returned to Canada, where he was pastor of Baptist churches until retirement in 1980.

He didn't ride a bicycle for about 20 years, and then picked up the sport again in the 1960s. He also runs competitively in the Masters program for older adults.

To train for the repeat trip, Ward rode 100 miles per week for one year.

Georgenne Terrell, a Fort Worth resident, read about Ward's ride in the Denver Post while on vacation. The next day as she was traveling home she spotted Ward on the highway.

"I can't believe he would do this," she said. Terrell said that even though she is not a Baptist, this experience inspired the "humanitarian" side of her.

At the end of the journey, Ward was weary but unimpressed with his own feat. "People ask me if I'm going to do this every 50 years," he said. "Well, I'm not."

But the fact that Ward chose the rough roads to Southwestern Seminary twice indicates his love for the school. "I owe a great deal to Southwestern," he said.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist news papers by Southwestern Seminary. Color transparencies available upon request from Southwestern.

CORRECTION: In (BP) story "Involvement Of Laymen Sought By Texas Group" mailed 9/16/86, please make the following correction. In graf 5, please change the last sentence to read: They believe in the fundamentals of the faith..., not fundamentalists as printed.

Thanks,
Baptist Press



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901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

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HISTORICAL COMMISSION
901 COMMERCE
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

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