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October 5, 1987

87-149

N-LO  
(CLC)

Christian Life Commission  
Opens Washington Office

By Tim Fields

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has opened an office in Washington in an effort to expand its involvement in and witness to the nation's capital, according to N. Larry Baker, executive director of the moral concerns agency.

The office, located in the Railway Labor Building near the Capitol and Senate office buildings, will be manned on a part-time basis by current staff of the commission who will commute from home offices in Nashville.

Commissioners of the agency voted unanimously in their 1986 annual meeting to open the Washington office as soon as funds were available.

Although the commission did not receive additional funding which it requested from the convention for the 1987-88 budget year, reallocation of funds in the 1987-88 operating budget made staffing of the office on a part-time basis possible.

The commission has asked the convention for a permanent allocation of \$150,000 beginning with the 1988-89 budget year to fund a full-time Washington-based staff for the office.

Establishment of a CLC office in the nation's capital also was supported by a special fact-finding committee of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee which reviewed the convention's participation in the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

The special committee encouraged trustees of the CLC "to continue the consideration of opening a Washington office to deal with appropriate moral and social concerns within its program statement."

The CLC is responsible for all social and moral concerns except separation of church and state and religious liberty issues, which are addressed by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and the Public Affairs Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"The decision to open the Washington office now instead of waiting for funding to support a permanent staff was taken in an effort to enhance the commission's opportunity to speak to a variety of critical moral issues and to motivate and inform Southern Baptists as to how they can address these issues," Baker said.

"Several legislative priorities are clear in the months ahead," he explained. "We will continue to work aggressively for the passage of the Danforth Amendment. We will also give close attention to several pieces of pending legislation related to gambling and matters related to the abortion issue. In addition to a bill restricting 'dial-a-porn,' a major anti-pornography bill may be introduced soon."

"I am in favor of the opening of a Washington office for the Christian Life Commission and have been all along," said Fred Lackey, newly elected chairman of the Christian Life Commission and pastor of First Baptist Church of Athens, Ala.

"This office will help the commission more effectively to carry out its program assignment and will put it closer to the pulse of our country and its lawmakers where we can be more effective in addressing and affecting moral issues," he said.

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According to Baker, Larry Braidfoot, who has directed the CLC's citizenship program for the past six years, will have primary responsibility for the Washington office and will travel to Washington with increased frequency. Baker also will work out of the office when needed.

Establishment of the Washington office comes on the heels of expanded involvement by the commission in recent months in the nation's capital. Commission staff presented testimony on Capitol Hill twice in recent months, joined itself to testimony offered by another organization in recent weeks, and has supported the Danforth Abortion Neutral Amendment.

The address for the CLC Washington office is: Christian Life Commission, 400 First Street, Northwest, Washington, DC 20001.

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First BSSB Librarian,  
Helen Conger, Dies

Baptist Press  
10/5/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--Helen Conger, 70, first full-time librarian for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, died Oct. 4 following a brief illness.

Miss Conger, a native of Statesville, N.C., began work at the Sunday School Board in 1944 as assistant editor of the Baptist Training Union Magazine. In 1947 she became full-time librarian for the Dargan Memorial Library, now the E.C. Dargan Research Library. She retired in 1973 for health reasons.

"The job I wanted the least was librarian of Dargan Memorial Library," she recalled at the time of her retirement, because she said she felt "most librarians kept the books away from people. I threw open the doors and windows, cleaned up the library and let in a breath of fresh air. I concentrated on serving the editors and editorial staff of the board."

In 1953, the library became the Dargan-Carver Library, operated in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, a relationship that continued until 1985.

A graduate of George Peabody College for Teachers of Vanderbilt University, she returned to Peabody while working full-time, earning the master of arts degree in library science in 1953. At the same time, she received the Louis Shores medal for highest honors in library science.

After 24 years under her leadership, the library had grown to 53,000 volumes at her retirement.

Miss Conger was the author of teaching guides and numerous articles in denominational publications. She was a consultant with a number of Southern Baptist librarians and was active in the Tennessee Library Association.

Survivors include a brother, a niece and a nephew.

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

Seminary Graduate Builds Shelter  
Of Love For Battered Women

By Elizabeth Watson

Baptist Press  
10/5/87

PLANO, Texas (BP)--Her husband went into a frenzy. He stomped his feet, clenched his fists and started screaming at his wife. He stretched out his hands to choke her.

"Now you've done it. I'm going to kill you!" he yelled.

The woman's heart raced as she ran out the door. She jumped into the car and quickly locked the doors. Her husband tripped and fell in his pursuit, allowing her to escape.

At the Plano, Texas, police station, she called Collin County Women's Shelter hotline. The phone was answered by Martha Moody, a Southern Baptist.

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Moody found a safe location for the woman and her children to rest, receive counseling and make decisions about the future.

This true story has a happier ending than most wife-abuse cases Moody handles as executive director of Collin County Women's Shelter. In the United States, 20 percent of all hospital emergency room visits by women are attributed to wife beating, she said.

"A 1985 study revealed that at least 3,900 women were abused by their husbands in Collin County that year," Moody said. "This figure was based just on domestic disputes reported to Plano and McKinney police departments. Actual wife-beating incidents are much higher."

Moody comes from a Christian home where she never experienced family violence. She remembers her first exposure to violence as a 10-year-old trick-or-treater.

"I heard a terrible noise coming out of a house," Moody recalled. "Through a window, I could see a man brutally beating a woman whom I assumed was his wife."

Neighbors refused the Moody's requests to call police.

"I stood there in shock because I had never seen that before," Moody said. "It stuck in my mind for a long time. So after I got out of college, I began looking for a way to help others."

More than 15 years later, Moody was exposed to the devastating results of such family violence. As a student at Southern Baptist Theological in Fort Worth, Texas, she had an internship at a private psychiatric hospital working with children from abusive families.

After graduation she worked for two years at the Arlington (Texas) Women's Shelter, directing support groups, counseling and training volunteers.

"At first it was hard to relate to the victims," Moody said. "But you don't have to experience what they have gone through to lend love and support."

Although Collin County Women's Shelter is only two years old, it offers a 24-hour hotline, crisis counseling, legal referral, medical assistance, support-group therapy and a safehousing program.

Moody currently is raising funds to purchase and renovate a four-bedroom home that she hopes will be ready to shelter 25 women and children by this November.

Moody has several messages for churches, based upon her work with battered women.

Primarily, churches need to place a stronger emphasis on the biblical admonition for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church, she said. "Ministers need to teach us to put responsibility for our own behavior on our own heads," she explained.

Second, churches must realize wife abuse does not just happen in lower economic groups, Moody said: "Battered-women syndrome knows no boundaries. The fact is victims of domestic violence live in all neighborhoods."

Finally, churches can help overcome the biggest obstacle in stopping wife abuse -- denial, Moody said.

"The husband denies he's an abuser. The wife denies the problem is as bad as it is. And society denies the problem exists all together," she said.

Rural Missouri Congregation  
Shares Blessings With Others

By Brenda J. Sanders

F-100  
(Mo)

HANNIBAL, Mo. (BP)--Sharing God's blessings with people in need is not just an ideal for members of Antioch Baptist Church near Hannibal, Mo. It's a reality.

Members of the rural congregation sponsored an event they called "Sharing God's Blessings." The church members cleaned out their closets and collected miscellaneous household items, clothing of all sizes and toys. They displayed the items in the basement of the church, prepared refreshments and opened the doors for a free give-away.

Needy families in the surrounding community came. Many of them found it hard to believe the items were free for the taking but expressed gratitude for the tangible outpouring of concern by members of Antioch Baptist Church.

"We saw that there was a need to help those less fortunate than ourselves," said Antioch pastor Glen Golden. "This project became a rallying point for our church.

"We felt that our families had enough -- even more than enough. We have so many blessings, an overabundance, and yet there are people all around us with very little. So we decided this was something we could do to share our blessings with those in need."

The idea for the project started with the church's Woman's Missionary Union director, Joyce Harrison. While attending a woman's conference earlier this year, she heard about other churches offering a similar ministry. "I thought it sounded like a good idea and was something we could do to reach out to the needy in our area," Harrison said.

When she shared the idea with church members, they accepted it whole-heartedly. "So many people started donating things, it looked like Christmas time here," the pastor noted.

Local stores let the church borrow clothing racks to hang donated clothes. Toys and household items were displayed on tables.

About 10 WMU members volunteered to help people with their selections and sack items to be taken home.

When the church opened its doors, 85 people were standing in line to see what "Sharing God's Blessings" was all about. Golden said about 150 people received items from the give-away. In addition to the donated items, Bibles and tracts were included in each sack, along with a letter of greeting from Golden.

Harrison said she hopes the event created an awareness among needy families in the area that the members of Antioch Baptist Church care about them.

Golden said expressions of gratitude for what the church had done were numerous. "One man came in with his son, and the boy was eyeing a table full of toys that we had set out. The father said, 'No son, we can't get anything like that. We've got to buy some school clothes for you, and we don't have much money.'

"A WMU volunteer heard him and said, 'Sir, the clothes are free. As a matter of fact, everything is free. Just take what you need, and your son can get a toy, too, if he wants to.'

"Well, that man could hardly believe it. There were several people with a few tears in their eyes."

Harrison noted the event was beneficial to the church, as well: "It made our people more aware of those in our community who need material things as well as spiritual things. I think it helped the church realize there are needy people out there who we can reach."

The pastor agreed: "I think it shook up some of our church members to see the number of needy people in our area. It's easy in a church family to just fellowship with your friends and not be aware of the needs around you. I think it was good for us to see this."

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As a result, Golden noted, "This showed us that you don't have to have 300 members to do something to help people." Antioch has about 150 members. "You don't have to be big, you just have to look around and see the needs," he affirmed.

"It really made our church members feel good to see how happy they could make others and how deeply they could touch them," Golden added. "Several people have said, 'This is what Christianity is all about.'"

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Hospital Chaplain Aims  
For Quality Of Life

By Breena Kent Paine

F-10  
(ADBTIS)

Baptist Press  
10/5/87

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--As a hospital chaplain, Royce Ballard has discovered he can make a difference in the quality of life of patients, even those facing death.

Ballard, a chaplain at Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans, was a successful businessman before he sold his business, gave his stock to his partners and become a chaplain.

In January of 1984, he became an intern in the clinical pastoral education program of the hospital; in 1985, a resident; and in 1986, one of four staff chaplains.

"What I'm doing is of eternal significance, as compared to owning a business," said Ballard, who feels businessmen are important also, "but this is of significance even after death."

Ballard holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University, and a master's degree in theology from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he continues to take counseling courses.

While working with cancer patients, "I learned that my life could make a difference," he said. He learned not to "look at them as people waiting to die," but people whom he could "make a difference for in their quality of life."

Ballard also discovered he often was tempted to "hold on" to patients and their problems: "I had to realize that God related to them even before I knew them. I had to learn to let go and know God is still there with them, and rather than trying to keep all these burdens myself, realize it's in God's power.

"God makes a tremendous difference both in times of getting well and in the composure of how they die."

Ballard's experience has been that people who "affirm faith in God ... get better faster, and when they have to face death, they handle that better."

He also deals with hospital employees on a day-to-day basis. "It's like being pastor of a big church, because there are 1,800 employees," he notes.

Gene Huffstutler, director of pastoral care at Baptist hospital, said: "Royce does a good job of conveying ... genuine interest and caring. I think he is valued at a lot of different levels -- with relatives, with administrators, with executives in the community, as well as people who are everyday people. He's a pastor in the real sense of the word."

Contrary to its name, the hospital does not have ties with the Southern Baptist Convention, although the director and three of the four staff chaplains are Southern Baptists.

Student chaplains, such as New Orleans Seminary student Jim Chatfield, and other ministers from varying denominations also minister to the patients. "One of the things about hospital ministry is that it has to be ecumenical," said Huffstutler, a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "Most of our patients are Roman Catholic, and there is a lot of diversity in religious preference."

"As a pastor, (patients) see in me the transcendent," said Ballard. "And I have certainly learned that many of them will allow you to bless them and minister to them. Sometimes the biggest ministry is to be able to accept people where they are and love them."

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(BP) photos available upon request from New Orleans Seminary