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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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October 28, 1987

87-162

Harwell To Retire Early  
From Georgia State Paper

N-CO  
(Ga.)

ATLANTA (BP)--Jack U. Harwell, editor of the Christian Index for 21 years, has announced his early retirement effective Dec. 31.

The Christian Index, newsjournal of the Georgia Baptist Convention, is the oldest state Baptist paper in the Southern Baptist Convention and the second-oldest religious publication in America, founded by Luther Rice in 1822. Harwell, 55, has been editor longer than any other person in the paper's history. He was associate editor for nine years before becoming editor Nov. 1, 1966.

The Index board of directors named Jack P. Lowndes acting editor beginning Jan. 1. Lowndes is director of the church-minister relations department of the Georgia Baptist Convention. He was executive director and editor for the Baptist Convention of New York from 1975 to 1982.

Harwell has been under fire from conservative groups in Georgia and Southern Baptist life for years. They charged him with favoring moderates and abusing conservatives in the ongoing Southern Baptist theological/political controversy. An effort to fire him was made at the state convention in 1979, but he was supported by messengers.

In 1986 another effort to oust Harwell resulted in creation of the Christian Index review board, to review all editorials and articles in the paper and with power to recommend dismissal of the editor if members felt such action was appropriate. In August of 1987 that review board told Harwell the editorial he wrote about the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis in June was a violation and said, "One more violation and we will recommend your termination."

At a called Index meeting Oct. 26, Harwell told the board: "With the creation of the review board I almost felt it necessary to submit my resignation. Hundreds of people across this state and nation advised me to resign at that time; they felt the integrity of the paper had been so compromised that resignation was unavoidable. But in my private prayer life, God did not tell me to resign."

But he added, "All the terrible (SBC) events of the past few weeks made me take a new and harder look at my own ministry. I saw that I had not written my conscience in a single one of those recent issues. I had written what I knew would pass muster with the review board, not what I felt to be true and honest and prophetic. I could no longer live with the restrictions and censorship placed upon this newspaper and be true to my God, my heritage, my denomination or my conscience."

Harwell said many people had advised him to make a floor fight over his situation at the upcoming Georgia Baptist Convention annual meeting Nov. 9-11 in Savannah. But he said: "Dozens of trusted advisers counseled that ... it would result in a terrible division in our convention, one that would be a long time healing. I love this convention too much to participate, or allow someone else to initiate, such a rupture over my personal circumstances."

So he asked the Index board to hold the special session to accept his retirement and to make plans for a transition toward another editor. The board voted to give Harwell one year's salary and title to the Index automobile as a retirement package.

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"The board of directors of the Index wish Dr. Harwell, his wife and his family the best of everything in any future endeavors," said Index Chairman William A. Smith. "May they be assured of our prayers and interests. The board of directors was generous and fair and just in granting a retirement package for Dr. Harwell." Smith is pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga., and chairs the five-member search committee named to seek a new editor.

"I am grateful for Dr. Harwell's skill as a journalist and the knowledge he has brought to the task of reporting the events and the happenings in the rapidly changing scene of Southern Baptists," said James N. Griffith, executive director-treasurer of the Georgia Baptist Convention executive committee and treasurer of the Index. "His strong commitment to promoting all of the missions programs of Georgia Baptists is especially appreciated."

Harwell is native of Mobile, Ala., and a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. He is one of four journalists in a Southern Baptist preacher family. He was a sports writer, public relations specialist and police reporter before joining the Index staff in 1957.

Harwell has been on the board of managers of American Bible Society, on the board of trustees of Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and been president of Southern Baptist Press Association. He was on the original SBC Bold Mission Thrust committee and was the first publicity chairman for SBC Missions Service Corps. He has held numerous positions in the Atlanta Baptist Association and the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Mrs. Harwell is the former Blanche Virginia Beard of Troy, Ala. She is a schoolteacher in metropolitan Atlanta. They have two sons, a foster son and two grandchildren.

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Professor Sees 'Best,'  
'Worst,' For Women Ministers

N-60  
(SBTS)  
By Pat Cole

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Women ministers are experiencing both "the best of times and the worst of times" in their pursuit of church vocations within the Southern Baptist Convention, according to a Southern Baptist sociologist.

Larry McSwain, professor of church and community at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said there is an "organized, vociferous effort to thwart" the ministry ambitions of Southern Baptist women. But that opposition, he said, stems from the "remarkable advances" made by women in Southern Baptist life.

McSwain addressed the seminary's Women in Ministry organization just three days after a Southern Baptist church in Memphis, Tenn., was disfellowshipped from its association for calling a woman as pastor.

"I started seminary in 1963, and if you had told me then there would be ordained women as pastors of Southern Baptist churches, I would have said, 'you are crazy,'" said McSwain.

At that time, he said, the role of women ministers was limited to children and youth workers and campus ministers.

McSwain noted that during the 1970s Southern Baptist churches began ordaining women as deacons and church staff ministers. Now most of the opposition is concentrated on keeping women from being pastors of churches, he said.

The major issue, he explained, is no longer "female giftedness" or "female proclamation," but instead it has shifted to "female authority."

The ordination of women has gained some foothold among Southern Baptists, McSwain said, citing a 1985 poll that revealed 30 percent of Southern Baptists favored the ordination of women.

McSwain said women should not pursue a ministry that requires ordination unless they sense a definite call to that vocation: "If you're not called, don't bother with it (ordination). I don't see why women (who are not called) would put themselves through what they have to go through in the Southern Baptist Convention."

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"Lots of opportunities" will continue to arise for women in non-pastoral ministries, McSwain said, but he predicted there would be few pastorates available to women in the immediate future.

Neither does he foresee the opposition to women pastors diminishing anytime soon: "I don't see a lot of change on the horizon. We are in this for the long term. This is not a five-year cycle that's going away."

In the meantime, McSwain said, women ministers can best advance their cause by tapping the "experiential faith" of Southern Baptists.

"The best thing that will help Southern Baptists (to accept women ministers) is for them to hear and experience the testimonies and the faith experiences of women ministers," he said.

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Church Coalition Sides With  
Catholics In Exemption Battle

N-BJK  
By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--A broadly based coalition of U.S. church bodies has asked the Supreme Court to set aside a contempt citation against the Catholic Church for refusing to turn over sensitive church documents related to its anti-abortion activities in the political arena.

In a friend-of-the-court brief filed Oct. 26, the church coalition argued the group, Abortion Rights Mobilization Inc., had no legal standing to attack the tax-exempt status of the Catholic Church on grounds the latter violated federal law by encouraging its members to vote for anti-abortion candidates and otherwise engage in political activity designed to forbid abortion.

A federal district judge last year found the Catholic Church in contempt for refusing to turn over large quantities of documents the abortion rights group claimed would prove the church broke the law forbidding such political activities. Earlier this year, a federal appeals court affirmed the district judge's ruling.

The church coalition, led by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., asked the nation's high court to overrule the lower court decisions because churches have a constitutionally protected right to address public issues without risking their tax exemption. Joining the National Council in the brief were the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, Christian Legal Society, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and National Association of Evangelicals.

Written by Loyola (Los Angeles) Law School Professor Edward M. Gaffney Jr., the brief also argued the lower courts improperly denied the Catholic Church legal standing as a witness to challenge the jurisdiction of the district court in the case.

The case has attracted an unusual degree of interest among church-state attorneys because of the potential fall-out should the anti-abortion group prevail in the challenge to the church's tax exemption.

One of these attorneys, Baptist Joint Committee General Counsel Oliver S. Thomas, described the dispute's significance: "It's hard to overstate the implications of this case. If the decision is allowed to stand, groups that disagree with a church's position on controversial issues will be able to attack its exempt status even though the IRS says the church is in perfect compliance with the law. Obviously, this could become a key element in a group's overall strategy on a hotly contested issue."

Thomas said Baptist and other churches that fight legalized gambling, for example, would risk their tax exemptions over waging political campaigns on the issue because "the gambling industry could attack the exempt status of every church that lobbied against a proposed lottery bill." He added, "The churches would then be forced to turn over all sorts of sensitive internal documents and essentially to serve as witnesses against themselves." He said if the gambling industry followed the anti-abortion group's example and named the IRS itself as defendant in a suit for failing to revoke the churches' tax exemption, "the churches wouldn't even be allowed to question the plaintiffs' right to file such a lawsuit."

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In the thus-far successful Abortion Rights Mobilization suit against IRS and the Catholic Church, the district judge found the church in contempt for refusing to produce the documents demanded and imposed a \$100,000-a-day fine until the documents are turned over to the court. One day later, however, the judge stayed the fines while the case was appealed.

Gaffney, one of the country's leading church-state authorities, asked the Supreme Court to review the proceedings in the case thus far "because the sensitive task of revocation of the tax-exempt status of religious organizations should not be entrusted to private third parties merely because they do not agree with the message of religious not-for-profit organizations engaged in public statements of moral positions on a variety of public policy matters."

In addition, Gaffney argued the high court should take on the case at its current state of proceedings because the lower decisions "undermined the ability of a major religious organization to challenge the power of a federal court to impose substantial fines on the church for its refusal to hand over extensive internal documents relating to pastoral plans to engage in constitutionally protected activity through moral advocacy on matters of public concern presented to the electorate for their deliberation and decision."

Underlying the dispute between Abortion Rights Mobilization and the Catholic Church are provisions in the federal tax code forbidding churches from endorsing candidates for public office engaging in substantial lobbying activities. While those questions are not at issue yet in the case, attorneys on both sides of the fight believe the courts eventually will have to enter the thicket of debate over enforcement of those prohibitions.

Noting that root question, Thomas said the case "points up the fundamental problem with a tax code that discourages churches from addressing the important moral issues of the day." He added: "It makes no sense to grant churches exempt status and at the same time tell them that if they lobby or engage in political activity they will lose their exemptions. Government benefits should not be conditioned on giving up a constitutionally protected right."

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Association Drops  
'Full Gospel' Church

N- (O  
(Texas Std.)  
By Toby Druin

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

LUMBERTON, Texas (BP)--Pastor Richard Vaughan and three other messengers from Fletcher Emmanuel Baptist Church in Lumberton, Texas, arrived at the annual meeting of Emmanuel Baptist Association in Kountze, Oct. 19, only to learn their church had been dropped from the association's membership rolls.

The association's executive board voted Sept. 17 to withdraw membership from Fletcher Emmanuel Church and deny messengers from the church to participate in the annual meeting.

The executive board found the church to be "heterodox in the faith and disorderly in practice" in withdrawing fellowship from the church, the largest in the association and a perennial leader in baptisms in Southeast Texas.

Association Moderator Carter Elmore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Silsbee, said the executive board action was final and no mention of it was made at the annual meeting.

Vaughan told the Baptist Standard, Texas Baptists' weekly newsjournal, he was unaware of the action although he was told a letter had been written to him regarding it. The letter was sent following the Sept. 17 action. He said the church was not doing anything contrary to the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963.

The church's practices have been a topic for debate for months in the association. The association's credentials committee reported last spring that Fletcher Emmanuel Church had become "heterodox in much of their doctrine" and recommended the church be placed under watchcare until the "doctrinal differences" could be resolved.

The church was notified in May that if it did not correct the "inconsistencies" that its messengers would not be seated at the annual meeting. The church's beliefs, the watchcare committee said, were "not consistent in Southern Baptist interpretation of Scripture."

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Among "heterodox" positions of the church, the committee said, were statements regarding healing, casting out demons, speaking in tongues and allowing dual membership. Vaughan was quoted as having said "true" New Testament churches follow such practices.

Vaughan told the Baptist Standard that by "true" he said he meant "complete." He said Fletcher Emmanuel is a "full gospel church" and there should be room among Baptists for such churches. The association action will not affect the church's participation in Texas and Southern Baptist conventions.

Vaughan said he did not question the association's right to exclude the church from membership but protested the way it was handled by the executive board rather than the messengers at the annual meeting.

Vaughan has been pastor of the church for 11 years. He said he received the "gift of tongues" in 1964 and that the church had been "full gospel" since a "miracle healing" occurred there about seven years ago.

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N-CO  
(SWBTS)

Criswell And Dilday Agree On  
Impact Of Drumwright's Ministry

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

DALLAS (BP) -- Key figures from differing factions within the Southern Baptist Convention dined together at First Baptist Church of Dallas Oct. 15 at a banquet in memory of Huber Drumwright.

Drumwright, who died in 1981, was a longtime professor of New Testament and dean of the school of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Shortly before his death he had become executive director of the Arkansas Baptist Convention.

The purpose of the dinner was to raise money for a Huber Drumwright Chair of New Testament at Southwestern Seminary.

Drumwright died just as the convention controversy was beginning. Six years later, the guest list of 180 of Drumwright's friends included Baptists who now find themselves on opposite sides of denominational politics.

W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, and Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Seminary, both spoke of Drumwright's contributions in ministry. Other testimonies came from John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La.; Bruce McIver, pastor of Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas; Ralph Pulley, member of First Baptist and former trustee of Southwestern Seminary; and Drumwright's widow, Minette.

"I'm overwhelmed by the love that is in this room," Mrs. Drumwright said.

"The reality is that we have lost Huber's life, his love and his laughter from this earth," she said. "Yet we have not lost the impact of his life, love and laughter on our lives."

Mrs. Drumwright described First Baptist Church as "one of the most significant factors" in Drumwright's life. He grew up there under the preaching of George W. Truett and was ordained there by Criswell. It later became a tradition for Criswell to invite Drumwright to preach at First Baptist every Labor Day weekend.

And Southwestern Seminary "became his life," she said. "He was totally devoted to his students."

Criswell called Drumwright "my sweet boy in the ministry" and recalled preaching a revival at Drumwright's first rural pastorate north of Dallas. "He was the best pastor in the world," Criswell said.

Drumwright then moved back to Dallas to start Wilshire Baptist Church, where McIver is now pastor. McIver heads the fundraising effort for the seminary chair.

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"It's time we had a chair in honor of Huber Drumwright," McIver said. "We ought to do it without delay. The project is worthy, it's right and it's timely."

Dilday said Drumwright "personified the uniqueness of Southwestern Seminary" through his commitment to academic excellence, conservative theology and practical scholarship.

Drumwright "was able to stand in this conservative faith without falling into extremism," Dilday said. "He was not only a scholar and teacher but a churchman."

The "common ground" that brought such a diverse group of people together was Huber Drumwright's "passion to teach the Word of God," McIver said after the banquet.

"One of the most dedicated teachers and preachers that Southern Baptists have known brought us all together in a spirit of gratitude for his ministry," McIver said. "Here's a man that had a passion around which we could rally in a spirit of togetherness and say we need more people like Huber Drumwright."

The chair will become active when fully funded with at least \$500,000.

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Nevada Baptists OK  
\$1.3 Million Budget

N-(O)  
(Nev.)

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

CARSON CITY, Nev. (BP)--A record number of Nevada Baptists convened for their ninth annual meeting, adopting a \$1.3 million budget and electing a new convention president.

"Bold Mission Nevada: A Time To Plant" was the theme for the meeting, held at First Baptist Church in Carson City. The convention registered 198 messengers, and nearly 100 visitors participated in the meeting.

The \$1,307,626 budget for 1988 reflects an increase of 4.87 percent over the 1987 budget. Giving to world missions through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget increased from 23 percent to 23.5 percent. Of the budget, the 130 congregations affiliated with the NBC will contribute \$361,942, or 27.7 percent.

Host church Pastor Terry Arnold was elected convention president. Arnold has been pastor of First Baptist Church in Carson City for six years. Other officers are Bob Norvell, pastor of College Park Baptist Church in Las Vegas, first vice president, and Lee Eudy, pastor of Walker Lake Baptist Church in Walker Lake, second vice president.

Messengers adopted a resolution urging the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board trustees to "re-evaluate prayerfully the recent decision concerning missionaries who have experienced divorce." In addressing his resolution, Lary Rothchild, pastor of Capitol City Baptist Church in Carson City, stressed the importance of Christians expressing a forgiving, healing and redeeming attitude towards people who have been divorced. After limited discussion as to the exact wording of the Home Mission Board policy on divorce, the resolution passed by about 65 percent to 35 percent on a show-of-hands vote.

The 10th annual session of the Nevada Baptist Convention will be held at West Oakey Baptist Church in Las Vegas Oct. 25-26, 1988.

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Jameson Resigns  
Oklahoma Paper

N-(O)  
(Okla.)

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Norman Jameson, an associate editor of Oklahoma's Baptist Messenger since Jan. 1, 1984, has resigned to become director of communications for the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, Inc., effective Dec. 1.

Jameson, a Southern Baptist journalist since 1977 when he became feature editor of Baptist Press, will move to North Carolina with his wife, Sue Ellen, and their three children.

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While at the Messenger, weekly newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, Jameson has been responsible for much of the feature, news and photography content, as well as page makeup and advertising of Southern Baptists' fifth-largest state newspaper, with a circulation of 117,000.

A Wisconsin native, he will graduate from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in December with a master of divinity degree.

In North Carolina, Jameson will edit the 100-year-old Charity and Children newspaper and establish employee communications and development support for the homes' work in 23 locations.

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Hispanic Church Dreams, Works  
Toward Cross-Cultural Growth

F-SSB  
By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Meshed within the crime-ridden, inner-city streets of San Antonio, Texas, is a small Hispanic church with a large cross-cultural dream.

Reaching vandals who break out church windows and break in church doors is the ultimate goal of the congregation whose 89 regular-attending Sunday school members would like to strengthen its stance by strengthening its forces.

Yet training at Westlawn Baptist Church has dwindled to zero, and its new pastor, Rudy Hernandez, along with a handful of members, has promised to reassemble a formidable troop of disciples and send them beyond the fenced-in church into a neighborhood badly in need of the gospel, he said.

Westlawn is one of 12 churches of the San Antonio Baptist Association that participated in a church training discipleship growth campaign sponsored by the association and the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department.

In mid-October, consultants spent a week in individual churches telling them about discipleship materials available and recommending the best ways the churches could start or improve their church training programs.

Westlawn was one of five of the 12 participating churches that did not previously have a church training program but committed to start one after the campaign.

Hernandez joined the church as pastor in February and has conducted a facsimile of church training since, he said.

"It is the general consensus of the church members to conduct a full church training program," said Hernandez, who said training declined during eight months when the church was without a pastor.

Hernandez said 96 percent of the total church membership of 119 is Hispanic, yet only 10 percent attend from the immediate inner-city area that surrounds Westlawn.

Although the pastor acknowledged he is anxious to reach into the San Antonio streets for prospective members, he said he first wants to train his members in basic Baptist heritage, polity and faith. He is intent on making the best disciples of his people before sending them out into the city to tell people about Christ.

"That is why we are going to jump into the church training program with both feet," he said. "I have seen what church training can do. When I was a pastor in Los Angeles, we had more in church training than in Sunday school."

Westlawn members have made "a complete turnaround" since he arrived in February, Hernandez said. "Because there was no full-time pastor, the church was at a very low ebb, spiritually and numerically. We were running 10 in Sunday school when I came."

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When church members are "equipped disciples," the church will begin a full-fledged effort to reach the community, he reported.

His strategy is to begin reaching out to the young people. "Hispanics are very clannish, very family oriented. If the children are allowed to come, eventually they will bring their parents," he said.

Almost 50 percent of the residents in the area with the same ZIP code as his church are under age 20, and 28 percent are between 21 and 40, he noted.

Meanwhile, Luell Smith, consultant in the growth section of the SSB church training department, said the campaign is designed to make churches aware of the church training material available to train their members.

"The purpose is not for better reports on the Uniform Church Letter, but to help churches help people do all they can in Christ," Smith said.

Smith said many churches are surprised to learn church training materials are available for preschool, children and youth as well as adults.

"Despite our efforts to inform, many churches haven't got any idea as to what all is available to them in the form of discipleship and leader training," Smith said.

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

Urban Allies Offer  
Ministry, Witness

*F-Texas*  
By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Several months ago a violent sexual assault left a 17-year-old Fort Worth, Texas, girl in a state of depression, isolation and mental anguish. In desperation, the teenager's mother turned to the only authority figure she knew, the manager of her apartment, who contacted Urban Allies.

Urban Allies is a ministry of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Tarrant Baptist Association, designed to link established congregations to inner-city churches and to provide resources through these local churches as they seek to minister and witness in poverty-stricken areas.

The Urban Allies coordinator called the pastor of an Urban Allies-affiliated mission who counseled the troubled girl. In time, both the young woman and her mother made professions of faith in Christ and opened their apartment to a home Bible study.

The teenage girl, a functionally illiterate recent high school graduate, also currently is enrolled in a literacy class sponsored by Urban Allies.

"When something like that happens, that's when this work is most rewarding -- when we're there and able to respond and make an eternal difference in someone's life," said Robert Sowell, director of urban missions for Tarrant Baptist Association and coordinator of the Urban Allies program.

Urban Allies was begun in January 1985 as a pilot project by the Texas convention in cooperation with Tarrant Association and the Home Mission Board. Most of the funding is provided through the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions, an offering given each fall through most Texas Baptist churches.

Urban Allies operates in four low-income target areas of Tarrant County providing basic emergency assistance, educational help and limited employment assistance, all in the name of Jesus. The program has received numerous community service awards, including honors from the Fort Worth Housing Authority and the Fort Worth Independent School District.

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"The idea is to cross cultural and economic barriers and then witness through established relationships," said Sowell. Currently, Tarrant Association churches and two missions are involved in Urban Allies. Sowell stressed the relationship between support churches and inner-city congregations usually is not financial.

"The emphasis is on mobilizing laypeople, providing networking, resources and training opportunities," said Sowell. "The process begins with ministry contacts. Through these contacts, persons form relationships and have the opportunity to share their witness."

To date, 236 persons have been presented the plan of salvation in one-to-one witnessing situations, and each has been referred to a local church for follow-up. Two new missions and a Hispanic department at College Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth have come into existence directly as a result of Urban Allies.

"Our philosophy is that empowerment and evangelism belong together. But these are difficult, sometimes violent, tough neighborhoods. The needs are so great and so complex, we don't see results every day," said Sowell. "It's often frustrating as you try to find a way to take hold and really make a difference in the life of someone who is in a situation he has no control over."

Ironically, Sowell said, one obstacle that must be overcome in many of the tough, inner-city areas is religion.

"Lots of people in these neighborhoods are 'religious,' but very few have a genuine commitment to Jesus Christ," he said. "They have to unlearn some bad theology and overcome some exploitive experiences.

"It's often frustrating, but when that happens -- when someone makes a real personal commitment to Jesus Christ -- it's exciting."

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Missionary Couple Teaching  
Others To Sing About Christ

F - FMB  
By Eric Miller

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

PANAMA CITY, Panama (BP)--Shifting his efforts from football to choir was a providential decision for Southern Baptist missionary Ed Steele.

When he was in junior high school, Steele loved football. But he had curvature of the spine, also known as scoliosis, and doctors warned him football would seriously injure his back.

So he dropped football and joined a choir. This change of direction in Steele's life moved him to the launching pad for overseas missionary work.

God used Steele's musical ability to place him and his wife, Kathy, in Panama, where Steele promotes music throughout the country. He teaches music in Baptist Theological Seminary in Balboa; conducts a music camp each year, teaches Indians how to sing hymns, starts choirs in churches and strives to demonstrate the value of music in spreading the gospel.

And it all started when Steele was 13. A choir director in a Baptist church in Moore, Okla., noticed his musical talent, gave him voice lessons and had him sing solos. Steele won several singing contests and began directing a small church choir near Norman, Okla.

Pursuing a career in music, he earned a bachelor's degree in music education at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee and a master's in church music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He felt a call to missions during his senior year at OBU. He struggled with the call and surrendered when he sensed God saying, "Why not give me your life voluntarily, rather than have me chase you down? Better to surrender with joy, now!"

Three years passed before he was willing to talk to his wife, Kathy, about his call to missions. Meanwhile, she had experienced her own call. They applied for missionary service and were appointed to Nicaragua in 1978.

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But political unrest made Nicaragua unsafe, and in 1982, the Steeles, both 35, and their children, Kristi, 9, and David, 7, moved to Panama. He's the only Southern Baptist music missionary in Panama.

One unusual aspect of Steele's work is his music promotion among Indians who live on islands along Panama's coast. About 50 of the 300 islands are inhabited and have 12 Baptist churches and eight missions.

Steele travels to the islands several times a year, leaving his house in a taxi at 4 a.m. He boards a small airplane and reaches the islands by 7:30 a.m. The plane's doors and windows aren't air-tight and rain has soaked him. Once, a luggage compartment door flew open, almost spilling his luggage into the ocean.

He "island-hops" by way of a "kayuco" -- a motor-powered canoe made from a dug-out log. Once he moved to the rear of a kayuco to relieve the driver during a three-hour ride. However, he was much heavier than the driver and water rushed in over the sides, almost sinking the canoe.

The Indians -- who live in grass huts and use coconuts for money -- speak Kuna. Steele uses a translator to translate from Spanish to Kuna. He lectures on music, explains the purpose of worship, provides cassette tapes and photo-copied hymnals, and teaches new hymns.

Each year on the mainland, Steele conducts a week-long music camp that draws about 70 participants from 20 churches. He and other music teachers provide training in music and worship, music and evangelism, hymn direction, theory, sight singing, voice and playing the guitar, flute, piano and keyboard.

Camp choirs are formed, and Steele shows participants the importance of music in worship by having them join hands and sing.

"There is a unique dynamic that happens," he says, "when you get a group of people -- after having really had an experience of worship -- to close a service out and join hands and sing 'We're One in the Bond of Love.' It unifies us so we can really focus in on God."

Music is useful for outreach in Panama because "Panamanians, like most Latins, love music," Steele says. Some Baptist churches there have musical groups that perform on church steps. "You can get a crowd instantly," Steele notes, "because people may not want to stop to hear a preacher, but they will stop to hear the music," which contains spiritual messages.

He helps churches start choirs, but only after someone in the church agrees to become the choir director.

Some churches have no hymnals, and the congregations sing three or four hymns -- all by memory. "With the same few choruses, worship degenerates and there is a loss of teaching and training," he says. For these, he provides a 20-page hymnal.

Only 15 percent of the Baptist churches in Panama have a trained or semi-trained music director. The Baptist seminary has a theology degree with an emphasis in music and Christian education, but no music degree.

Having a music degree program at the seminary and a trained music director in every Baptist church are some of Steele's goals, he says. He also would like to see an internationally recognized Christian composer rise up among the Panamanians.

Steele and his wife are working on these goals together. "I try to help Ed and work with him in whatever way I can," Mrs. Steele says. She has taught piano and played while he directed seminary choirs.

They work together on outreach and ministry. They started a Spanish-speaking adult Sunday school class in an English-speaking church. Teaching the class was a "real blessing," she recalls, "because we were able to work basically with new Christians who were very hungry to grow and anxious to learn about the Bible."

The Steeles also began a home Bible study in a middle-class Catholic neighborhood. The people there have "never had the chance to read the Bible," he notes. "So we get together, read and study the Bible, and they come with questions. They are so hungry with a deep hunger."

Mrs. Steele, who has taught several sessions of the MasterLife discipleship development program, doesn't miss opportunities to tell people about Christ. She has witnessed to people in waiting rooms and in restaurants. She witnessed to a Panamanian woman when the woman asked her about the Christian magazine she was reading while the two shared a park bench. The woman didn't become a believer in Christ, but Mrs. Steele feels gospel seeds were planted.

"Some of my favorite people to witness to are taxi cab drivers," Steele says. He uses cabs frequently and has learned that cab drivers are lonely and want to talk to someone.

This allows him to explain how people can receive salvation through Christ, using the Gospel of John. He tells the driver: "Belief in this is like me getting in this taxi. I really believed you could have gotten me here but I didn't really show that you could until I got into your taxi. That same kind of faith -- as we accept Christ -- can really change our life and give us eternal life."

Steele has worked with the Panama convention's radio and television commission, especially in follow-up consultation with people who received gospel messages through the commission's media programs. The Steeles also have encouraged their children to sing for congregations, and their daughter is helping teach songs to children.

Steele's life took on a new direction when he dropped football. He not only has won contests for singing, but also for writing songs. He has written or arranged more than 30 songs, including several that were for friends' weddings. He has released a studio-recorded cassette tape titled "Go Tell My People." He can play the piano by ear and occasionally has accompanied vocalists in songs he's never heard.

The Steeles' music ministry is making an impact, Mrs. Steele says, because music is "a language that breaks barriers -- whether cultural or social -- and opens doors for the gospel to be shared."

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

Portuguese Church Plows  
New Ground In Stewardship

N- FMB

Baptist Press  
10/28/87

MATOSINHOS, Portugal (BP)--The First Baptist Church of Matosinhos, Portugal, has purchased facilities for a mission without any outside financial help, believed a first in the 80-year history of Baptist work in the country.

The church in Matosinhos, a coastal city in northern Portugal, opened a mission in the inland city of Santo Tirso about 20 miles away in February. Nineteen people attended the initial meeting.

In 1963, with the help of a \$20,000 grant from Southern Baptists' Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions, the mother church obtained a three-story building. Its members handled most of the remodeling. The church has grown from about 30 members to 130 in the last 24 years.

Then this year the Matosinhos church spent \$31,000 to purchase two rooms in a building as a meeting place for its Santo Tirso mission. Several church members helped by providing interest-free loans. And mission members took responsibility for the needed renovations. The Santo Tirso congregation, now with about 30 members, was constituted as a church in early October.

The Matosinhos church's stewardship stems, in large part, from "the philosophy of pastor Agostinho Farinha Isidoro, who for over 40 years has challenged his people spiritually but also physically and financially," reported Lynne Bates, a Southern Baptist representative who also is a member of the church.

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