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Retired missionary helps coordinate
Texas/Brazil partnership mission effort By Terry Barone

DALLAS (BP)--When Dan Luper retired three years ago as a missionary to Brazil, he had no idea he would help coordinate the partnership mission effort between Texas and Brazilian Baptists to begin in 1990.

Since February, Luper has been working as a consultant with Bill Gray, coordinator of partnership missions for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Luper ministered in Brazil with his wife, Julia, for 38 years. She is a Mission Service Corps volunteer working as a part-time artist in the public relations office of the Texas convention.

Luper said he is excited to work on this program for Brazil, since the South American country has been an integral part of his life, he said.

He was born in Brazil to missionary parents. When he was young, his family moved to Portugal, where his parents served for several years before returning home to Dallas. His father became pastor of First Baptist Church of Oak Cliff and served there for 20 years.

When the opportunity to work in the partnership missions office came up, Luper said, "I jumped at it." While on furlough in 1982, he worked on Texas Baptists' mission to Brazil partnership effort.

"I never dreamed such an opportunity would come open again," he said.

Luper is excited about the opportunities of Texas and Brazilian Baptists linking up to share the plan of Christian salvation in major cities throughout Brazil.

"This is exciting and challenging because Brazilians are receptive to God's word and are growing. They are having more baptisms there than anywhere else in the world," he said.

One of the things he likes best about his job is "getting to go back to see friends and work with the wonderful Brazilian people. Brazilians are handsome, outgoing, gregarious people which makes it (the partnership) great for Texans since both groups are so similar."

Luper believes God is behind the partnership and feels "the Lord's presence in a strong way" as he helps prepare for the effort, he said.

"This is a great opportunity for Texans to share Jesus," he noted. "It looks like the Lord opened a window for us with the Share Jesus Now emphasis in 1989 and the partnership with Brazil beginning in 1990. Share Jesus Now is an emphasis of the Texas Baptist Convention to train 89,000 Texas Baptists to share the gospel with one million Texans in 1989.

"We can step in and take advantage of this open window at a time when so many (other windows) are closing."

And the Lupers are members of their church, First Baptist of, Oak Cliff, are taking advantage of the open window by sponsoring a mission trip to Brazil this summer.

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In 1985, before another partnership mission effort with Brazil, had been confirmed, the Lupers, along with Dan McClinton, minister of music at the Oak Cliff church, began planning a mission trip to Brazil for the church's orchestra.

"After returning home and hearing the wonderful orchestra at our church, I thought it would be great to use these people and their talents as an evangelistic tool in Brazil," Luper said.

Each orchestra member will have opportunities for personal witnessing to share faith in Jesus in parks and theaters in addition to performing in Baptist churches in Rio De Janeiro, Recife and Belem, he said.

Luper also will work with the partnership efforts in Europe and Australia and will help in coordinating requests, recruiting volunteers and conducting orientation sessions for participants in the partnership projects.

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Missouri association's oldest church
reopens, becomes newest congregation

By Susan Thornsberry

Baptist Press
4/17/89

BERRYMAN, Mo. (BP)--The newest church in Missouri's Meramec Baptist Association is also the association's oldest. Courtois Baptist Church in Berryman, established in 1829, reopened its doors last month after being closed for about 20 years.

"They've got good attendance and are growing," said Delbert Bishop, Meramec Association director of missions. At least 50 people meet weekly in the one-room church, located in the rural community.

Since starting with four members in January, the church's membership has doubled. Weekly contacts number as high as 64.

"There are good prospects in the area, and there was a lot of value in getting the church to where people can attend again," said Bishop, who credited the reopening to Center Point Baptist Church in Steelville, Mo.

Three years ago, the abandoned church building looked as though it might never be used again, recalled Center Point Pastor Delmar Hutson.

Hutson and his son Spencer, director of the Missouri Baptist Convention's church administration/architecture department, had been enjoying a dune buggy ride in the area. They forded Courtois Creek and followed the road up a valley to the old Courtois Church, where Hutson once held a revival.

Surrounded by weeds and briars, the abandoned church building "had no windows, no doors, and you could look through the roof," Hutson noted. "The whole building was leaning and the front porch was gone."

He later mentioned the sad condition of the old church building to his congregation. Aware of the need for a church to serve the Berryman area, members decided to restore the building and the congregation.

"We were determined to see it go again," said Lester Vance, who became a Christian at Courtois Church when he was 13 years old. He and his wife, Lottie, later married there.

Although the old church records have been scattered, eight people are believed to have come from Belleview, Mo., to establish the original church. Although the church's original building no longer is standing, the current facility dates back a number of decades.

About 20 years ago, dwindling attendance and other factors forced the church to close its doors. The building was deeded to the church's deacons, only one of whom still is living. Pleased to learn of the restoration project back in his old hometown, he was contacted and signed the building over to Meramec Association.

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Refurbishing the church building was a major task for the Center Point members and some local residents who gave of their time and talent. The building was raised from its leaning position and given a new roof. It now boasts new siding, a suspended ceiling, new electrical wiring, a gas furnace, new paneling and carpet.

Three members of Center Point Church volunteered to move their membership to Courtois and help the church grow. A member of nearby Huzzah Baptist Church, in Steelville, also joined. The project is particularly dear to the four because all originally were members of Courtois Church.

"We pray that we'll see the congregation grow and that the church will be able to minister to at least 60 people," said Vance, who is Sunday school superintendent and deacon. Mrs. Vance is the church treasurer, and Edna Walker is church clerk. Sunday worship services are led by interim Pastor Brandt Smith.

Courtois Church, although not a mission church, continues to receive some financial assistance from Center Point Church. Ongoing projects include gathering and organizing the old church records, completing the front porch, installing the new gas furnace and getting a gravel parking lot.

Meanwhile, members continue to visit families in the surrounding area as news spreads that the 160-year-old church once again is available to help meet the spiritual needs of the community.

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Seminary student becomes
mom to children at center

By Pam Alewine

Baptist Press
4/17/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When Rhonda Cole enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, she didn't intend to end up with 27 children.

But as director of the after-school program at Baptist Community Center in downtown Fort Worth, Texas, Cole is a tutor, counselor, friend and second mom.

Cole, a religious education student, started two years ago meeting general needs of people who came into the building located in one of the most depressed areas of Fort Worth.

Her interests soon focused on neighborhood children. That's when the job turned into a ministry.

Cole's background as a child of missionaries in Ecuador and Nicaragua helps her minister to people in the mostly Hispanic neighborhood around the center.

After the children get out of school each day, they go to the center a block away. What they find is Cole eager to do crafts, play games, listen to their stories and be a friend.

"To me it was always so important to go home and tell mom how my day was. These kids don't have that," Cole said. Many of the children are from single-parent homes and would return to an empty house if the after-school program didn't exist, she said.

"It's a good time to unwind from school," Cole said. And the program provides a place where "they can escape the reality of the way they're living."

With a growth in enrollment, Cole saw the need for additional supervision. A field education student from Southwestern was added and recently started a Bible club. Two Baptist Student Union groups volunteer in the afternoons.

"I get any volunteers I can so they can be a good influence on the children," Cole said.

Special events show the children people care about them and demonstrate "the unconditional love of Christ," Cole said. "They see youth from outside their neighborhood who are good role models."

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She hopes to broaden her reach at the center by creating a ministry for entire families. Adult Bible studies will be added to the English-language classes for adults Cole helps coordinate.

And as Cole's ministry at the center expands, so does her opportunity for evangelism. By building relationships, Cole said, she has more chances to share her faith: "I've seen a lot of changes (in the children). I've seen a lot of kids open up and not be so tough. They've learned there are rules and they must stick to them."

In the past two years, Cole has seen many of children come and go, which leaves her wondering about the lasting effect of her ministry.

"They're all so special, even the tough kids," Cole said. "The kids that give me the most trouble are the ones I love the most."

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Pam Alewine is a newswriter for Southwestern Seminary.

(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Chaplain stays in 'Constant' touch
with needs of Fort Worth police

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
4/17/89

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Terry Constant is one minister who doesn't mind being stopped by a police officer.

Constant has spent 20 years with the Fort Worth (Texas) Police Department, the last 12 as chaplain. And when a policeman stops him, it usually means Constant has the chance to make a difference.

While most police chaplains are civilian ministers, Constant is a "real cop" who has earned his ranking as sergeant. Before taking on the chaplain's roles of counselor, friend and minister to the 1,300-member department, Constant worked in a variety of positions, including patrol officer, field supervisor and communications supervisor. He also is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth.

"I do Bible studies on request, speak at different events, and visit officers and their families in the hospital, but my heavy emphasis is on counseling," Constant said.

Some of his most effective ministry to police officers is accomplished through on-the-job visitation, or "coffee cup" counseling. "I'll meet them at roll call, in the detective offices, at coffee shops, wherever they are," he explained. "And some will talk to me over a cup of coffee while the problem is still insipient, rather than waiting until they are about to go under."

One of the biggest problems police officers face is acute stress caused by a variety of factors, including the dangers of the job, alienation from the public and contradictory job requirements, Constant said. All of these lead to family pressures, which explain the high divorce rate -- 66 percent -- among police officers and an alcohol-abuse rate about twice the rate for the general public.

"The majority of my counseling is marital counseling for the simple reason that if it's a job-related problem initially, a lot of officers won't come in to see me until they are about ready to lose their family," Constant said. "I counsel with the officers' families too, because the family unit is the most important support group an officer has."

In the lobby outside of Constant's office is a table filled with pocket-sized New Testaments, and he said that the gospel is his most effective counseling tool. "I don't preach to anybody, but when I look back at the people I've counseled with, the ones that have really gotten their lives back together are the ones that have gotten their lives right with Christ in a real sense," he noted.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary

Baptist minister
focuses on Bible

By Pam Parry

BALTIMORE (BP)--Professing to be people of "the book," Southern Baptists need the fullest measure of truth attainable from the Bible, says Baptist Philip L. Bailey, who is focusing the last year of his ministry at the Maryland Bible Society to that end.

Bailey, 64, is associate executive director of the Baltimore-based Maryland Bible Society, the nation's only remaining autonomous state Bible society.

Since coming to the Bible society Aug. 1, 1978, as administrative assistant, Bailey has overseen the day-to-day operations of the 179-year-old, interdenominational organization. He served primarily as an administrator and secondarily as a promoter of the society and its ability to enhance the use of scripture.

Bailey always has been eager to share the society's work and encourage the use of the Bible more among Southern Baptist churches, he says, but demands of administration limited him until this year.

Bailey, who is scheduled to retire from the Bible society Dec. 31, will shift focus away from administration, spending most of 1989 promoting the society and Scripture among Maryland/Delaware churches.

Even though the state Bible society is an independent, ecumenical organization, Bailey says, his orientation is toward Southern Baptists, and he is seeking to make them a special focus for 1989.

"I hope to help people get an enlivened interest in opening the Bible and studying it; so that they can personally experience a growing relationship with the Christ of Scripture, he says.

Even though most people can buy an individual Bible today, Bailey says the Maryland affiliate helps to fill the gap of bulk needs and to encourage the study of Scripture.

"What we try to do is to make sure Scripture is available at prices persons can afford and in a format they desire," says Bailey, who came to the society from the pastorate at First Baptist Church of Aberdeen, Md.

"There is a great need for people to understand the Bible better. I find so much of the time people have really an insufficient grasp of Scripture, its importance and application for life today."

Despite the increased emphasis toward Southern Baptists, Bailey remarks, his first service is to the work of the Christian Kingdom, and he has enjoyed relating to many Christians of different denominations.

And Christians need to help each other more, he observes: "The need I see is for Christians to understand each other better. ... We are all seeking to serve and to enlarge the Kingdom of God, but sometimes we forget to (remember) the other groups. We should be more aware of our Christian brothers and sisters in other denominations and remember them a little more in our prayers and work together with them."

Bailey chose to retire early, but looks at it as mere technicality: "I can't imagine anybody retiring from the ministry. Can you? You don't quit; you just go into another phase of ministry."

He will continue to "do some assignments" for the Maryland Bible Society and will be available for supply preaching, he says.

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