



**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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January 12, 1989

90-6

WMU board meeting focuses on  
new leader, new missions strategies

By Susan Todd

N-10  
(wmu)

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union executive board invested a new executive, updated its charter, adopted a new church missions program and approve three staff positions in its Jan. 8-11 meeting.

Dellanna W. O'Brien was invested as the sixth national WMU executive director by WMU President Marjorie J. McCullough Jan. 9. The service represented the first time a WMU executive director was formally installed.

In an address to the board, McCullough affirmed the missions priority of the organization, which is almost 102 years old.

"I still believe our priority is missions, and it will have to stay missions," she said. "There are many demands being made on Baptist women today. These demands have placed us in a position of competition and some compromise. I'm not afraid of competition. We've had to be in competition for 100 years.

"We do need to be on guard and be constantly aware that missions education is what we are here to do. Compromise does concern me."

While WMU must look for ways to be flexible, it cannot compromise to the point that it lose its missions purpose, she said.

"We must be on guard and find new ways to get the message of missions in the church and the message himself, Jesus Christ, out of the church and into the community and world," she said.

WMU is unique in holding auxiliary status in the Southern Baptist Convention, McCullough said. However, WMU always has cooperated within the convention and should continue to do so, she added.

During the meeting, board members voted to replace the charter's declaration of incorporation with articles of amendment. The change was made to clarify WMU's tax-exempt status. WMU has functioned under the tax-exempt status of the Southern Baptist Convention. Under the articles, WMU will apply for its own tax-exempt status.

Changes in the bylaws were proposed by the board's bylaws committee for consideration at the WMU annual meeting in New Orleans June 10-11. These changes will bring the bylaws in line with the organization's charter.

Bylaw changes must be voted by the membership and be made public to members three months in advance. To meet this requirement, an insert will be included in the April issues of Royal Service and Contempo magazines, WMU's adult age-level magazines.

Proposed bylaw changes include the requirement that the WMU national president must have served previously on the WMU executive board.

A new churchwide missions program named CONTACT was approved by the board. CONTACT is an acronym for Christians Obeying Now The Actions Christ Taught.

CONTACT is a 12-week adult missions growth plan for use by individuals or groups.

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The goal of CONTACT is to educate more Southern Baptists about missions and about each Christian's responsibility to witness to a non-Christian world. It is aimed primarily at individuals not involved in a missions organization, but it also can be used by members. The program is for adult men and women.

Bible study materials and other CONTACT materials will be available in 1991.

Three national staff positions were approved by the board: assistant to the executive director/financial adviser, information systems assistant and records assistant/missionary housing coordinator.

As soon as the records assistant/missionary housing coordinator position is filled, WMU will assume from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board the responsibility of helping furloughing missionaries find housing. Because home missionaries do not have furloughs, WMU will seek free or reduced-rate housing for their vacations.

In another decision, board members by a 2-1 margin declined to become an official sponsor of lay renewal. Lay renewal is a program sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission to encourage spiritual renewal among the laity.

However, the board voted unanimously to affirm the work of lay renewal and encouraged the continued participation by a WMU representative on the Southern Baptist interagency lay renewal executive group.

In other business, the board:

-- Seated Pauline Shiroma, president of Hawaii's WMU, as its newest voting member.

-- Voted to prioritize promotion materials for the weeks of prayer for foreign and home missions as follows: offering envelopes, prayer guides, posters and all other free materials. This action was taken after board members said prayer guides always should be provided.

Last year, due to a one-time budget decision made by WMU officials, the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions prayer guide was not printed. When the promotion budget had to be trimmed in midyear, the prayer guide was the only item not yet in production. So WMU officials chose to remove the item from the production schedule.

-- Changed the title of the missions education system at the national level to the missions program system. The program system plans, equips and promotes the WMU program in local churches and associations.

-- Approved \$37,665 in grants from WMU's endowment fund, the Second Century Fund. Grants will provide programs for or support: new-work-area literature; language curriculum; Colorado WMU; Indiana WMU; New England WMU; Ohio WMU; Utah-Idaho WMU; West Virginia WMU; Wyoming WMU; Brazil WMU; and the age-level magazines group at the WMU national office.

Second Century Fund grant awards must be used for support of missions work among women and for support of missions education among women in seminaries.

-- Voted to offer for sale the satellite uplink truck owned by Signal Services Inc., a subsidiary of WMU.

-- Allocated \$30,000 for research into WMU membership patterns and magazine circulation.

-- Transferred \$165,000 from the capital budget to the operating budget to purchase computers for the national headquarters staff.

-- Heard reports from Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board staffs.

-- Adopted the 1992-93 dated plan, which outlines the activities, curriculum and products for WMU organizations in the churches for the year. They also adopted the 1991-92 associational dated plan.

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-- Heard the announcement of the 1990 Acteens National Advisory Panel: Angie Jones, Milton, Fla.; Dorena Flick, Dewey, Okla.; Wendy Rigdon, Garland, Texas; Regina Plemmons, Houston; and Lisa Maxey, Jonesboro, Ga.

Advisory panel members serve as pages at the WMU annual meeting and the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, both in June. They also write and speak on behalf of Acteens, the missions organization for girls in grades seven through 12.

The next meeting of the WMU executive board will be June 9 in New Orleans.

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Missionaries go  
'home' to Colombia

By Mary E. Speidel

*N-2MS*

Baptist Press  
1/12/90

DENTON, Texas (BP)--Joye and David Crane thought twice about returning to Colombia.

Every time they heard a disturbing newscast about Colombia's bloody drug war, they had to "rethink and replay" their decision to return to the South American nation as Southern Baptist missionaries, said Mrs. Crane. But the answer was always clear.

"This whole situation has caused us to re-evaluate not only our missionary calling but our specific location. But in all of this praying and everything we've done, Colombia is still home," David Crane said during a recent vacation in Denton, Texas.

The couple and their daughters -- Aimee, 9, and Heidi, 6 -- went "home" to Colombia Jan. 11. He returned to his assignment as a music consultant. She will continue as a church and home worker and piano teacher.

"We just have a peace about going ahead and going back," she said. "God has taken care of us before. There's no reason to doubt that care at this point. Outwardly, it looks like a dangerous situation. But that's only true if we're not in the Lord's will."

When drug-related violence escalated in Colombia last September, the Cranes relocated within the country for safety reasons. Later they came to the United States to spend time with relatives in Denton, their hometown.

Two other Southern Baptist missionary families who left Colombia because of the violence returned to their assignments in December. They are Arnold and Lucy Pessoa of Morton, Texas, and Charles and Jamie Ruede. Ruede is from Noel, Mo.; Mrs. Ruede is from Faucett, Mo.

Larry and Linda Booth, who also left Colombia in mid-September, remain on furlough in Raleigh, N.C. Booth is from Camden, N.J.; Mrs. Booth is from Closter, N.J.

In addition, five new Southern Baptist missionaries will go to Colombia as soon as paper work for visas is complete, said Betty Law, Foreign Mission Board associate area director for Spanish South America. The new missionaries, who recently finished Spanish language school, are Rodney and Sharon Coleman, of Hereford and Clifton, Texas, respectively; Sandra Gustin, of San Antonio, Texas; and David and Betsy Kammerdiener, of Lane, Kan., and Energy, Ill., respectively.

When violence escalated in Colombia last fall, board officials gave missionaries several options, Law said. They could stay put, return to the United States for furlough, transfer to another country or relocate to safer areas within Colombia.

The Cranes chose to relocate within Colombia. Before and after the move, they adjusted to rapid changes. They began home schooling their children for the first time. They heard a bomb explode almost every day. They squeezed a family of four into a tiny guest apartment.

Along the way, they discussed the changes with the children. "We've tried to let them know in advance every step that we're taking," said Mrs. Crane. "We've always been very straightforward and open about the situation in Colombia with our children. But we've tried to take out any emotion or fear or sensationalism."

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But the Cranes have tempered the facts of life in Colombia with a healthy home life. After the move their living arrangements, although crowded, provided opportunities for family time. "We've always been a close family, but we've just had more time together and we've just enjoyed each other more," Mrs. Crane said.

The children's home schooling also gave Crane a chance to help his first grader, Heidi, learn to read. "I always thought that was some magic the teacher did," he said.

As they have made decisions amid conflict, the Cranes also have considered family members in the United States. "There was a stewardship of personhood and in our case there was a stewardship of grandchildren. Our families were very concerned," Mrs. Crane said. "We felt like the Lord would not have us be foolish with the loved ones we had in our care."

As they return to Colombia, the Cranes asked Southern Baptists to pray for families and friends of missionaries there. "We know we're being prayed for," she said. "But our families and close friends back in the States need the prayer as well."

Both the Cranes' parents have been "very supportive," Crane said. During the family's vacation in Texas, he gained insight talking to his father, James Crane, a retired Southern Baptist representative to Mexico. The elder Crane and his wife, Edith, live in Fort Worth, Texas.

"He's been more concerned as he finds out about the situation, but in the same breath we've been able to talk quite a bit since we came back about situations he went through in Mexico," said the missionary. "You realize that God takes care of you if you're where he's called you to be."

Some friends and relatives have not understood why they are risking going back to Colombia, the Cranes said. But the couple insisted they are realistic about potential dangers. "We're not naive," said Mrs. Crane. "We know something could happen. That's why it's all the more important to be sure that's really what God wants us to do because we've got to be able to live with this decision."

For the Cranes, the choice remains clear. "Unless someone has been at that kind of crossroads," she said, "it's hard to understand how one has to depend upon the peace that the Lord gives, because there's nothing else to depend on."

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Criswell tells search committee:  
'Men of God chose own successors'

By Ken Camp

*N-Texas*

Baptist Press  
1/12/90

DALLAS (BP)--Setting an Easter deadline, Pastor W.A. Criswell instructed the co-pastor search committee at First Baptist Church of Dallas to work with him in following the biblical example of men of God who chose their own successors.

"Don't listen to the voices of those who are piously pompous. Listen to the word of God. And listening and following the word of the Lord, come and work with your pastor. Then call us a man that can be as one with your pastor," Criswell said in his annual "state of the church" message Jan. 7.

Criswell cited biblical instances such as Jacob giving his birthright to Joseph and his blessing to Judah; Moses appointing Joshua; Samuel anointing David; Elijah passing his mantle to Elisha; Peter choosing Mark; and Paul commissioning Timothy. Throughout Scripture, men of God selected their own successors, he emphasized.

"There is no exception to that in the word of God. From the beginning of it in Genesis to the consummation of it in Revelation, there is no exception to it. These men of God chose their successors," Criswell said.

"And my word to the search committee is this: Listen to the word of the Lord. Follow the example of these men of God."

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Criswell first announced in January 1986 that he was praying for a young preacher to "come serve alongside" him and ultimately succeed him as pastor of the largest church in the Southern Baptist Convention. On Aug. 24, 1988, the church voted unanimously to appoint a committee to seek a co-pastor.

"The search committee was appointed a full one and one-half years ago. For one and one-half years, that committee has been assigned this tremendous task," Criswell said. "The time has come when an ultimate decision must be made. It must be made soon. It must be made by Easter."

Criswell said the man to be called should be a "friend," a "prayer partner" and "fellow pilgrim" working with him.

"I am now beyond 80 years of age. I would like to be called senior pastor. I would love for him to be designated as pastor. And we'll work together, pray together, serve God together, build this lighthouse for Christ together," he said.

Richard Clements of Dallas, chairman of the search committee, said he considered Easter "not a deadline as such," and he doubted that the committee would reach a decision by then.

Rather, he interpreted the Easter date as an expression of Criswell's urgent desire to see the church continue to move ahead.

Noting that the "state of the church" message also dealt with the recent acquisition of property for expansion of the church and Criswell College, Clements said he believed Criswell simply is anxious to have an administrator and successor in place soon.

"I think that's where his sense of urgency is coming from. We need to get a man to come in here and help him," he said.

Clements said he did not take seriously Criswell's implication that he has the right to choose his own successor.

"I think it's his way of saying, 'If you all don't get with it and get somebody, I'll do it myself.' And we know it doesn't work that way. It's just his way of putting a little pressure on us, and we do feel his urgency now more than ever," he said.

Clements noted that when the 20-member search committee met on the Tuesday evening following the sermon, there was little discussion of the sermon. He said the committee is continuing to interview and consider several men for the position.

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Belmont student spends break  
watching international news break

By Mona Collett

F- (CO  
(Tenn.)

Baptist Press  
1/12/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Vasile (Lica) Vadan spent his first Christmas away from home watching and video-taping news reports of the tumultuous overthrow of the government in his homeland of Romania. The 25-year-old Belmont College student says he will show the tapes to his grandchildren someday.

The anxiety of trying day after day and not being able to get through to his family in Romania was relieved a week after Christmas when he finally reached them by phone. "They are just fine," reports Vadan, who had not talked with his father since the upheaval began.

His father has been preaching for 30 years and "went through everything" trying to continue his ministry under oppressive government systems, he says.

The elder Vadan is pastor of Iris Baptist Church in Cluj-Napoca. And while Romanians have felt more of a sense of religious freedom in the last six to seven years, Vadan says the environment has been restrictive for Christians. As pastor of the 450-member church, his father is optimistic about the prospect of a freer government system and more tolerance for Christianity.

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"Now, with the new government, I may be able to go home for a visit and not have to worry about being to return to the United States," says Vadan. Leaving Romania is very difficult in the first place, and return visits have been impossible, he notes. He has been in the United States over a year, and a visit home is in order, but not practical if it means a halt to his education. He is studying religion and music at the Baptist school in Nashville, with plans to return to Romania to minister to his people.

Vadan was introduced to Belmont through an alumnus who was in Cluj-Napoca studying music as a Fulbright scholar. John Robinson now is associate pastor at Green River Baptist Church in Waynesboro, Tenn., and attends Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Robinson invited Vadan to visit and suggested he study at Belmont. Considering the discouragement Christians had received when trying to go to college in Romania, the opportunity to study at the Southern Baptist school appealed to Vadan. He applied for a temporary visa to visit the United States with Robinson. His decision to study here at Belmont was confirmed, and he began his studies in the fall of 1989.

Belmont President William Troutt arranged for Vadan, who knew little English before his visit, to live on campus while studying for the mandatory English proficiency test required of foreign students. Not without visa complications, Vadan completed his first semester and went to Florida to spend his first Christmas in America with his roommate and family.

According to Vadan, he had a "great first Christmas in America," despite anxiety about turmoil at home. While wishing he could have been there, he reminisces about Christmas in Romania and looks forward to a time when Christian holidays will be recognized. Youth from Iris Baptist Church in Cluj-Napoca traditionally go on an all-night Christmas Eve carolling vigil. Since public witnessing is not allowed, this is one of the few opportunities Romanian Christians have to witness in the open.

Vadan's family reported that the carolling tradition was not carried on this year because of violent outbreaks caused by political unrest. However, Vadan and his family look forward to future Christmas holidays and a much better day for the people of Romania.

While the future is unsure, it "must be better," says Vadan, who is optimistic about "the new country" to which he will return after completing his education.

"When I came here, I didn't know how long I would be able to stay," he explains.

The changes in government policy come just in time for Vadan to apply for his extension. His one-year visa expires Feb. 28, and he is much more likely to get approval to stay since travel restrictions were lifted Jan. 8.