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91-105

Four members added
to NOBTS faculty

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees recently elected four new faculty members.

Thomas S. Roote Jr., former executive director of the Greater New Orleans Federation of Churches, is associate professor of church administration in the division of Christian education ministries. A native of Covington, Tenn., Roote holds master's and doctorate degrees in education from New Orleans Seminary, and a bachelor's from Mercer University. He has been a leader in Baptist associations in Georgia, Florida, and Alabama; and a professor at Baptist Bible Institute.

Charles A. Ray Jr., former foreign missionary and professor of New Testament and Greek at the Baptist Seminary in Taejon, South Korea, is associate professor of New Testament and Greek, division of biblical studies. A native of New Orleans, Ray holds master's and doctorate degrees from New Orleans Seminary, and bachelor's and master's degrees from Mississippi College. Prior to his missionary service, he was pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Pine Grove, La.

Sidney L. Buckley, former minister of music at Washington Avenue Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C., is associate professor of voice in the division of church music ministries. A native of Columbia, Miss., Buckley holds a doctorate degree from Florida State University, a master's from New Orleans Seminary, and a bachelor's from William Carey College, all in music. He has taught voice at Florida State University and Furman University, and was head of the music department of Central Wesleyan College.

Effective Aug. 1, Paula A. Stringer, director of child development at Broadmoor Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss., will be assistant professor of early childhood education in the division of Christian education ministries. A native of Montgomery, Ala., Stringer holds master's and doctorate degrees in education from the University of Southern Mississippi, and a bachelor's from Mississippi College. She has taught classes in early childhood at USM, and was an assistant professor of elementary education at MC.

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Acteens discover missions
challenge close to home

By Ken Camp

F-Texas

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DALLAS (BP)--After taking mission trips to Wisconsin, Utah, Kansas and Idaho, the Acteens at North Hardin Baptist Church in Silsbee, Texas, found their greatest missions challenge just three miles from home.

The last four years, Acteens leader Bonnie Walters led Acteens Activator teams from North Hardin Baptist Church on out-of-state summer mission trips. But since most of the "veterans" had graduated and the younger girls needed training, she decided her group would benefit from a mission trip closer to home this year.

The Acteens focused on the "river bottoms," a secluded, heavily wooded area that North Hardin Baptist Church had targeted for a new mission. For four days in June, the seven girls conducted Backyard Bible Clubs in three locations daily and surveyed the community.

Throughout the "at home mission trip," the Acteens ate and slept at North Hardin Baptist Church. Prior to the experience, each of the participants went through a missions training program, and they were paired with prayer partners in the church.

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"We acted just as if we were going away on a mission trip. The Acteens treated it with the same sense of responsibility and with the same degree of excitement," said Walters.

The Acteens discovered 40 to 50 homes in the rough, reclusive area, and they were shocked to find the community almost totally unchurched.

"Some of the girls became very emotional. It got to them when they realized that nearly every family they met, every child they taught in a Backyard Bible Club, was lost. Most of the people had no concept of what church was all about," Walters said.

"The percentage of unchurched people was higher even than on our mission trips out of the state, and there was more of a hunger for the gospel. It was hard to accept that those people had to drive by our church to go into town, but they didn't even know what church was."

Later this summer, North Hardin Baptist Church plans to conduct a tent revival in the "river bottoms." By fall, church leaders hope to purchase property and a mobile home and to begin a mission in the area, building on the foundation laid by the Acteens.

"I believe our Acteens made significant inroads into the community," said Ferrel Massey, pastor of the church. "Our girls gained the confidence of the people there."

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'Forced termination' is time
for Christians to offer love

By Karen Benson

F-20

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--"My heart hurts."

"He didn't just lose a job. We lost a way of life."

Those comments by two pastors' wives are typical of the pain families feel after a situation of "forced termination," according to author and speaker Jennifer Bryon Owen.

Owen recently led a seminar on "Forced Termination -- A Call To Love" during Woman's Missionary Union Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. Owen is coauthor, with Myra Marshall and Dan McGee, of the book "Beyond Termination: A Spouse's Story of Pain and Healing."

Recent statistics show more than 115 Southern Baptist ministers are forced to leave their pastorates each month, Owen said. By year's end, around 1,400 pastors have experienced "forced termination," she said.

A forced termination is a situation in which "there is a split in the church and a dissolving of the union between church and pastor," Owen said, "and the pastor leaves, either through choice or coercion."

"There is a great deal of secrecy that goes on in a forced termination," Owen said. "It's still embarrassing for all involved. We've got to get away from that."

There are two main problems with forced termination in the Southern Baptist Convention, Owen said. "The first problem is the way in which the forced termination is handled. The second is that most churches are unaware of what is happening until it's too late."

When pastors are asked to leave, it's usually by a small group of leaders in the church, she said. "Most ministers take the attitude that 'It's God's church, and I don't want to cause a split or a fuss, so I'll just move on quietly,'" she said.

Laity need to be sensitive to "what's going on in a church" and be ready to seek advice and assistance from an "outside person" such as the director of missions for that church's association, she said.

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For most ministers who have been forced to terminate, there is a feeling of aloneness and a feeling akin to that of a death in the family, she said. "They have lost something of great value, and yet there are no casseroles brought, no service of closure, no body to put into the ground."

Marriages often suffer during times of forced termination, Owen said. "The relationship is often strained, because the first person a minister turns to is his wife. But the wife is affected, too. She is hurting, herself, and is not always able to give the love and support the minister expects."

If a marriage wasn't good before a forced termination, "it probably won't get any better during or after the crisis," she said.

Children of ministers affected by forced termination need to be kept informed "to as much extent possible without going through all the nitty-gritty details," Owen said. "Children can become very bitter through an experience like this. We need to always assure them they do belong to God, and God will take care of them."

It's a myth in Southern Baptist life that fired ministers will have no trouble finding another church soon, Owen said. Most find a secular job or take a pastorate in another denomination, she said.

"Southern Baptists simply don't call a minister who's not already employed on a church staff somewhere else," she said.

In most Southern Baptist churches, there are no performance reviews for ministers, no job descriptions, no clear understandings between pastor and church as to acceptable reasons for a firing, nor any understandings as to who can do the firing, Owen said.

"In most instances, an entire church votes when the minister is hired, but it doesn't come to the entire church when the minister is fired," she said.

Pastors would be wise to thoroughly check out a church before accepting a call, Owen said. "There are churches that are habitual terminators. Ministers need to do a real good background check into churches. There are some churches where they really don't know how else to deal with a problem other than through forced termination."

On the other hand, she said, there are ministers who are "habitually terminated," and churches need to do some thorough background checks of prospective ministers to avert problems.

The No. 1 cause of a forced termination, Owen said, is "poor communication between the minister and the church." The No. 2 reason is immorality.

Regardless of the reason, individuals affected still need a loving approach for helping to heal the hurts, Owen said. She suggested several ways to minister to hurting families:

- periodically cook dinner for them;
- be available to talk or simply provide a listening ear, without rendering any judgment as to what the family should do or should feel;
- include the family in social activities;
- send cards with messages that show the family is being thought about and lifted up in prayer;
- discreetly inquire about the family's finances, and help out where needed;
- allow the family "healing time," as needed.

Hmong student at NOBTS
had long journey to 'life'

By Breena Kent Paine

F- CO
NOBTS

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--For Thai Her, a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the journey to meaning in life was long. He waded through war, ancestor worship, fear of evil spirits, murdered family members, the burning of his village, near starvation, and a refugee camp before arriving in the "land of freedom" and encountering Christ's love.

A member of the Hmong people group, a tribe with its roots in China, Her was born in a village on the border of Laos and Vietnam. Inside his home was an ancestor shrine, and his grandfather was a "wizard," someone who could "contact" the ancestor the family worshipped.

Neighbors and relatives often would bring their sick children to the wizard, hoping for a cure. Then the drums would beat, and the wizard, covered by a red veil, would begin shaking copper "rings." The more evil spirits the wizard felt were plaguing the child, the longer he would shake the rings, sometimes for 30 minutes continually, asking the "domestic" spirit to fight the evil spirit.

When the wizard stopped shaking, the parents would ask him if he saw what was wrong with the child. His answer might be that the evil spirit needed a sacrifice -- perhaps a pig, a chicken, or a dog.

"Will my child die?" a parent once asked.

"Yes," the wizard answered.

"Where will he go?"

The wizard pointed, "You see that pregnant woman over there? He will go there."

As a child, such ancestor worship "was the only choice I had," said Her. "I didn't know anything else."

When war tore apart the region, and even children were being drafted by village leaders to fight, many households were left with only women in them. Men and young boys alike were given guns and sent into the jungle, without training, to fight the enemy.

Opposing forces burned the Hmong village, and many of Her's relatives were killed. He and his immediate family fled to Laos, where they lived as nomads, forced by the war to move constantly.

Then in 1975, the 10-year-old and his family boarded a boat for Thailand, where they joined about 3,000 other refugees in a small, fenced-in camp. Anyone attempting to escape was arrested and placed in jail, Her said.

"That place was like imprisonment for me," he recalled. Each person was given one cup of rice a week, and sometimes families would receive half a chicken. The little water that was available was often contaminated. Some refugees were able to plant miniature gardens near their shelters; others suffered starvation.

"We had no choice. If we had stayed in Laos, we would have died," Her said. But conditions were so bad that he and his family lost hope. "I felt like that was the end of life."

The Thais began offering the refugees a school, however, and English classes for those who could afford it. As Her was the only boy in his family, his parents traded vegetables from their garden so he could learn.

Then a "miracle" happened. Through a special program, refugees whose head of the family had been a soldier were offered a chance to leave the camp, with passage to such places as Australia, France, Canada, New Guinea, South America, or the United States.

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The Her family qualified, and after a week in Bangkok, where refugees learned "how to ride an airplane," they arrived in Decatur, Ga., in 1980. There the 10-member family lived in an American's garage for two months.

When members of Columbia Drive Baptist Church invited them to attend services, the Hers accepted out of courtesy, even though they could not understand the message. Soon, other Hmong families arrived, and "the church opened its doors and its heart to the refugees," Her said.

"That was the first time I had heard of the Bible and of Jesus," he continued. Then a Hmong pastor moved to Decatur and began preaching to the 10 or so families in their own language.

Slowly, Her began putting aside his tribal traditions of ancestor worship and started learning about the love of Jesus. When Christians offered him help in attending Toccoa Falls (Christian) College, he realized, "I stood in the middle of a line. I didn't know whether to hold onto my heritage or cross that line."

He decided to take the education opportunity. "Every time the professors lectured, they brought a Bible. The students carried their Bibles to class. I thought, 'What's going on? I thought this was education. Why do they open that book?'" Her said.

Then one of the students gave him a Bible, and as he read it he began to accept the Christian message. Then Don Aderhold, liaison for New Orleans Seminary's north Georgia extension center, encouraged him to continue his education so he could help his family and other Hmongs come to Christ.

Her's answer was, "Wherever the Lord leads me, I'm willing to go." Now he is studying for a master of divinity degree at New Orleans Seminary, and challenges his people to compare their traditions of ancestor worship and fear of evil spirits to the love, peace, joy, and forgiveness Christ offers.

"True, there are evil spirits," he tells them, "but the Bible says, 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.'"

"Without Christ, life is very foggy, very fuzzy, hopeless; there is no future," he continued. "But right now, I know if I have Christ, I have everything. Before that, I was scared to die. Now, 'for me to live is Christ; to die is gain.' If I had not come to Christ, I would not have that kind of hope."

Her claims II Corinthians 4:7-10 "summarizes" his new life in Christ. "My parents later came to understand. They saw the change in my life," he said. Now, all but three of his immediate family are baptized.

He smiled, "I come from the very darkest past to the very brightest future."

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(BP) photo available upon request from New Orleans Seminary

NOTICE: Aug. 31, 1991 will be the last day for use of the Jacquard computer in the Baptist Press office. After that date, Baptist Press will be available electronically only on the CompuServe system. We will, of course, continue to mail Baptist Press to all our subscribers. Contact David Haywood at the Baptist Sunday School Board for more information.

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