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BSSB retirement 'window'  
chosen by 159 employees

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press  
10/23/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 83 percent of the 191 Southern Baptist Sunday School Board employees eligible for a special voluntary retirement window have elected to take the enhanced early retirement provision approved by the institution's trustees in August.

A total of 159 elected to retire between Sept. 1 and Nov. 1. The one-time provision, part of a restructuring for the 101-year-old church programs and publications agency, was offered during the summer to persons with a minimum age of 52 and whose age and tenure totaled at least 77.

In addition to the retirement of eight employees from middle- and upper-level management positions announced in June, six department directors are retiring. They are Max Caldwell, Sunday school youth-adult department; Muriel Blackwell, Sunday school preschool-children's department; Tom Clark, Bibles and books; Ray Conner, church recreation; Joe Denney, video/audiovisuals; and Jerry Ross, art.

Retirees among Baptist Book Store managers include two regional managers, Robert Mendenhall, southeastern region, and Al Crawford, central/campus region.

Five store managers in the 63-store chain will retire. They are Ken Brannon of Greensboro, N.C.; Charles Clark of Nashville; Charles McGlocklin of Jackson, Miss.; Loren Miller of Knoxville, Tenn.; Jeanette Scott of Wake Forest, N.C.; and Fran Webb of Charlotte, N.C.

Of the 159 retirees, 53 were in management positions, 63 were professionals and 43 support staff personnel.

Provisions of the voluntary retirement incentive plan include no reduction in monthly benefits for early retirement and a benefit enhancement based on projected Social Security benefits to age 62 or age 65, depending on the individual's age at retirement.

The program is being financed by the board's pension trust fund and affects operating costs positively by savings in salaries and benefits. After replacement of about 50 percent of the departing employees, the program is expected to save the board about \$2.5 million.

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A complete list of employees retiring under terms of the Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program is available on SBCNet or on request from the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Women 'set back' church work  
2,000 years in urban Detroit

By Susan Doyle

DETROIT (BP)--As "Operation Lydia" catches on in Detroit, Southern Baptist home missionary W.D. "Doc" Lindsey says "it will set back our work 2,000 years."

"Operation Lydia" is a process by which members of Woman's Missionary Union in the Greater Detroit Baptist Association are starting churches. "Operation Lydia" is jointly sponsored by the association, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Lindsey began looking at Detroit, America's sixth-largest metropolitan area, wondering how to reach its 3 million lost people. In many neighborhoods, he knew a man would not be effective in witnessing efforts.

"Women can go and do things in areas where men can't go -- especially white men wearing ties," he said.

He also knew the typical Southern Baptist approach wouldn't work -- a seminary-trained clergyman, a church-type building, well-developed programs and sufficient financial resources.

"I asked myself, 'What if we had nothing? If the apostle Paul were starting here, how would he do it?'"

Lindsey thought back 2,000 years to the resurrected Christ's appearance to his disciples and to Mary Magdalene. Lindsey remembered where Christ found the followers after his death and their different responses to his appearance. The disciples were paralyzed by fear but the women were out doing what needed to be done.

"There was a dead rabbi and a bunch of scared disciples hiding in an upper room," Lindsey said. "The only ones who went out on the streets were women."

Within six months, there were 50,000 followers of Christ, Lindsey said.

"They had no buildings, no programs, no resources, no Billy Graham," he said.

A pattern emerged in Lindsey's thinking. Women were the logical ones to take the gospel message into the troubled streets of Detroit, he said.

Comparing Christians to salt, Lindsey offered this scenario: If freshly slaughtered meat was locked in a truck trailer and left for three weeks without preservatives, it wouldn't be a pretty sight, he said.

"Salt is preservative," he said. "But our churches move out from the cities to the suburbs and then look back at the city pointing fingers saying, 'Can you believe those people?' Would you blame the 'meat' for rotting? No! No! No! It's our problem. We took the salt away."

Operation Lydia involves women taking the "salt" back to the city, Lindsey said. He has developed the project borrowing approaches used by Tom Wolf, pastor of Church on Brady in Los Angeles.

About a dozen women from four churches in the Greater Detroit Baptist Association have been involved in Operation Lydia since the project began in February. The churches are Emmanuel Baptist, Temple of Faith, Fairview Baptist and Middlebelt Baptist.

The results -- the women are now leading eight different groups of unchurched people in Bible studies, and people are making professions of faith. The goal is for each Bible study to become a church.

The approach is so simple and so obvious, Lindsey said. "It can be reproduced by anybody anywhere."

Lindsey first leads the women to discover their "oikos," or "sphere of influence." This discovery process takes in four worlds -- family, friends, co-workers and people within the geographic world in which they move.

"On the average, every American knows at least eight people who are not saved and attending church," he said. "I think on Judgement Day, God's not going to ask about our tithes and offerings, not about talents or if we sang at church. I believe he is going to ask us about the ministry he gave us within our own 'oikos.'"

Lindsey points to Acts 2 where the Bible says the gospel spread in this manner.

After women have identified the lost people within their own worlds, they gather together in threes to pray, forming prayer triplets. They pray for the opportunity to serve those within their worlds and the opportunity to share the gospel message.

The next step is to pinpoint locales where several of the non-Christians they know live close to each other. These areas become potential locations for Bible studies.

Before the women start the Bible studies, they pray. For 14 days, they engage in what Lindsey describes as "spiritual warfare."

"When you go out, you're really going up against the gates of hell," he said. "This group knows that."

The women pray for the team members who will go into the neighborhood to start the Bible study. They pray for responsiveness to the gospel. They pray for the identification and salvation of one person in particular -- a person Lindsey describes as "the person of peace."

"It's unbelievable because God has always prepared one," he said. The "person of peace" is a person who will help open the door to the neighborhood, offering the use of his or her home or offering other helpful direction.

Halfway through the prayer strategy, the women walk through the neighborhood, praying house by house for the residents. They continue other specific prayers through the 14th day.

After the 14-day prayer strategy ends, the women survey the neighborhood, knocking on doors asking four simple questions:

- Do you have a Bible?
- Do you read it?
- Would you like to study it with others?
- Can we use your home for Bible study?

If the person indicates he or she doesn't own a Bible, the women readily share one.

As the women discover people interested in Bible study, they form one. The Bible studies, led by no more than two of the women, last five weeks. Each week the group gathers and reads a short passage of Scripture from a photocopied sheet of paper. The question-and-answer session which follows is simple:

- What did you like best about what you read?
- What did you like least?

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- What did you not understand?
- What did you learn about God?
- What do you need to do about it?
- What phrase/sentence would you like to take with you to think about/chew on this week?

"The women are discovering that in about the third week, a number of those persons attending the Bible study will be saved," he said.

These Bible study groups may not look like the typical Southern Baptist church but they are growing into a fellowship of believers, he said.

"We're not trying to grow a squash which grows in six weeks," Lindsey said. "We're trying to grow an oak tree."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) of "Doc" Lindsey mailed to state Baptist newspapers by WMU.

Woman follows God's leading  
into Detroit mobile home park

By Susan Doyle

Baptist Press  
10/23/92

DETROIT (BP)--God has given Dee Howard a mobile home park.

She'll never hold the property title but Howard has "claimed" the park nonetheless -- for Christ. She believes God has great plans for the people who live there.

Howard's enthusiasm about what God is going to do in the mobile home park is contagious. She has enlisted the help of a few members from her church, Fairview Baptist.

"I believe God is giving us the mobile home park for himself," Howard said. "I believe people are going to worship God there."

Howard is participating in "Operation Lydia," a process by which members of Woman's Missionary Union within the Greater Detroit Baptist Association are starting churches. "Operation Lydia" is jointly sponsored by the association, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Detroit has "grown up" around Howard's mobile home park -- and then has left it. Looming on one side is a large brick and steel automobile manufacturing plant, long since abandoned. On another side runs one of Detroit's busy six-lane highway arteries.

Most women might hesitate to knock on the doors within the mobile home park. But for Howard, assistant WMU director for the Greater Detroit Baptist Association, there was never a question.

Nothing about Howard's mobile home park indicates permanence or safety. Most of the mobile homes are 30 to 40 years old and show many signs of age and wear. Padlocks hang from the outside of their doors. Cats who make their home in the park wander from mobile home to mobile home and gather at the dumpster. Most of the mobile homes look abandoned. Howard knows otherwise.

Knocking on the doors came rather easy for Howard after God gave her a "real affirmation this was where he wanted us to be," she said. "We didn't get an overwhelming response (from the residents). We got a lot of 'No's' and some 'Absolutely not's.'"

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"If you had thin skin, you would have had a really bad day," Howard said with a laugh remembering the day she first knocked on the doors of the mobile homes.

Out of 120 contacts, Howard found 12 people who said they would either attend a Bible study or would host one.

"I really believe God has prepared this place," she said. "We're not going in and setting up a mobile home to start a church. We're going in with the Word of God, and if the people decide to have a church, that will be their decision."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) of Howard mailed to state Baptist newspapers by WMU.

Belleville women  
play 'Pied Piper'

By Susan Doyle

Baptist Press  
10/23/92

BELLEVILLE, Mich. (BP)--To look at Carol Mostoller and Pat Adams, one would think they have the magical charm of a pied piper with local children.

But unlike the storybook character, Mostoller and Adams don't play a magical flute to lure children away from their homes. They play baseball, put on puppet shows, offer refreshments and lead the children in games and singing.

Most of all, they offer the children their friendship and a personal relationship with their God.

"I'd like to see everybody become a member of the family of God," Mostoller said. "They don't have to be a member of my church. That's not important. Knowing the Lord -- that's important. That's why I'm here."

Mostoller and Adams are members of Emmanuel Baptist Church in the Detroit suburb of Belleville. They, along with pastor Ken Mowery, are leading their church to participate in "Operation Lydia."

Operation Lydia is a process by which members of Woman's Missionary Union within the Greater Detroit Baptist Association are starting churches. The outreach is jointly sponsored by the association, the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The church of 31 members has not allowed its small size to keep it from looking to the needs around it. Within an eight-mile radius of the church, there are 11 mobile home parks. Mostoller knows. She discovered them as she drove around her neighborhood to assess its needs. In those 11 mobile home parks, there are more than 2,700 homes.

"I went into each mobile home park and prayed for the people who lived there," she said. "Periodically, I will drive around and do that. I said, 'Well, Lord, I'm sure you want these people to know you, so I'm just going to claim them for you.'"

Claim them Mostoller and Adams have, using some creative means of sharing the gospel message.

On one particular cool afternoon, Mostoller and Adams led a visiting youth group on a mission trip to strike up a baseball game within one park. Within minutes of arriving, kids came running from all corners of the mobile home park.

The women were not strangers to the children. They had built a rapport with the children earlier in the summer by staging puppet shows and skits for them.

Mostoller watched as the two baseball teams took their turns at bat.

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"I know they'll break for refreshments," she assured herself softly. "They just don't know who the real refreshment is."

Mostoller and Adams spread a blanket and opened bags of potato chips and bottles of soft drinks. Immediately, the kids were willing to take a break.

The women used the time to lead the group in a short, simple Bible study. After passing out photocopies of Mark 1:21-28, the group read it aloud and began a brief discussion.

Mostoller asked what they liked best about what they had read and what they liked least.

"Did you learn anything about God?" she asked.

Mostoller chose the passage because the story about the man with an unclean spirit shows how powerful God is.

"I want them to know that God is powerful and able to help them," Mostoller said.

The big question came when she asked if they would like to meet again and read another passage and talk about it. The answer pleased her. Not only did they want to meet again, a couple of the teens were willing to talk to their parents to get permission to use their own homes for Bible study.

As a result of Adams' and Mostoller's work, several families have begun attending Emmanuel Baptist Church. They also have the names of more than 300 children who do not attend church but are interested. Their days are now spent following up with these families.

The members of Emmanuel are committed to reaching their community for Christ. By the first part of November, they will have started at least one worshipping community as a result of the work Adams and Mostoller have done.

"The sad thing is that there is so much potential, but we don't have the personnel to go everywhere at this moment," pastor Mowery said. "We're asking the Lord to send laborers."

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(BP) photos (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by WMU.

BWA women set high goal  
for prayer day offering

Baptist Press  
10/23/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--As Baptist women around the world observe their annual Day of Prayer the first Monday in November, they are challenged to more than triple their offerings to reach a goal of \$1.2 million worldwide.

The challenge goal for North American Baptist women is \$1 million. The total worldwide offering on the 1991 Day of Prayer was \$331,576.

The high goal was set by the BWA women's department executive committee, composed of nine international and continental officers. Catherine Allen of Birmingham, Ala., is president of the department and Aduke Akinola of Nigeria is secretary/treasurer.

The annual Day of Prayer, sponsored by BWA's women's department, is observed in the 165 member bodies of the Baptist World Alliance. Offerings taken on this day are shared equally between the six continental unions of the women's department and the international office.

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In North America, the continental union (NABWU) includes 20 conventions and unions in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. In a recent letter to the leadership of women's groups in North America, outgoing NABWU President Dorothy Sample said the support of women on this continent is "crucial."

"We in North America have the greatest resources of all the continental unions but we give the least per capita. This is a heartbreaking truth. As we seek this year to reach more and more women around the world for Christ, to train Baptist women leaders in remote areas and to meet physical needs of women and children, your support is crucial," Sample wrote.

Around the world the Baptist Women's Day of Prayer is observed in nearly all the major languages and in many dialects. The program, distributed by the BWA women's department, is sent early in the year to translators in the six continental unions. The suggested program includes Bible study, testimonies and prayer requests for women throughout the world.

The Baptist Women's Day of Prayer was held first in Europe in 1948 as a means of reconciling national Baptist groups following World War II. The movement has grown to include Baptist women in about 200 nations. Offerings taken on this day are the financial lifeline of the women's department, an auxiliary of the Baptist World Alliance.

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For more information, contact Beth MacClaren, director of the BWA women's department, (703) 790-8980.

Man reached for salvation  
at least-expected moment

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
10/23/92

WOODSTOCK, Vt. (BP)--No one had come forward. John Pate signaled an end to the invitation; the pianist stopped playing "Just As I Am."

"I want to thank you for coming this morning," Pate said, wrapping up Woodstock Baptist Fellowship's morning worship in this Vermont village of 1,500. "We're here to meet your spiritual needs. If we can help, just let us know."

Suddenly, a man in the congregation did -- jumping up, raising and waiving his hands, walking forward, almost shouting, "Is there still time left? I want to accept Jesus into my heart!"

Many of the 50-plus worshippers were stunned; then emotions and tears began to flow; they had been praying for him for, maybe, eight years.

"It's been a long time," the man told the congregation after gripping Pate's hand, "and things are going to be different now."

Pate, pastor of the church the past year and a half, had hoped for some conversions Oct. 18 -- but hadn't dreamed it would be the early-40s man who had been attending with his wife, a faithful Christian, for so many years without ever making a decision for Christ.

Several unsaved persons and their families had been attending the church several months, and Pate had them in mind as he prepared his sermon.

"I've been asking God's guidance in preaching more powerfully the gospel message each Sunday," said Pate, a Connecticut native who became a Christian at a Southern Baptist church in that state in 1976.

Pate based his sermon squarely in the "Ye must be born again" thrust of Jesus's words to Nicodemus recorded in the third chapter of John's gospel

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That Sunday, however, Pate looked out over the congregation and saw none of the expected visitors.

"I first thought, 'The day is done,' but I simply turned it over to the Lord ... and felt a peace about going ahead and throwing myself into the message."

Pate admitted he wasn't counting on any particular result. "Things were pretty non-eventful. I was even taken back a bit" when the man bounded forward.

All Pate could tell the man rushing toward him was, "Absolutely, there is still time."

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Chaplain Bob's interstate flock  
gathers at Wisconsin truck stop

By Marie Rohde

Baptist Press  
10/23/92

DeFOREST, Wis. (BP)--When Bob DeWald gets ready to summon his flock, he picks up the mike of his CB radio.

"Good morning drivers! This is Chaplain Bob at the Unocal 76 truck stop!" DeWald begins. "Church services will be held at 9 a.m. Sunday morning. Sure would like to have you stop in and visit with us. Praise the Lord!"

The truck stop, located on Highway 51 just off Interstate 94, is one of a growing number around the country that welcomes pastors to set up shop. The first services here were July 5, DeWald said. Services coordinated by DeWald began the same day at the Shell Oasis in Edgerton, Wis., and he has plans for a third to be established in the Milwaukee area within about a month.

DeWald is part of the Truckers Christian Chapel Ministries, Inc., based in Dayton, Ohio. Although he's a Southern Baptist pastor, the services are non-denominational, DeWald said.

Three other national organizations -- Truck Stop Ministries in Atlanta; Christian Truckers in Brownstown, Ill.; and Transport for Christ in Denver, Pa. -- also staff truck stop chapels around the country, including one in Portage, Wis., and another in Hudson, Wis.

Several signs announcing church services are posted at the Unocal 76 truck stop -- one at the back entrance used by drivers, another in the section of the restaurant where they sit and a third in the television room they use.

Services are held in the small, darkened television room. Several rows of theater seats face a television set at the front of the room. Desks line the walls.

DeWald, who is a full-time volunteer and also visits prisons around the country, leans against the television when he preaches at the DeForest truck stop.

"I can preach from a television set or a street corner or leaning against the running board of a truck," said DeWald, 68. "I've got a marvelous story to tell about the greatest man in the world. I can tell it from anywhere I happen to be."

For the first service, taped music was used. DeWald said he hopes local churches eventually will volunteer to send musicians and preachers to the truck stops.

The service begins with a hymn -- drivers prefer what DeWald calls old-time favorites like "The Old Rugged Cross" -- then goes into prayer, the sermon and more music.

Although DeWald said he was careful to end the service within an hour, there's almost always someone who wants to talk afterward. Last week, a driver asked the pastor to join him for a cup of coffee.

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"He spoke about his life being all scrambled," DeWald said. "He was intrigued by the orderliness that can be there if we allow Christ to lead us and direct us and control our lives.

"In his case, 'all scrambled' meant his wife was in the process of getting a divorce," DeWald continued. "He was having problems making payments on his rig. He was in Madison and had no idea where he was going to get a load once he unloaded here."

DeWald said he told the driver the Lord was the way to find peace.

There's a great need for truck stop chapels, said Al Russell, a driver who operates an 800 number set up by the Truckers Christian Chapel Ministries.

"You can't just pull your rig into a side-of-the-road church," said Russell, who is studying to become a Southern Baptist minister. "If they have the time to go to church, drivers don't feel comfortable because of their truck-driving clothes."

DeForest truck stop owner Roger Kluge, a Catholic, agrees there's a need for religious services and pastoral counseling.

"Many years ago there was a pastor who came in on an irregular basis, maybe three times a year," Kluge recalled. "I think there's a need for religious services for some of the drivers, either counseling or just sitting down and reading the Bible. Everyone has a religious need."

DeWald, a former medical equipment salesman who was disabled by multiple sclerosis while still in his 50s, goes from rig to rig talking religion to any driver who is interested. He's armed with cassette sermon tapes and Bibles, each stamped with an 800 telephone number drivers are encouraged to call. No collection is taken at the service and the tapes and Bibles are free.

Eight drivers showed up for the first DeForest service, three at the next. But the small numbers don't bother DeWald.

"One pastor was asking me if this was really worthwhile, considering so few showed up," DeWald said during an interview in the Unocal coffee shop. "I said half of those who attended one of my services said they had been saved and asked him if he could make the same claim."

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Reprinted with permission from The Milwaukee Journal. (BP) photo (vertical) may be ordered from the newspaper's public service bureau, (414) 224-2120.

Church arranges baptism  
for wheelchair-bound man

By Tammi Ledbetter

Baptist Press  
10/23/92

HOBART, Ind. (BP)--When members from Sunnyside Baptist in Hobart, Ind., first visited Kenney Payne to share their faith and hope in Christ, he politely refused their attempts to interest him in attending church.

Though he had only recently developed multiple sclerosis, Payne was no longer able to work and expressed a great deal of frustration and anger over his disease. But that didn't stop the visits from church members or pastor Bill Gibbs.

After two years of deteriorating health, Payne was admitted to a hospital and doctors were not sure he would live much longer. Breathing had become difficult; his muscles lost their strength.

"During this time in the hospital, while I was visiting with Kenny, I began to talk to him about the things of Christ and his need to know him as personal Savior," Gibbs recalled. "Kenny committed his life to Christ there in the hospital room."

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As he began regaining his strength, Payne shared with others about his commitment to Christ and said he was a Southern Baptist. With the transfer to another hospital and completion of physical therapy, he improved even more and eventually went to Crown Point nursing home. There he attended various worship services at the facility.

Over the next year and a half, Gibbs continued to visit with Payne, spending time in prayer together. "But nothing was ever said about baptism or church membership." Eventually, Payne expressed an interest in attending Gibbs' church.

On the following Sunday, two men from Sunnyside Baptist in Hobart drove to Crown Point to pick up Payne and a friend so they could attend church services. Returning to the nursing home after lunch, Gibbs remembers Payne saying, "My only regret is that I waited so long to get to church." They promised to make the trip again and Gibbs left a booklet for Payne to read which described church doctrine and membership.

"I had forgotten about it," said Gibbs as he told of Payne calling him at home to emphatically announce, "I want to join the church."

Gibbs explained baptism was a part of church membership and Payne replied, "I know. I read that in the book you gave me."

Aware of the complications that would result from Payne's confinement to a wheelchair, Gibbs assured Payne that if he was certain he wanted to be baptized, the church would make it possible. Payne immediately invited his family and one of his nurses.

"I was still wondering how we were going to accomplish the task of getting Kenny up the stairs and down into the baptistry," Gibbs said. That's when he decided such a move would be impossible and decided to work on an alternative.

A farm supply company in Valparaiso loaned a large watering trough which was set at floor level in the front of the sanctuary and several men were enlisted to help lift Payne into the water for the baptism.

"Kenny's adamant commitment to be baptized and the testimony of his baptism were an encouragement and a challenge to every one of us," Gibbs said. "There were very few dry eyes that morning and many choked up as we sang 'We are One in the Bond of Love' for our benediction.

"It was certainly the most unusual baptism service I have ever had part in and one of the most meaningful."

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BWA women to sponsor  
meeting of CIS women

Baptist Press  
10/23/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The BWA women's department is sponsoring a leadership development conference for women in the republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The meeting will bring together 80 women leaders from several areas of the former Soviet Union.

The conference is in response to a request from the women's leadership in the Baptist Union of the CIS. Organized in 1990, this will be the third and largest annual meeting of Baptist women leaders in that land.

The Nov. 9-14 meeting will be held in Moscow at the same time representatives will be in Moscow for meetings of the Evangelical Union of Christians-Baptists.

Catherine Allen, president of the BWA women's department, is in charge of the program and will head the international delegation of women leaders going to Moscow for the conference.

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In addition to Allen, others attending from the United States will be Donna Anderson, executive director, American Baptist Women's Ministries; Dorothy Sample, past president of North American Baptist Women; Marilyn Hopkins, director, Woman's Missionary Union of Michigan; Kathy Burns, preschool specialist, Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention; and Jolene Ivy, associate executive, Woman's Missionary Union of Alabama.

Canadian women's leader Marilyn Smith, executive director of United Baptist WMU of the Atlantic Provinces, also is slated to attend, along with Hilde Sayers of England, president of the European Baptist Women's Union, and Irene Haase, Germany, of Fraudentst (the Baptist women's organization in Germany).

Each of the program leaders will be participating with the financial sponsorship of her own organization. Women's department expenses for the meeting are being underwritten by several individuals and churches in North America, and with the support of the Baptist Women of Mexico who were invited to send a program leader, but sent a large financial contribution instead.

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For additional information, contact Beth MacClaren, telephone (703) 790-8980.

Disappointments bring new  
direction for former 49er

By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press  
10/23/92

ROCKVILLE, Va. (BP)--When Mike Simpson played his first soccer game, his teammates had to carry him off the field.

"I made a bad mistake," joked Simpson, a former defensive back for the San Francisco 49ers. "I forgot that I was 45 years old and 20 years out of my football career."

Simpson pulled a hamstring while learning soccer skills with other new missionaries training at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va. He and his wife, Beckie, recently finished a seven-week orientation there. They will start churches in Honduras, where soccer is a popular sport.

After the injury, "I lost my dignity but I've gained my composure again," said Simpson, laughing at himself while relaxing with his wife and their adopted Korean daughter, Emily Grace, 7, at the learning center.

Simpson, from Groves, Texas, learned about hard knocks early in his football career.

That career began under "Bum" Phillips, his high school coach, who later coached several professional teams, including the Houston Oilers. Simpson also played defensive back under Phillips at the University of Houston. During his senior year there, Simpson was the 13th round draft choice of the San Diego Chargers.

During training camp, Simpson ran the fastest 40-yard dash among the Chargers, so head coach Sid Gillman switched him from defensive back to wide receiver.

"I had to learn everything from scratch," Simpson recalled. On top of that, he was playing behind Lance Alworth, a wide receiver who had set just about every receiving record in the old American Football League.

In the exhibition season, Gillman cut Simpson from the team. After breaking the news to his wife, "We felt like our whole lives were over," said Simpson, a newlywed at the time. "We were devastated."

Later that year Simpson signed with the San Francisco 49ers. During his first three years with the team, the 49ers won the NFL Western Division championship.

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"Those were exciting years, because we were winning and getting exposure," he said. "But ... whenever you lose, somebody has to bear the blame. So it's a tense kind of environment."

Simpson, who became a Christian at age 9 in a Texas Baptist church, found support from a weekly Bible study he and his wife attended with several other 49ers. He also attended team chapel services before Sunday games. During off-seasons he spoke about football and faith in churches and schools.

He faced a big disappointment in 1972 when the 49ers barely missed going to the Super Bowl. San Francisco was playing Dallas for the NFL's national conference championship. The 49ers were three touchdowns ahead at the half.

"Some people had turned off their television sets thinking the game already had been decided," Simpson said.

But in the fourth quarter, star quarterback Roger Staubach came off the bench to save the Cowboys. During the last two minutes, Dallas scored to pull ahead and win the game.

Another disappointment came in 1974 when Simpson was traded to the Baltimore Colts. Early in the season he dislocated his left shoulder, which put him out the rest of the season. The Colts didn't renew his contract.

After declining an offer to play with the Green Bay Packers, Simpson signed with the Oilers. By this time he had suffered so many injuries he wore a special helmet to prevent concussions. Four weeks into the preseason, the Oilers released him.

Simpson decided his football days were over. "We didn't know what we were going to do," he said. "Football had been our life. There was a tremendous void."

He ended up starting his own business, raising cattle and opening a family roller-skating rink in Henderson, Texas. Later the Simpsons helped establish Emmanuel Baptist Church, which met for a time in the skating rink.

While self-employed, Simpson struggled with the feeling God was calling him to preach. In 1982 he publicly committed himself to full-time Christian ministry. That decision was tough for the Simpsons, who had gotten used to being self-sufficient and financially successful.

"But we worked through that," said Mrs. Simpson. "When you trust the Lord, he grows your faith. God does work in your life and meet your needs. But you have to step out in that faith ... as he calls you to do things."

After a short pastorate in Price, Texas, Simpson became pastor of Emmanuel Baptist in Henderson, where he served nine years. The Simpsons participated in mission projects and were deeply influenced by church members Kirk and Marilyn Jones, who went as missionaries to Tanzania in 1987.

The Simpsons were open to becoming missionaries themselves "but the timing was never right," Simpson said. But during the summer of 1991 Simpson felt "God was moving us into a transition again."

During a vacation that summer, the couple decided God was calling them to foreign missions and "the time frame seemed right." They were appointed this summer in El Paso, Texas.

The Simpsons and their daughter head for language school in Costa Rica in December. They will leave behind two sons, both college students.

Simpson said he plans to take a soccer ball with him to Central America. Sports is a way to "gain access to people's lives," he added.

Reflecting on his own life, Simpson said he had hoped his football career would have lasted longer, but "I believe God has a timetable that he brings us along on. I was disappointed ... but so many times our disappointments are because we cannot see the greater picture of what God is doing in our lives."

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed Oct. 22 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Outline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

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CLARIFICATION: In (BP) story titled "Faculty matters top discussion in Midwestern trustee meeting" dated 10/22/92, please replace the ninth paragraph with the following:

A lengthy discussion ensued when trustee Ronnie Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church in Hot Springs, Ark., made a motion to amend the policy which previously allowed students to tape record classroom lectures "contingent on securing prior approval from the professor in the course." With his amendment, Rogers asked trustees to delete that section of the policy, allowing lectures to be recorded without a professor's approval.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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