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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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91-170

**West Virginia Baptists elect
Don Mathis new executive**

HUNTINGTON, W. Va. (BP)--Don R. Mathis, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Corbin, Ky., was selected executive director-treasurer of the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists Oct. 31, immediately preceding the convention's Nov. 1-2 annual meeting.

Mathis was introduced to the 233 messenger and 97 visitors to the convention Nov. 1.

Active in the denomination, Mathis has been a trustee of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, serving on the executive committee and as chairman of the administrative subcommittee. He was president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention 1985-86 and of the Kentucky Baptist Pastors' Conference 1981-82. He served three terms on the Kentucky Baptist Convention executive board.

During Mathis's time as pastor, the Corbin church has had more than 2,000 additions, reaching new high totals in membership, attendance, evangelism, and mission support. Sunday school attendance has increased from an average of 330 people to a current average of 945 people. Worship attendance has grown from 400 to more than 1,000.

"After 27 marvelous years as a pastor, I believe God is calling me to use the gifts, abilities, and experiences that God and his people have provided to help the churches reach the people of West Virginia for Christ and to grow churches and mature Christians. Especially these 12 years in Corbin have been wonderful. No pastor could feel more love from a congregation nor more acceptance by a community than my family and I have experienced in Central Baptist Church and Corbin, Ky. Now I believe that it is time to take what I have experienced and learned and follow the Lord's leadership to this exciting new adventure in ministry," Mathis said.

Mathis is a graduate of Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tenn., and holds both the master and doctor of divinity degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

A native of Hopkinsville, Ky., Mathis is married to the former Sharon Daugherty. They have two children: Donny, a sophomore at the University of Kentucky, and Laura Beth, a sophomore at Corbin High School.

In other convention business, a 1992 budget of \$1,562,275 was adopted. Of this total, the convention will contribute 27.5 percent to the Cooperative Program unified budget, up 0.5 percent from the previous year.

Harry Kinchen, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Parkersburg, was elected convention president. Other officers elected were: Everett Powell, pastor of Berkeley Baptist Church in Berkeley Springs, first vice president; John Andes, professor at West Virginia University and interim pastor of First Baptist Church of Ft. Ashby, second vice president; Jack Dial, layman from host Highlawn Baptist Church in Huntington, recording secretary.

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Seven resolutions were presented to the convention body. All were passed. Included in those were a resolution giving a directive to the state's recording secretary to write letters to the national and local offices of PBS to record West Virginia Southern Baptists' objection to the PBS broadcasting of "The Long Time Companion," depicting homosexual lifestyles as being normal.

Next year's meeting will be Nov. 6-7 at Covenant Baptist Church in Shepherdstown.

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Dying missionary gives last
gift to foreign missions

By Robert O'Brien & Irma Duke

Baptist Press
11/11/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--For a few days before Les Watson died, Keith Parks wore two wedding bands.

One symbolizes Parks' commitment to his own marriage. The other symbolizes Watson's lifelong commitment to foreign missions -- and his last gift to it before he died of cancer Nov. 10 in Richmond, Va.

Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, found the 74-year-old retired missionary to Japan asleep during a Nov. 5 visit to Watson's hospital room, where he lay expecting to die soon.

Parks urged Watson's family not to wake him.

"He wants us to wake him," replied Watson's wife of 45 years, Hazel. "He has something he wants to give you." Watson awoke slowly as she bent close to tell him Parks and his wife, Helen Jean, were there.

"Les pulled his hands out from under the sheet and started trying to take his ring off," Parks said. "He was weak and his daughter had to help him.

"He gave it to me and whispered, 'This is for the Lottie Moon Offering,' Parks told Foreign Mission Board staff during a chapel meeting. The Lottie Moon offering is the annual Christmas offering given by Southern Baptists to foreign missions.

Overcome with emotion, Parks could not continue his account. But as he reflected later, he called it "one of most moving moments Helen Jean and I have ever had."

As he spoke, Parks removed the extra wedding band, now housed in the board's vault. He turned it reverently in his fingertips as he pondered the significance of the simple band of gold, inscribed with the Watsons' initials and Psalms 34:3.

"O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together," reads the Scripture verse, which also is inscribed in Mrs. Watson's wedding ring.

"His gift is symbolic of Les and characteristic of his spirit and attitude, that his dying thoughts would be on giving to missions," said Parks. And, he said, it symbolizes a spirit of sacrifice more valuable than the money it will add to the offering to support 3,900 missionaries in 121 countries.

Colleagues who knew Watson during his 35-year career weren't surprised that he would continue thinking of missions even as he lay dying.

"He was the kind of missionary who would sit up all night on the train in Japan because he didn't want to pay mission money for a sleeper," one said.

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Watson and his wife, the former Hazel Tunstead, were appointed as missionaries to Japan in 1950. They served there until 1982, when they moved to Richmond to work as curriculum research consultants in the Foreign Mission Board's missionary orientation program. They retired in 1986.

Since 1989 he had been missions awareness associate for the Dover Baptist Association, Glen Allen, Va., and both served overseas as volunteers and had hoped to return overseas this year. They are members of Biltmore Baptist Church, Glen Allen.

The Watsons were the first Southern Baptist missionaries to reside in the Miyazaki Prefecture of Japan.

Miyazaki "was what many would call the boondocks of Japan," said George Hays, a long-time missionary colleague of the Watsons. "Les saw it as a place in desperate need of the gospel of Christ.

"Les had the virtue of patience to a degree not often found in missionaries. He was kind and considerate to his Japanese brethren, never assuming a superior stance. No missionary was more loved and appreciated by the Japanese than Les Watson."

The Watsons helped establish five new churches and numerous preaching points. From 1969-72, they worked with five churches and their pastors in Kanagawa Prefecture and then moved to the Shibuya section of Tokyo, where they worked with two churches.

A native of Atlanta, Texas, Watson attended the College of Marshall (now East Texas Baptist University), Marshall; received the bachelor of arts degree from Baylor University, Waco, Texas; bachelor of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; master of arts degree in missiology from the Institute of Church Growth, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.; and master of arts degree in cross-cultural communication from Wheaton (Ill.) College Graduate School.

He served on islands in the Pacific in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II and then as pastor for churches in the Texas counties of Limestone, Panola and Henderson.

Watson is survived by his wife, two grown children, four grandchildren, two sisters and two brothers.

Memorial services will be held Nov. 17 at Biltmore Baptist Church in Glen Allen and at the First Baptist Church chapel in Henderson, Texas. Interment will be at Quantico (Va.) National Cemetery.

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

Lora Clement dies at 102;
was oldest retired missionary

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
11/11/91

DARLINGTON, S.C. (BP)--Lora Clement, Southern Baptists' oldest retired foreign missionary, died Nov. 10 at the Bethea Baptist Retirement Community in Darlington. She was 102.

Clement worked in China during 35 of her 44 years in missions. She was appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1915 and retired in 1959.

During China's years of communist oppression of Christianity, Clement regularly prayed for the Chinese. She rejoiced as China opened its doors to foreigners during the past two decades.

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Chinese Christians "were persecuted terribly" during the most repressive years of communism, she said in an interview during a 1987 reunion of China missionaries at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center. "But at the same time, the Lord kept them preaching the gospel, witnessing to his grace. Today, there are many, many Chinese who have turned to the Lord because of their witness."

As a missionary in China, Clement supervised seven schools for girls at a time when most Chinese girls received no education at all. She later did evangelistic work. Kongmoon, in China's Guangdong province, was the site of most of her work.

In retirement Clement spoke in churches about missions, even into her last years.

She worked in Macao (near Hong Kong) for eight years during the Japanese occupation of China. With the subsequent rise of communism, she left China in 1947. She worked among the Chinese in California, then went to Singapore in 1950 to assist a Cantonese-speaking Baptist church and open Southern Baptist work there.

A native of Spartanburg, S.C., Clement was a graduate of Winthrop College in Rock Hill, S.C. She taught school in Union, S.C., before missionary appointment.

She is survived by three nieces. A graveside service and burial were scheduled for Nov. 12 at Rosemont Cemetery in Union.

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

National WMU leaders object
to defunding of Ruschlikon Seminary

Baptist Press
11/11/91

By Susan Todd Doyle

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The national leaders of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union have formally objected to a recent decision by trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to defund the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

WMU is the missions organization for women, girls and preschoolers in Southern Baptist churches and is an auxiliary organization to the Southern Baptist Convention.

FMB trustees voted Oct. 9 to cut all funding slated for the Swiss seminary. Trustees earlier had agreed to continue contributions to the school through 1992 and then begin a gradual decrease of funding. The action taken by FMB trustees will cost the seminary \$365,000 during 1992 -- about 40 percent of the seminary's total budget.

A letter was mailed Nov. 6 to William Hancock, chairman of the FMB trustees, by the national leadership of WMU. The letter was signed by Dellanna W. O'Brien, WMU executive director; Carolyn D. Miller, national WMU president; Martha Wennerberg, national WMU recording secretary; and Joyce Mitchell, Bobbie Patterson, and June Whitlow, WMU associate executive directors.

Copies of the letter also were mailed to FMB trustees; FMB President Keith Parks; and members of the WMU executive board.

The letter called for FMB trustees to "put political considerations aside and rescind this action for the greater cause of world missions. In so doing, we can continue our historic relationship as 'laborers together with God' for the fulfilling of the Great Commission."

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The letter also spoke to the reason FMB trustees gave for defunding the seminary. Their decision came after seminary leaders invited Glenn Hinson to teach at Ruschlikon for four months. Hinson is a church history professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and is perceived by some FMB trustees as having "liberal" views on Scripture.

"We realize that the trustees made their decision based on perceptions of a 'liberal bent' in some areas of seminary teaching. If this is a legitimate concern, we implore you to use negotiation processes to resolve this concern in a manner which would preserve the historic relationships among Southern Baptists and overseas Baptist entities," the letter stated.

WMU leaders reminded FMB trustees of their own 103-year-old relationship. "Throughout our history, WMU has been one of the staunchest supporters of the Foreign Mission Board. We have linked arms many times over the years to further the cause of Christ around the world. We have supported you through thick and thin, during lean times and during prosperous times.

"But recently, the FMB trustees made a decision which we cannot support -- the decision to defund the Ruschlikon Seminary.

"We have moved beyond initial shock at the announcement, through days of deep concern about the impact of the decision, to the point today of wanting to register our strong objection to this action," the letter said.

The letter cited several concerns:

-- How the action will affect the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The leaders said they are "hearing report after report of congregations who are planning not to give anything at all to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, or who plan to designate their Lottie Moon Christmas Offering gifts -- many to Ruschlikon."

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions is promoted jointly by WMU, the FMB and the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. The offering makes up about one-half of the FMB's total budget.

-- How the action will affect relationships between Southern Baptist missionaries and overseas Baptist conventions. WMU leaders raised concern about "reports from overseas Baptist conventions who are weighing options and evaluating relationships with Southern Baptists in light of the Ruschlikon decision. Even long-standing agreements are being re-evaluated which allow for Southern Baptist missionaries to live and work in some of these countries."

-- How the action will affect the "window of opportunity" for work in Eastern Europe. "This (action) comes on the heels of first-person reports from our first national Baptist Young Women Enterprisers Abroad team, who returned Sept. 10 from a Bible distribution project in the Soviet Union. (Baptist Young Women is the missions organization in Southern Baptist churches for women ages 18-34.)

"Those 26 BYWs brought back enthralling tales of spiritual and physical needs among the peoples of Eastern Europe -- and they shared their eyewitness accounts of windows of opportunity for a Christian presence and witness that may not be there much longer," the letter said.

"To take advantage of this window of opportunity, it seems that we ought to be stepping up support for an already-established institution which is producing Baptist leaders for the entire European and Eastern European region. Yet, we find the FMB trustees doing just the opposite."

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WMU members across the country increasingly have been concerned about the matter and have voiced their opinions about the action FMB trustees took Oct. 9. Letters and phone calls have been directed to the national WMU leadership asking for action.

WMU members "are right," the letter states. "We cannot sit by in silence when the cause of missions is in such jeopardy."

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SBC delegation seeks focus
on religious liberty in Georgia

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
11/11/91

TBLISI, Republic of Georgia (BP)--A delegation of six Southern Baptists is scheduled to meet with government and religious leaders here in early December to focus international attention on religious liberty in this Orthodox-dominated breakaway former Soviet republic.

The visit grows out of three concerns:

-- Reports of intimidation and threats by some Orthodox leaders who have physically barred Baptists in the republic from their worship houses and threatened the safety of Baptists in the republic;

-- Information that some government leaders in Tblisi continue to deny building and press permits to Georgian Baptists;

-- Reports of verbal attacks via television and other media against the Baptists in Georgia.

"The purpose of this delegation's visit to Georgia is to confirm our continued interest in friendly and supportive relations with the people of the Republic of Georgia and to encourage the implementation of rights of religious liberty to all faiths, including minority Christian groups," said group leader Lynn R. Buzzard, director of the Church-State Resource Center at Campbell University in Buies Creek, N.C.

Buzzard has become a frequent consultant to leaders in the former Soviet Union as they work toward a more open religious atmosphere. He met with Mikhail Gorbachev in late October on the issue of expansion of religious freedoms in the changing former Soviet republics.

Accompanying Buzzard on the Nov. 29-Dec. 8 visit to Moscow and Tblisi will be Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission; Louis Moore, the director of media and products of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission; John Rogers, pastor of Buies Creek Baptist Church in Buies Creek, N.C.; and Sam Morris and David Dixon, both Campbell University law students.

The Christian Life Commission's concern about religious liberty in the Republic of Georgia grows out of the historic and deeply felt commitment Baptists have to religious liberty, Land said.

"When our Baptist brothers and sisters in Soviet Georgia suffer, we suffer with them. We want to commit ourselves in solidarity with them and to assure them that millions of their Baptist brothers and sisters in America are praying for them and are concerned about them," said Land.

The Southern Baptist group has drawn up a list of six "specific requests" it has told the government in the Republic Georgia it intends to pursue. These are:

1. "That the appropriate government authorities assure the rights of Baptists to meet in their churches and worship according to the dictates of their conscience, and to protect them against threats to their person or property."

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2. "That appropriate laws and constitutional provisions will be promptly adopted which guarantee religious liberty in accord with the growing recognition of the centrality of such rights in civilized society, and the commitment to such rights in international covenants and declarations such as the Declaration on the Freedom of Discrimination on the Basis of Belief."

3. "That a process will be created whereby grievances concerning the denial of rights of religious liberty may be promptly heard, and these rights protected."

4. "That the rights of religious liberty extend to the administrative processes of government, and in particular the request for a building permit for the Tblisi church, and proper press permits for Baptists publications be acted upon promptly in accord with the same generosity shown other religious communities."

5. "That while religious groups ought to be free to defend their doctrines and beliefs and even criticize and condemn the vices of others, the government assures such proper exercises of free speech do not advocate violence, or promote the denial of civil rights of persons. The government should affirm its commitment to religious toleration, and let all those who would favor suppression of religion know the government will not support such intolerance."

6. "That church leaders of all faiths and denominations will affirm rights of religious liberty, and encourage mutual respect and to further this they will admonish priests, pastors and local religious leaders to refrain from using national media to personally insult, threaten or incite their followers to deny the rights of other religious communities."

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Surgeon general's request
irks alcohol critics, industry

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
11/11/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--Surgeon General Antonia Novello recently delivered an attack against youth-oriented alcohol advertising but failed to please the opponents of such ads as well as the industry responsible.

In a news conference Nov. 4, Novello called for elimination of "irresponsible ads" that appeal to youth, yet she asked the alcohol industry to do so voluntarily. Fourteen chief executive officers from segments of the industry have accepted invitations to discuss the problem with her, Novello said.

Her method of solving the problem of youth-oriented alcohol advertising was not sufficient for some.

Novello's "recommendations are disappointing and fall far short of solving the problem," Rep. Joseph Kennedy, D.-Mass., said in a statement released at a later press conference. Sen. Strom Thurmond, R.-S.C.; Sen. Al Gore, D.-Tenn. and Kennedy have introduced legislation requiring warning messages in all alcohol advertising.

"Dr. Novello, to her credit, highlights the problems of irresponsible alcohol advertising," Kennedy said. "But it is about time that the administration realize what the American people have known for some time -- that the alcohol industry is not about to change its tune voluntarily. We cannot rely on the good faith of the alcohol industry while the lives of our young people are being destroyed."

James A. Smith, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of government relations, expressed similar sentiments.

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"Why is it that the surgeon general can so forcefully and eloquently condemn deceptive alcohol advertising directed at youth and yet not offer a substantive solution?" Smith said. "Why is it that members of both parties in Congress have recognized the value of legislation which would require warning messages for alcohol advertising and yet refuse to cosponsor the bill?"

"The answer is the enormous political influence which the alcohol industry wields in this town, and that influence flows from the millions of dollars the industry gives to politicians," Smith said. "Those contributions have bought the silence and/or acquiescence of members of Congress and the Bush administration when it comes to legislation affecting the alcohol industry."

"Still, while the recommendations of Dr. Novello were insufficient, we are deeply appreciative of the attention she brings to the issue simply by speaking out as the surgeon general of the United States."

The CLC is a member of the coalition supporting the bills requiring warning messages.

An alcohol industry representative said Novello's request was out of line.

"I very much doubt that we're going to" pull all alcohol ads showing attractive young persons, said James Sanders, president of The Beer Institute.

"I can't see that we're going to write (the industry's voluntary code) to please everyone that comes along and makes a suggestion that they don't like this particular ad or that particular ad ... who's going to be the czar to choose and tell people what kind of ads they can run and what kind they can't?" Sanders told reporters after Novello's press conference. "Who's going to tell us what our tastes are in America? Who's going to be the Big Brother to tell all these people that 'this is distasteful according to me, and it's illegal? I'll take you off of the air.'"

"Well, I don't believe we go along with czars in this country."

Novello's statements were based on the final in a series of reports on youth and alcohol. The reports were produced by the inspector general's office of the Department of Health and Human Services. "Youth and Alcohol: Controlling Alcohol Advertising That Appeals to Youth" is the title of the report.

A June 1991 survey by the Office of Inspector General found secondary school students especially like alcohol ads "that spotlight attractive people, make drinking look like fun and feature attractive or exotic settings," the OIG report said.

The alcohol industry should eliminate ads appealing to youth "on the basis of lifestyle appeals, sexual appeal, sports appeal or risky activities, as well as advertising with the more blatant youth appeal of cartoon characters and youth slang," Novello said.

"Alcohol advertising rarely communicates the true consequences of drinking or its health risks," she said. "Ironically and irresponsibly, advertising images and slogans reinforce the use of alcohol in potentially risky situations."

The report's findings revealed:

-- Federal jurisdiction is divided among three agencies and is limited in its authority;

-- Federal regulations do not forbid youth-oriented alcohol ads;

-- Regulations prohibiting such ads exist in only 17 states, and many of those are limited in their scope;

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- Alcohol industry standards are ineffective and unenforceable;
- Control by television networks is limited by negotiation with alcohol advertisers;
- The trend is for TV networks to weaken standards to gain advertising revenue.

The federal and state governments, alcohol industry, advertising agencies, media, schools and families must join together to eliminate underage drinking, Novello said.

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Donor recognition day held
at New Orleans Seminary

By Erin Price

Baptist Press
11/11/91

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--During a recent donor recognition service at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, President Landrum P. Leavell emphasized the importance of worthwhile contributions during one's lifetime.

Leavell referred to Hebrews 11:4 and the worthy sacrifice made by Abel to God. He went on to explain by making a worthy offering to the Lord, Abel, although he died, continued to speak throughout time.

"The older we get, the more concerned we become about the future and the contribution we've made while here on earth," Leavell said, and continued by emphasizing the importance of continuing to speak after death.

Referring to a recent television program on ghosts and experiences with spirits of dead loved ones, Leavell said, "Frankly ... I do not believe in ghosts." He said he believes dead people continue to communicate, however, pointing out the witness of Abel, which speaks eloquently to Christians today. "Though Abel died in the very prime of life," Leavell said, "his murder did not eradicate his name from the word of God." Length of life is not the only criterion for measuring existence, he continued.

Leavell offered several examples of the dead continuing to speak: Samuel Brittle, owner of the race horse Man-of-War, whose will designated \$4 million for upkeep of his horse's grave; and William Greir, who left \$45,000 to his two cats. "Dr. Greir, being dead, yet speaketh," Leavell said. "The way he left his earthly resources spoke pointedly of that which he believed.

"Today we are here to recognize and to honor some individuals, who, long after they have died, will continue to speak fervently regarding their faith in God. Without these friends it would have been impossible to realize the gains that we've recognized in recent years," Leavell said. He expressed his conviction these donors have made "an eternal investment in the lives of God-called men and women."

Leavell referred to former Texas governor and past president of Baylor University, Pat Neff, who said he often wondered how to fulfill the Bible command to "lay not up for ourselves treasures on earth, where rust corrupts and thieves break through and steal, but to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven." One day the answer came to Neff, Leavell said. "In order to get treasure into Heaven, it is necessary to invest in something that is going to Heaven."

Leavell recognized special donors whose gifts have enabled the seminary to do such work as renovating The Roland Q. Leavell Chapel, and purchasing and renovating the Hardin Student Center. "It happens because God has blessed the lives of people like these, and they, in turn, have blessed us," Leavell concluded.

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