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**Mission Arlington grew
from reaching people**

By Frank Wm. White

ARLINGTON, Texas (BP)--Tillie Burgin didn't set out five years ago to start 120 Bible study groups supported with a food pantry, clothes closet, medical clinic, day shelter and other services.

She only tried to help one family and saw a need for a Bible study in one apartment complex.

Now, with a never-tiring effort, she doesn't hesitate to say her goal is a Bible study in each of the 3,000 apartment complexes in Arlington, a community sandwiched between Dallas and Fort Worth.

Mission Arlington's success has produced a stream of Southern Baptist and other denominational leaders seeking advice on starting similar programs.

"You can't take the model, the method or program because that won't work," Burgin said. "Take the burden for reaching the lost and find ways to meet their needs. That works."

Burgin's zeal and tenacious attitude, which translates into 18-hour days without thought of a day off, are based in her drive to meet needs.

The approximately 300 volunteers who participate in First Baptist Church of Arlington's Mission Arlington mirror Burgin's enthusiasm. When someone expresses interest in helping, she immediately assigns them a task. Anyone who spends more than 15 minutes in the Mission Arlington office becomes involved in some element of the work.

As full-time director of Mission Arlington, Burgin supervises a staff of four and coordinates the work of volunteers who are primarily from First Baptist Church but also from 14 other churches in the community.

Initially, Burgin and others struggled to get into apartment complexes to hold Bible studies. Now, 16 locations are on a waiting list for Bible studies as soon as volunteer workers are available, said Lauren Musgrave, new works coordinator, one of four full-time employees of Mission Arlington.

Local interest in Mission Arlington increased significantly when the local police chief told members of a civic organization he noted a decrease in crime and domestic problems in apartment complexes where Mission Arlington was involved.

"Apartment managers who had been resisting our Bible study groups suddenly were offering us apartment space to use," Musgrave said.

The Bible study locations range from Cross Roads in an affluent business park to low-income apartments where about 60 percent are located, Musgrave said.

About 80 percent of the Bible studies are at the traditional 11 a.m. hour on Sunday. "With our schedule, we know we are getting people who aren't going to church somewhere else," Musgrave said.

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Even though most of the Bible studies are on Sunday morning, Mission Arlington is alive and active throughout the week.

Early Saturday morning, Bible study volunteers begin arriving at the Mission Arlington office tucked in the corner of a church parking lot. There they find bread, food supplies and other items to take with them as they make visits in their assigned apartment complexes inviting people to Bible study the next day.

A group of youth from a nearby church may be assigned to organize the week's contributions to the clothes closet that has overtaken a small office building.

Another group of youth may be enlisted to distribute flyers door-to-door in an apartment complex where a Bible study is to start the next morning.

Throughout the week, local doctors and nurses give their lunch hours to work in a makeshift clinic adjacent to the Mission Arlington office.

Countless other volunteers work through the week in the day shelter, the battered women's shelter, teaching English as a second language or other services where Mission Arlington has found needs.

"Mission Arlington is first a Bible study but we figure out other ways so people can hear," Burgin said. "Folks don't hear until someone walks with them and helps them."

Although church leaders first anticipated the Bible studies providing prospects for the church, the groups have become their own congregations. Many will never become churches but may continue as separate congregations that meet needs of the people in the apartment communities, said Charles Wade, pastor of First Baptist Church of Arlington.

"In 120 different communities where people live in this city of 265,000 people, we have started little congregations. They meet for Bible study, they sing, they share the good news of Jesus Christ, they love each other, care for needs, pray for their sick and dying. They are church. They do church and Jesus Christ meets them there," Wade said.

More than 2,000 people can be counted in the Bible study groups in any week. At least 400 persons have been baptized the past four years. Nine congregations are receiving pastoral support from the Baptist General Convention of Texas but at least 100 of the groups may never be more than a Bible study fellowship, Wade said.

The philosophy of Mission Arlington doesn't fit easily in the mold of Southern Baptist churches, Burgin acknowledges.

Although the group leaders know the people attending their Bible studies and have prospect lists, enrollment and membership aren't high priorities. "We've got New Testament churches. They may not be Baptist congregations but they are churches in the true sense," Burgin said.

Burgin was influenced by seven years she and her husband, Bob, spent as missionaries in Korea. She worked with cell group Bible studies there. Although she realizes the influence that has had on the framework of Mission Arlington, she said she didn't start out with that in mind.

"What we are doing here is not necessarily cell groups. It is not grouping people; it is meeting needs," she said.

Wade encourages other churches to do similar work by finding ways to meet needs in the community. He pointed out a church doesn't have to start 120 groups to be successful. "There are many churches that could start 20 and be successful," he said.

Burgin is the driving force of the work in Arlington and Wade pointed out a key leader is essential. "It's real important to understand the influence of Tillie but realize that others can do it, too," Wade said.

Wade said the work of Mission Arlington involves the church in the lives of people in the community. "We don't just tell them the gospel. We are the gospel for them."

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(BP) photos will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Southern Baptists must find
approaches to reach unreached

By Frank Wm. White

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists have a traditional approach to Bible study that is reaching 8 million people but need other approaches to reach others, according to the leader of Southern Baptist Sunday school work.

Apartment complex Bible studies such as Mission Arlington in Arlington, Texas, are non-traditional but they are reaching people who otherwise would not be hearing the gospel, Harry Piland pointed out.

More than 2,000 people are involved in the 120 Bible studies meeting in apartments, office buildings and other locations throughout Arlington.

The leaders of Mission Arlington shy away from traditional Southern Baptist literature because they believe it is not appropriate for non-Southern Baptists and others who have little or no familiarity with the Bible.

Rather than reject non-traditional approaches to Bible study such as that of Mission Arlington, Piland embraces it as another way to reach people.

"We have to accept the fact we are trying to minister and touch their lives, not make them Southern Baptists," Piland said.

Piland said many other Southern Baptist churches need to be working to reach people in the community who likely will never attend their church.

"Someone in the church must get the dream and begin the work," he said. "It's bone-crushing, hard work and we don't have near as many churches doing it as we need."

Just as Mission Arlington started five years ago with an effort to reach one family, other churches must start small with one apartment complex and build on that ministry for an outreach effort, Piland said.

Southern Baptist churches generally have abandoned low-income groups, Piland observed. "Once, we Southern Baptists were a people who didn't have material goods, status or place. This kind of work represents some of what we used to be," he said.

"These people in apartment complexes and downtown transitional areas need and deserve to hear the gospel," Piland said. "We need to reach to them as well as the 'up-and-in' groups."

Both segments of society will need different approaches than the traditional Sunday morning, at-church Bible study, Piland said.

Southern Baptists' response to reaching others must be in addition to providing the traditional that is already reaching 8 million people, Piland said.

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Like First Baptist Church of Arlington, the structured, traditional church must continue to have strong support. The traditional provides the base for taking Bible study approaches to other locations, Piland said.

"What is needed is a vision and a commitment to carry through with the hard work and sacrifices," he said.

Piland said the strong base of a traditional Sunday school will provide the financial means and trained volunteers to lead Bible studies at other locations.

The Sunday School Board offers some materials to meet the needs of non-traditional Bible studies but is in the process of developing additional materials, Piland said.

A New Century Design task force is evaluating needs of various target groups not being reached with dated curriculum, according to Larry Shotwell, manager of the adult program section in the board's Sunday school youth-adult department.

"We are looking at materials for men's groups, women's Bible studies, after-school sessions, newlyweds, single parents, prison ministries and others," Shotwell said.

Shotwell cited Outreach Bible Study, an eight-session study for non-Christians, as material to use in non-traditional Bible study approaches.

Other undated, short-term studies are available from the Sunday School Board that could be used in non-traditional Bible studies, Shotwell said.

A proposal from the task force may be to create a catalog listing with possible materials produced by several departments at the board, Shotwell said.

For an ongoing Bible study such as those conducted by Mission Arlington, Shotwell recommends beginning with eight weeks of Outreach Bible Study, then moving to dated leaflets that provide a simplified presentation of the Sunday school material in each of the board's three curriculum series and finally moving to the regular curriculum materials.

Shotwell said the success of the Sunday School Board in the past century has been with dated materials that can be destroyed at the end of each quarter.

However, technology is available that may allow the Sunday School Board to provide different materials targeted more directly to specific needs, Shotwell said.

Even so, he said, regular dated materials should continue to be used for traditional ongoing Bible study.

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California pastor opens home
to quake-displaced families By Mark Wyatt & Polly McNabb

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RIO DELL, Calif. (BP)--At least one California Southern Baptist church received "considerable structural damage" in a series of major earthquakes centered in Humboldt County April 25-26. Early reports indicated the homes of several church families also were damaged by the powerful quakes.

No deaths were reported in the temblors which measured as high as 6.9 on the Richter scale. State and local officials reported scores of injuries, however. Early damage estimates from the north coast quakes were placed at about \$50 million.

Darrow Sanderson, retired pastor of Rio Dell Baptist Church, said there was considerable structural damage to the church from three major earthquakes which struck the area at 11 a.m. Saturday, April 25, and just after midnight and 4 a.m. Sunday, April 26.

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Three families in the Rio Dell church who live in Scotia, one of the towns hardest hit by the quake, moved in with the Sandersons after their homes were knocked off their foundations and subsequently condemned by public safety officials.

"We have pallets all over with kids everywhere -- we're having some jim-dandy good fellowship!" Sanderson exclaimed.

Another member is living in a tent in Sanderson's backyard.

In addition to the three major jolts, seismic monitors reported thousands of minor aftershocks. Some were felt as far away as Carmel, Fresno, Oregon and Nevada.

Sanderson said April 27 there are "big rips" up the corners of the Rio Dell church. New walls in the fellowship hall had been put up with four-inch iron reinforcing poles. "If we hadn't had those we would have had lots of damage," he said.

Still, an outside wall is "coming apart" and there will have to be major reconstruction to the building, he said.

Despite damage to the building, thankful members of the Rio Dell church met for worship April 26, even as the aftershocks subsided. Sanderson said that was possible because the sanctuary suffered less damage than the fellowship hall.

Cracks in the baptistery, which is situated on the second floor, resulted in water damage to two Sunday school classrooms. Ceilings in both rooms will have to be replaced, Sanderson said. "Fortunately, however, there were no gas leaks," he added.

The threat of fire from leaking gas was compounded in some communities by the loss of water service. Several major blazes destroyed businesses and government buildings in parts of the disaster area.

Nevertheless, because the strong quakes hit the less-densely populated northern California coast, damage and casualties were significantly less than the October 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

Sanderson described the loss of furnishings in his own home as "considerable," including some antique dishes broken in the quake. The actual residence, however, was not seriously damaged. The mobile unit had just "bounced up and down and landed back on its foundation," he said.

California Southern Baptist Convention officials said April 27 efforts are under way to determine the extent of damage and provide assistance to some of the churches and families affected by the earthquakes. Don Hargis, CSBC men's ministries director, said the relief may include food and temporary lodging at motels for families forced from their homes. Hargis said he is coordinating efforts with Greg Sumii, director of the CSBC missions ministries department.

Every storefront in Rio Dell is boarded up following two days of shaking, Sanderson said. "There was no business that wasn't damaged."

Initial reports indicated Southern Baptist churches in Eureka, near the first earthquake's epicenter, did not sustain any damage.

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Sunday School Board trustees
affirm Hemphill to growth post

Baptist Press
4/28/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Ken Hemphill was affirmed April 23 by the trustee executive committee of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board to become director of church growth, a new position jointly funded by the SSB and the Home Mission Board.

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Directors of the HMB elected Hemphill, pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., to the post March 10 contingent upon approval by the Sunday School Board. His office will be in Atlanta and he is expected to assume the position Aug. 1.

Hemphill's primary responsibility will be to coordinate church growth efforts of the two boards. He will report directly to SSB President James T. Draper Jr. and HMB President Larry Lewis.

"Southern Baptists are the strongest, fastest-growing, proven churches in the country and we ought to have the best church growth emphasis in the country," Draper said.

A joint working agreement between the Home Mission Board and the Sunday School Board is being drafted to spell out responsibilities of the Southern Baptist Center for Church Growth which Hemphill will head.

"A key to this working agreement is to set Ken Hemphill free to write, to be on seminary campuses, to be available for consultation and coordination of church growth activities," Draper said.

"Ken is a solid, biblical conservative with a brilliant mind and endless ideas. He has built a phenomenal church and exudes enthusiasm for reaching people and growing churches," he added.

Hemphill, who has been pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk for 11 years, also has been pastor of churches in Galax, Va.; Louisville and Battletown, Ky.; Winston-Salem, N.C.; and Little Stukeley, England. He earned the Ph.D. degree from Cambridge University in England and the doctor of ministry and master of divinity degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

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Paul Stevens honored by RTVC
with award bearing his name

By Doug Dillard

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Paul M. Stevens was the first recipient of the "Paul M. Stevens Golden Herald Award" given by the Radio and Television Commission to honor outstanding contributions in the field of Christian broadcasting, according to RTVC President Jack Johnson.

Johnson presented the award to Stevens on "Night of Honors," a two-hour program simulcast April 23 on two television services operated by RTVC, the American Christian Television System (ACTS), which reaches 601 cable systems nationwide, and FamilyNet, which serves 77 broadcast TV stations.

"Most of those who were the cornerstones of the colossal Christian broadcasting industry of our day have passed from the scene," Johnson said in his presentation. "They made a distinguished contribution and received their divine reward.

"There is one still among us," Johnson continued. "His peers in the history of Christian broadcasting are few. Fewer still are living. It is appropriate that this award for distinguished Christian broadcasting be named the Paul M. Stevens Golden Herald Award. It is also appropriate that the first recipient be Dr. Paul M. Stevens, president emeritus of the Radio and Television Commission.

"In 1953 a dynamic 37-year-old Paul Stevens became president of the Radio Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, later to become the Radio and Television Commission," Johnson said. "He led the commission to 27 years of superior growth. He coined the phrase 'televangelism' for use of his film dramas and was the guiding hand that shaped many of our current radio programs."

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Stevens remained in Fort Worth after retirement in 1979 and has stayed active in civic and philanthropic affairs. He and his wife, Norma, are active members of Broadway Baptist Church.

Stevens was instrumental in moving the commission from Atlanta to Fort Worth in 1955, according to executive vice president Richard T. McCartney. "In the early 70s, Stevens led 'A Second Step' financial campaigns in Fort Worth and other cities across the nation to erect state-of-the-art communications center located at 6350 West Freeway."

More recently, McCartney said, the 76-year-old Stevens served as honorary chairman of a Tarrant County fund-raising effort called "A Step Ahead," which raised more than \$1.3 million in cash and pledges for capital needs.

"Stevens also assisted in the commission's recent negotiations to broadcast programs on Russian television on a St. Petersburg station which reaches a potential audience of 110 million persons," Johnson added. Stevens went to Russia with Johnson and others last November when initial letters of understanding were signed.

"The commission's present opportunity is an extension and validation of the foundation laid by Paul Stevens' pioneering efforts," said Johnson, who pointed out Stevens spent three months in Russia in 1959 filming a documentary about the Baptist church in Moscow which was thriving in spite of persecution.

Stevens returned the commendations to present RTVC leadership in accepting the award. His final sentence brought a standing ovation: "You ain't seen nothing yet!"

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Radio and Television Commission.

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