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May 10, 1993

93-78

VIRGINIA -- 1993 Day of Prayer and Fasting focuses on Asia's Mongolians.  
MONGOLIA -- Mongolia enters new day for the New Testament.  
MONGOLIA -- Mongolia: ancient land of mystery hurtles into a new era; photos.  
VIRGINIA -- Missionaries see results in unevangelized 'World A'; graphic.  
NASHVILLE -- McGee wrote bestseller out of personal struggles.  
PENNSYLVANIA -- Peggy Masters retires after 15 years with Penn/Jersey.  
KENTUCKY -- Catholics open their building to town's new Baptist church.

NOTE TO EDITORS: The following story package features the Mongolian people of Asia -- focus of the 1993 Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization May 28-29. Two of the stories are based on firsthand coverage in Mongolia, considered part of "World A." The package also includes a story and graphic on "World A," the name Southern Baptist mission strategists have given to vast regions of the globe where people live and die with little or no knowledge of Jesus Christ.

1993 Day of Prayer and Fasting  
focuses on Asia's Mongolians

By Donald D. Martin

Baptist Press  
5/10/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Just as the Asian nation of Mongolia scripts the first chapters of its new democratic movement, the Christian community there has begun chronicling the first pages of its own history.

"It's all so new to them," explained a Christian observer who recently returned from Mongolia. "These days are the first chapters of Acts for Mongolian Christians."

In the early 1990s, as Mongolia turned to a multi-party democratic system, the government began to allow foreigners, including Christians, into the country. With this entrance came the opportunity for Christians to share their faith with people who had never heard the name of Jesus Christ.

And one by one, just as the New Testament church began, Mongolians began to embrace the faith. Today, Mongolia has at least 800 known believers, and about 1,400 Mongolians regularly attend church services.

But the fledgling Mongolian church is a young body of Christians. Most believers have only been Christians for about two years. The most mature Christians accepted Christ as their Savior about three years ago. They have an urgent need for sound discipleship and Christian training.

Administrators at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board believe Southern Baptists have a role in Mongolia's Christian development. They are asking Southern Baptists to pray for the Mongolian people during this year's Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization, scheduled from 6 p.m. May 28 to 6 p.m. May 29.

During this 24 hours -- just before Pentecost -- Southern Baptists will join other Great Commission Christians in praying for the several million Mongolians scattered throughout far eastern Asia. In addition to the 2.3 million who live in the nation of Mongolia, other Mongolians live to the south in China and to the north in Russia.

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Some specific prayer requests include:

- That young believers will grow and develop spiritual discernment.
- That personnel who work in the country through Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist aid organization, will remain safe and healthy and enjoy success in their work.
- That God will provide Bibles, draw Christians from neighboring countries to minister in Mongolia and create a network of people to pray regularly for this young Christian community.

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Mongolia enters new day  
for the New Testament

Baptist Press  
5/10/93

ULAN BATOR, Mongolia (BP)--For some, it's like living in the New Testament Book of Acts.

What began as a handful of about six Mongolian Christians in 1990, has grown to about 800 believers around the country and about 1,400 attending Christian worship or Bible studies. New followers of Christ -- many young and joyfully enthusiastic -- gather often to worship, pray and study Scripture.

Evidence exists that some of the legendary Mongolian khans had Nestorian Christian wives, and some Scripture was available in Mongolia in the past. But following Christ has never before had such a response from Mongolians.

Mongolian believers see God's timing in the availability of a new Mongolian New Testament and in an unprecedented interest in religious faith at a time when Mongolians face hard economic times and collapse of parts of their social structure and political system. People are searching. "They say now that they don't believe anything," said Altanchimeg Gibbens. Gibbens, thought to be the first Mongolian believer of modern times, found Christ while assisting in the translation of the Bible into her language.

"They (Mongolians) trusted communism and what communism told was lies," said Gibbens, who now directs the Mongolian Bible Society. "They're open toward any religion. They're looking to hold something."

Gradually, Christianity has found its way back into Mongolia and is beginning to grow.

Those working alongside Mongolian believers include several English teachers, medical personnel and others representing Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist aid organization.

CSI's first representatives in Mongolia were Stan and Laura Kirk of Tennessee. The Kirks, now in the United States, taught English from 1991-92 at the 3,000-student Mongolian National Medical University. They plan to return on a more permanent basis in late 1993.

In an effort to be effective, CSI has conferred with the government and signed contracts to help in several areas -- education, health care and agriculture. "We can place people at every sector of the society to do some kind of work which would benefit the Mongolian society," Kirk said.

Those people include Don and Helen McNeely of Texas, now coordinators for CSI projects in Mongolia. They arrived in early 1992 after working for years in Zambia. Martha Taylor, a single woman in the middle of a two-year volunteer assignment, teaches university-level English. She grew up in Mississippi and lived for years in California. More recent arrivals are Gary and Evelyn Harthcock of Florida, English teachers; and David and Laura Meece of Kentucky and Ohio, respectively. He is a medical doctor.

The concept of becoming followers of Christ needs to gain credibility with Mongolians, Kirk stated. Christians from outside Mongolia can play a role in this effort. There's a lot more talk than action in how Christianity is seen in Mongolia, he said. Practical help, such as agriculture, business, medicine and education, would gain credibility.

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For those who have found new life in Christ, reaching others is a matter of satisfying the searching going on in their hearts.

One key is love, said Enkhbayar, a young man emerging as a leader of one of Ulan Bator's Christian groups. (Most Mongolians use one name only.) "Whatever you say, if they can't see love, it is empty," he said. "What changed my heart was just love. Even if nobody talked about Jesus but they really (showed) love ... people would start to be interested in Jesus."

The growth of Christianity in Mongolia has not been without growing pains. One has to do with the numbers of short-term volunteers coming in a sincere, but at times counterproductive, effort to work alongside Mongolian believers.

Enkhbayar said often there are a lot of activities but few lasting decisions for Christ. The problem is the number of people coming from the outside -- and their preparation. "Most of them don't know about Mongol culture or Mongol language but still they try to do something," he said.

Short-term efforts can be helpful but sheer numbers have overwhelmed ongoing outreach, Kirk said. "There are more para-church people than church people (in Mongolia)."

The Kirks attended a group called the Bible Fellowship in Ulan Bator. They have seen the impact of this situation. It isn't a matter of good or bad, but good and best. Some groups do good things but zap the energies that might be applied to a permanent Mongolian Christian presence.

Mongolian Christian believers are key witnesses for the gospel in Mongolia.

For example, Buingirgil heard the name of Jesus for the first time at work. Her health was bad and she was discouraged. After she heard about Christ, she prayed about the problem. "I dreamed someone told me, 'Don't go to the hospital, I will help you,'" she said. As she learned more about following Christ, she decided God was communicating with her. She now says her body is healthy; the problem was in her head.

Now, she tells others. Sometimes, when she starts talking about Jesus Christ, people say, "That is not our religion." Her response: "Buddha was a person like us. He didn't change my life; God did."

The contagious enthusiasm of Mongolian Christians for their new faith inspires non-believers and longtime Christians alike. Almost every Bible study or worship time has a lot of prayer during the meeting. Then small groups gather to pray about specific needs afterwards. "We've always been a praying people too, but I've never been in a group that prayed as much and as often and as long as these people do," Mrs. McNeely said. "This is their power and this is their resource."

Mongolian believers are fighting a spiritual battle at the same time they are growing in their own new-found faith.

As with Enkhbayar, many new believers struggle with what it means to be a Christian. Making the decision is not the hard part, said Gibbens; it's learning to live by what the Bible says.

"They need to leave behind old life and change ... in the heart," she explained. "This is the hardest thing for them. Satan holds them really tightly. Satan doesn't want to lose even one Mongol."

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Mongolia: ancient land of  
mystery hurtles into new era

Baptist Press  
5/10/93

ULAN BATOR, Mongolia (BP)--Genghis Khan. The Gobi Desert. Fleet horses and riders. Circus acrobats.

Mongolians and their land are a mystery to many in the West.

They once ruled the largest empire in history, stretching from the Pacific Ocean west into parts of Western Europe. More recent generations have lived in land-locked isolation. Legendary rulers, horsemen, traders and artists have no well-known modern counterparts.

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Today's Mongolia is a 605,000-square-mile land inhabited by 2.3 million people with the second-lowest density in the world -- four people per square mile. (The United States averages 70 persons per square mile).

Millions of Mongolians, or Mongol people, also live in the eastern regions of the former Soviet Union and in a province of China, once called Inner Mongolia. (The nation of Mongolia was once called Outer Mongolia).

Until the breakup of the Soviet empire de-emphasized Russia's power, Mongolia spent years as the meat in a superpower sandwich, surrounded by Russia and China. It still has only those two links to the outside world.

"Mongolia has two neighbors, two windows to the outside world, and it's difficult to look out of two windows at once," says Namkhaitserenglin Ganbat, an official of the Mongolian government's Committee for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts.

For decades, Mongolia saw the world through the Soviet window, becoming very dependent on the Soviets for fiscal subsidies, industrial development, education, agriculture, medical facilities and consumer products. Since that support collapsed, Mongolia has struggled for a kind of independence or interdependence with the outside world. It is redefining itself.

The 1992 legislative election was a fledgling attempt at democracy, where the fragmentation of new political groups made possible an almost complete sweep of seats by the already ruling Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP). Almost half the nation's total population, or 1.1 million people, gave 70 of 76 seats to MPRP, although only 50 percent voted for MPRP candidates. The other half of the votes were divided among many new parties and independent candidates.

This June Mongolia will elect its first president. The election follows the promulgation last year of a new constitution intended to make Mongolia's political system more democratic and its economy market-oriented.

The Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party was the ruling communist entity during seven decades. In the changing climate of 1990-91, party leaders declared the party no longer communist, some denying it ever was communist.

Many Mongolians who voted MPRP hoped for stability and a return to life before current economic hardships. Others voted for change. After the election, MPRP officials hailed the democratic process and promised to continue reforms. Losing party spokesmen vowed to learn from the experience.

One small group participating in last year's election was the Mongolian Religious Believers Party, which promotes combining the state with Buddha's teachings. Lama Buddhism was the predominant religion among Mongolians beginning in the 13-14th centuries. The Association of Mongolian Believers has 100,000 members, according to a party spokesman. They hope to make Buddhist philosophy the cornerstone of state policy and practice.

While the Buddhist believers' party may not be politically strong, it is evidence of a resurgent interest in Lama Buddhism, and religion in general, in Mongolia. For some, being Buddhist is the same as being Mongolian.

The center of Buddhist faith in Mongolia is Gandan Monastery in Ulan Bator, the capital city. It was the only one to remain open during most of the communist years, when more than 700 monasteries were closed or destroyed. Thousands of monks were killed or forced into secular work.

Endon Amgalan, deputy hamba (a title for leader) of the monastery, said it's hard to know the number of practicing Buddhists in Mongolia. He claims it would be "most people."

What it means to be Mongolian and how that's expressed and shared with other cultures is a part of the new dialogue in the country, according to cultural minister Ganbat. Mongolia is trying once again to find its soul and express it, he said.

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Ganbat envisions a Mongolia where traditional Mongolian arts and Western arts are both known and appreciated. "Culture has no borders," he said. The cultural understanding of the people is his concern, mirroring those of many in the West. "With videos (and) rock music, everybody knows Michael Jackson; a few know Shakespeare," he said.

But they are up against some concrete realities, Ganbat said. Everything from financing children's cultural activities to restoring a national traditional culture costs money at a time when there are many needs. "We need bread, sugar, petrol. We couldn't pay a lot of attention to developing traditional culture," he said.

As in many situations, a lot boils down to money.

The combination of losing Soviet aid and expertise along with the lack of a developed economy and market access to the West has brought hard times to Mongolians. It's critical to locate and efficiently use the country's natural resources. It's essential to find more markets for Mongolia's products, such as cashmere wool. It's important to solve the fuel crisis. Mongolia's airline in 1992 purchased a non-Soviet jetliner at the same time it was canceling most flights because there was no fuel. Even the train system was strapped. It's hard to move goods when there's no fuel.

Much of Mongolia's infrastructure of factories and power plants was designed and built with East European plans and technology. Now when they break down, it's difficult to impossible to get replacement parts.

Two processes of privatization began in 1991. The government issued Mongolians "small" and "large" vouchers to "buy into" the privatizing of factories, shops, businesses and livestock concerns once completely state owned. "Small" vouchers allow them to buy farm animals, cars and other goods. "Large" vouchers go toward shares in industrial facilities.

Mongolian life is a combination of the modern and the traditional. About half the people, even in some cities, live in "gers," large tents of canvas tied onto a wooden lattice frame. They are movable and suited to the semi-nomadic life of those who herd animals. Others have city apartments, western clothes, higher education and office jobs.

And however they live, Mongolians face a lot of change.

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(BP) photos (six horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Missionaries see results  
in unevangelized 'World A'

By Erich Bridges

Baptist Press  
5/10/93

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A blip appeared on the screen when Southern Baptist missionaries looked back on their efforts during 1992:

Among 1,606 churches started by Foreign Mission Board workers and their overseas partners, 20 were launched in a certain isolated area of the world.

"So what?" one might ask. What's the significance of 20 infant churches among all the other new ones, or the nearly 33,000 total churches connected to Southern Baptist missions, or countless thousands that still need starting?

Every church is significant in God's economy. But here's the special nature of those 20: They're in "World A."

World A -- so named by mission experts -- is not exactly a place, although much of it can be found in a wide swath encompassing the Mideast, North Africa, China and central and southern Asia. Rather, it's a state of being -- specifically of being mostly untouched by the Christian gospel.

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Because of the political systems, cultures, religions or borders within which they live, few people in World A have heard about Christ, much less had the chance to accept or reject him. Many of them are members of large people groups that spill across borders but identify with each other through language and ethnicity. They have no or few churches, Bibles, indigenous Christian leaders, Christian literature or broadcasts.

The number of unevangelized people now stands at about 1.19 billion -- or 21.5 percent of the world's population total -- according to missions researcher David Barrett.

Now, through Southern Baptist efforts, some of those peoples have their first church in modern times or, in several cases, their first believer.

"It's not just a matter of trying to approach these areas, or elicit prayer for these areas, or have someone researching," according to Mike Stroope of Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist aid organization which works throughout World A.

"It's a matter of seeing churches planted," he said. "In some places it's the first church among a people group, in other places the first believer among a people group. That's why we're there. It's history-making. It's their first-century church."

Added board vice president Lewis Myers: "In at least three unevangelized people groups, we've seen the first person in history come to know the Lord and be baptized."

History is cooperating, at least for now. Few could imagine 10 years ago that so many closed areas would open so quickly with the crumbling of Soviet communism. But the gospel is making its way into an empire even more closed and hostile to Christianity: the heartland of Islam.

One new believer, in an area once dominated first by Islam and then communism, now travels each weekend to a different village or factory and shows the "Jesus" film. In the past six months he has shown the film to more than 15,000 people.

"These people have many questions," he said. "Now we're learning something new, and we're filling our souls. The process of filling the emptiness is happening."

More than 40 people in his city alone read the Bible and believe it to be the Word of God. They meet in small groups to discuss their insights and ask questions.

Joining other evangelical mission groups, Southern Baptists began focusing much more sharply on restricted areas and untouched peoples in the mid- to late 1980s. Missiologists and mission researchers began producing ever more specific studies of who unevangelized peoples are and where they live.

Evangelizing the world by the year 2000 is more than a slogan or impossibly idealistic goal, they declared. It's actually possible -- but only if all evangelical Christians join together, pray specifically and use the resources and technology at their disposal to target the unreached world.

In 1985 Southern Baptists sought alternative ways, such as Cooperative Services International, to offer professional and social services to restricted countries where traditional mission work is impossible. They would seek to spread their faith as they aided such societies and, where possible, encourage local churches if any existed.

Others in Southern Baptist foreign missions also began searching out unevangelized peoples on every continent. Some missionaries had already worked for years to reach such peoples, particularly in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

As the '80s drew to a close, strategists at the Foreign Mission Board helped pioneer and launch the "nonresidential missionary" approach. Now called a "strategy coordinator," such a missionary becomes an expert, advocate, information clearinghouse, strategist and coordinator for missions to a particular unevangelized people, country, city or area -- whether or not he can live among his target group.

Then the communist world began to fall apart, opening up additional big pieces of World A to Christian outreach.

The strategic shift toward seriously targeting World A -- the "A" means Priority No. 1 -- has been anything but painless at the Foreign Mission Board and other evangelical mission agencies. Leaders have debated about whether to concentrate on more open or responsive areas.

Thousands of missionaries work in so-called Worlds B and C -- regions where people can hear the gospel relatively freely and traditionally "Christian" countries or peoples. Many of them argue that their mission fields are just as needy and wonder if their ministries are being devalued by the emphasis on World A.

The debate isn't over, but most agree that Christians as a whole must put far more effort into reaching World A -- whatever the cost or difficulty -- if "world" evangelism plans like Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust are to address the entire globe.

Meanwhile, actual ministries in World A have quietly developed. And in 1992 the effort by Southern Baptists began to pay off, with small groups of believers meeting among previously unreached people groups.

Southern Baptist missionaries overall now live in 129 countries, assist ministries in 27 others and have a Christian witness in 11 additional nations. Some countries in all three of those categories fall into World A, especially the latter two.

Cooperative Services International began with a few English teachers in China. By the end of 1992 nearly 300 CSI workers were on the field -- double the 1991 total -- with more than 90 job requests in for additional full-time workers.

In 1988, the Foreign Mission Board decided to work toward reaching no less than 300 of the 3,000 unevangelized people groups in the world identified by mission researchers -- a seemingly unreachable goal. But four years later, strategy coordinators had been assigned to 52 of those groups containing more than 371 million people. Another 16 target groups, representing 162 million people, take priority for assigning strategists this year. Up to 113 of the total 300 groups picked in 1988 could have Southern Baptist workers assigned to them in the reasonably near future.

Enormous obstacles remain, including violent opposition in some cultures, suspicious governments and a resurgent Islam that tolerates no other faiths in large areas of the world.

But a recent letter from Stroope to Southern Baptist workers in World A sums up their goal with a comparison to the 10 Israelites Moses sent to scout out Canaan:

"You and I work with the promise that all peoples of the world are to hear the gospel Jesus Christ," Stroope wrote. "Some have reported that this is unfeasible, unwise, or just plain foolishness. But I have heard from many of you as you have scouted out the lands, peoples and cities that while difficulties and obstacles abound, the land can be taken. I choose to believe your reports, because of the promise which God has made to us."

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(BP) graphic (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

McGee wrote best-seller  
out of personal struggles

By Kay Moore

Baptist Press  
5/10/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Robert McGee was a tall, seemingly self-assured college basketball player who later was decorated for his service in Vietnam. To help others, he became a counselor with a master's degree in clinical psychology.

But even after he began counseling fellow Christians with their personal problems, McGee stayed up nights "wondering what people thought about me and whether I shook this person or that person's hand right."

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His struggles with issues of self-condemnation and self-worth resulted in a book first released in 1982, "The Search for Significance," that he's been told has prompted suicidal individuals to "put away their guns and their pills." The LIFE Support edition of the book recently was published by the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division.

McGee, 46, a lifelong Southern Baptist who grew up in Oklahoma, said he wrote "The Search for Significance" to share the concepts that helped him recover from his personal struggles of young adulthood.

"I had to learn how God wanted me to relate to myself," he said. "If how we relate to ourselves is messed up, then how are we ever going to relate properly to someone else?"

In "The Search for Significance," McGee guides "approval addicts" and those caught up in gaining their sense of worth from their accomplishments to learn instead how to base their self-worth on the love, acceptance and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

The same concepts are the basis on which McGee in 1986 founded Houston-based Rapha, a nationwide network managing hospital-based, in-patient psychiatric care and substance-abuse treatment from a Christian perspective.

McGee said he, like many, can trace his struggles to family dynamics of his childhood. As he grew up in Norman, Okla., his mother spent much of her time caring for McGee's invalid brother and father. His life circumstances, combined with his shyness, caused McGee to feel loneliness and a lack of self-worth.

A Christian since age 6, McGee as a University of Oklahoma student was active in Baptist Student Union and Campus Crusade for Christ.

After his military service in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot, when he won the Purple Heart and other decorations, he earned a master's degree at Oklahoma State University and began serving as a counselor for churches in Duncan, Moore and Norman, Okla.

While going through the motions of Christian service, McGee said he began to "realize that even though I had been directed by him (God) in a lot of ways, I had never experienced his love and never recognized him as a father to me."

He began telling God about his feelings as he drove to churches to conduct counseling sessions. The answers he received from God, he recounted, underscored God's creation of individuals in his image as the true measure of their worth, not their mistakes -- a message that became the basis for "The Search for Significance."

The book has sold more than a half million copies under its Rapha imprint. "Search for Significance: LIFE Support Edition" appears in a workbook format and features self-paced interactive learning activities. A youth edition, "The Search," will be released this summer.

McGee said he believes the book has been successful and has encouraged troubled individuals because "if the truth were known, we're all strugglers. People look at others and believe others are much better off than they are. I don't know anyone who's got it together 120 percent. We're all on a trip with God. That's where I am."

McGee said he formed Rapha out of concern that some of his Christian counselees with destructive and addictive behaviors felt they could not find in-patient care in a facility that would respect their Christian faith.

McGee also began training lay counselors and became a pioneer in church-based, small-group ministry. To support the Sunday School Board's efforts in the field, McGee has donated several books published by Rapha for adaptation by the board.

Courses to be released in 1993 and 1994 include:

- "Untangling Relationships: A Christian Perspective on Codependency."
- "Conquering Codependency: A Christ-Centered 12-Step Process."
- "Conquering Eating Disorders: A Christ-Centered 12-Step Process."
- "Shelter from the Storm: Hope for Victims of Sexual Abuse."
- "Breaking the Cycle of Hurtful Family Experiences."

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-- "Conquering Chemical Dependency: A Christ-Centered 12-Step Process."

McGee receives no money from the board's sale of the adapted books, although non-Rapha authors receive royalty payments.

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Moore is design editor of LIFE Support materials in the BSSB discipleship and family adult department.

Peggy Masters retires after  
15 years with Penn/Jersey

By Betty R. Kemp

Baptist Press  
5/10/93

HARRISBURG, Pa. (BP)--Peggy Masters, editor of the Penn/Jersey Baptist, has retired after 15 years of service to the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey.

She is now living in Garland, Texas, taking care of her mother, Elma Masters, and planning to continue in writing and volunteer work.

During her tenure with the Penn/Jersey convention, Masters also was director of the Woman's Missionary Union and Christian social ministries.

She was named editor of the Baptist paper in 1992 by the convention's executive board after 13 years as managing editor.

A native of Commerce, Texas, Masters is a graduate of East Texas State University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. She also studied at Vanderbilt University and Auburn University.

Before her work with Penn/Jersey Baptists, Masters was residence hall director for 525 women students at the Arkansas State University.

Her other experiences included public school teaching in Texas and Vermont; director of student activities, Baptist Hospital School of Nursing in Nashville; associate Baptist campus minister at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa; and director of Baptist Young Women-Acteens Work, Alabama WMU.

Within the Penn/Jersey convention, Masters established missions education programs in each of the state's Baptist associations, along with a women's ministry meeting, "Dawning I" and "Dawning II" which brought together women from across the state to be educated in missions and equipped for service in their communities.

Geri Hutchinson, associate director of church and community ministries for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said, "Peggy has been a great person to work with ... very cordial and affirming in her relationships. She has done a lot to build teamship among ministry missionaries and expand ministries in the churches of Pennsylvania/South Jersey."

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Catholics open their building  
to town's new Baptist church

By Denise Spencer

Baptist Press  
5/10/93

JACKSON, Ky. (BP)--An unlikely partnership has developed between a Roman Catholic congregation and a new Baptist congregation in the small eastern Kentucky town of Jackson.

"If this really works out, it will be one of the biggest witnesses in the county," said Sister Lydia Villegas of Holy Cross Catholic Church.

For more than a year, Holy Cross has been sharing its facilities with New Hope Community Baptist Church. In March 1992, the two congregations signed a covenant agreement of cooperation.

The Baptist church got its start in October 1991 when a small group of people left First Baptist Church in Jackson due to what some have called a "difference of vision."

Mark Driskill, who had resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church, agreed to help get the new church started but didn't plan to stay there long.

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However, after much prayer Driskill and his wife, Mary Royals Driskill, decided they still had a ministry in Jackson. He accepted the position as pastor, and Mrs. Driskill became minister of education and church secretary.

After reaching a high attendance goal of 60 after only two months, New Hope was constituted as a church Dec. 29, 1991.

The congregation met in homes the first four weeks, then moved to an empty storefront in a shopping center before moving to the Catholic church in February 1992.

The covenant agreement signed between the two congregations instructs each body to respect the other's traditions of worship. Any events New Hope schedules are approved beforehand by Sister Villegas, pastoral director at Holy Cross, or Father Rock Travnikar.

New Hope pays Holy Cross each month for use of the building, and the relationship is evaluated every six months by leaders of both congregations.

A sign in the Holy Cross church yard now identifies the building as the meeting site of both Baptist and Catholic churches.

The sisters of Holy Cross "have been the most gracious people I've ever seen," Driskill reported.

Members of each church sometimes visit each other's services. Last October they had a joint Halloween party.

Sister Villegas said the relationship has brought both churches greater recognition in the area. She hopes members and outsiders alike will be reminded that "we're worshipping the same Lord."

Driskill agreed: "It's been a tremendous witness in the community."

New Hope now offers a wide range of ministries, including education, missions, music, a "Kids' Klub" and special programming for women, singles, college students, youth and the deaf.

Beginning a church from scratch is both difficult and rewarding," the Driskills agreed. "We're trying to do things that haven't been done before," Mrs. Driskill explained. "That's part of the struggle and the joy. We try to turn the minuses into pluses."

New Hope's situation has forced creative thinking. When the education space at Holy Cross proved to be inadequate for a Baptist-style Vacation Bible School, New Hope decided to hold backyard Bible clubs in two neighborhoods.

When plans for a 6 p.m. evening worship service conflicted with another event in the building, New Hope decided to hold vespers services outdoors from May through September, and average attendance at the services zoomed from 12 to 40.

Most of New Hope's additions have been people not involved in any church before, Driskill said. Consequently, equipping members for ministry has been a top priority.

The church's deacons are learning counseling skills, and the Brotherhood is focusing on mission action projects.

"These are young professional people who have never before had a chance to do ministry," Driskill said. "It's so exciting to watch them grow."

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Spencer is a correspondent for Kentucky Baptists' Western Recorder newsjournal.

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