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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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NASHVILLE -- BSSB offering assistance to churches damaged by flooding.

PENNSYLVANIA -- Missionary Joanne LaGette dies in head-on car crash.

TEXAS -- RTVC joins in plan to reach students via sports, music.

FLORIDA -- First Baptist Dallas considering O.S. Hawkins.

BSSB offering assistance
to churches damaged by flooding

Baptist Press
8/24/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist churches damaged or destroyed by the recent flooding in the Midwest can receive assistance from the Baptist Sunday School Board in the form of free replacement of dated literature and discounts on other materials, BSSB President James T. Draper Jr., announced.

"It is with a heavy heart that I have watched the damage done by flood waters in your area. I pledge to you the prayer support that will be vital as individuals and churches in your state convention rebuild their ministries," Draper wrote in a recent letter to state executive directors in affected states.

In addition to prayer support, Draper said the uninsured loss of the following products will be replaced at the discount listed:

- dated church literature, 100 percent;
- Convention Press and undated church literature (hymnals, VBS materials, church study courses, etc.), 50 percent;
- Broadman & Holman books, Bibles, and audiovisuals, 50 percent;
- Genevox music products, 50 percent;
- church furniture, steeples, baptistries, and audiovisual equipment, 15 percent;
- choir robes, baptismal garments, Lord's Supper supplies, 30 percent;
- library supplies, offering envelopes, 25 percent.

Churches in need of help should contact their state convention office for assistance. A representative in each affected state will forward the request to Mark King, director of the BSSB's direct marketing department.

This isn't the first time the board's policy of providing assistance to churches damaged or destroyed by disasters has been enacted. The BSSB assisted dozens of churches damaged by last year's hurricanes -- Andrew and Iniki.

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Missionary Joanne LaGette
dies in head-on car crash

By Randal K. Cowling

Baptist Press
8/24/93

GETTYSBURG, Pa. (BP)--A car accident claimed the life of veteran Southern Baptist home missionary Joanne LaGette Aug. 22 as she was driving to a newly formed mission's second meeting.

LaGette was traveling west on Penn. Hwy. 116, just three miles from Gettysburg, Pa., when a car attempted to pass, hitting LaGette's vehicle head-on. She was pronounced dead at the scene by Adams County Coroner Pat Linbach.

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The driver of the other car, Wayne Williams of Gettysburg, suffered minor injuries to his leg. He was taken to the Adams County Prison for parole violation.

The 62-year-old LaGette was on her way to the Fairfield Baptist Mission for its Sunday morning service. The accident occurred at 9:16 a.m., according to the Pennsylvania State Police. She had assisted the Central Baptist Chapel in Mont Alto, Pa., in starting the mission which held its inaugural service one week earlier.

LaGette, a home missionary since 1979, had been church extension field consultant for Keystone and South Jersey Baptist associations since 1990. Prior to serving in the Northeast, she was a church extension/church starter strategist for the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. She had also worked in New York, California and South Carolina.

Funeral services are planned for Aug. 26 at the Westminster (S.C.) Baptist Church.

She had earned the bachelor of arts degree from Winthrop (S.C.) College; a master of social work degree from the University of Tennessee; the master of religious education, master of divinity and the doctor of ministry degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

She is survived by one daughter, Linda L. Faulkner of Humboldt, Tenn; a brother, Frank Lumkin of Seneca, S.C.; and three grandchildren.

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Cowling is interim managing editor of the Penn-Jersey Baptist, newsjournal of the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/So. Jersey.

RTVC joins in plan to reach
students via sports, music

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
8/24/93

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--FamilyNet, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Pyramid Productions have joined forces to offer students and young adults an entertaining, Christian way to celebrate special events.

"We are excited to be using the power of television, the influence of athletes and the energy of contemporary Christian artists to make an impact on students for Christ," said Dal Shealy, president of Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

The project is "Let's Party and Say W.H.A.T. (What He's About Today) -- Sharing the Victory" TV series, which is built around special events such as Halloween, the Super Bowl, the men's "Final Four" basketball championship and the baseball all-star game.

The concept is for church and campus ministries to host parties in churches, homes or schools to meet the specific needs of their youth, centered around a live, nationally televised broadcast that brings together sports personalities and Christian recording artists. The celebrities share, through testimony and song, what God is doing in their lives.

Guest lineup for the Halloween Alternative show is Star Song recording artists Two Hearts, Keith Brown, Disciples of Christ (D.O.C.) and video by Newsboys. Athletes include Buffalo Bills Quarterback Frank Reich; Betsy King, LPGA golfer expected to be inducted into the Ladies Golf Hall of Fame; and Michigan's basketball great Rob Pelinka. Other guests include comedian and ventriloquist Dennis Lee and insight into deception by investigative journalist and master illusionist Dan Korem.

Halloween is on Sunday this year and the first program will be a straight one-hour show aired at the following times in each zone; Eastern, 8 p.m.; Central, 7 p.m.; Mountain, 8 p.m.; and Pacific, 7 p.m.

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"We're bringing in high-profile athletes who have integrity," said Mitch Beckman, Christian program manager for the Pyramid Group. "We don't want them to sell Jesus, we want them to share Jesus. And we mix the sports personalities with contemporary Christian artists. It's a way to reach students in a non-threatening manner."

The program is being promoted by the FCA's 4,500-plus "Huddle Groups" nationwide. Many churches are represented in each "Huddle Group."

A "Party Plan Kit" has been created with ideas and promotional material to help each church and student organization maximize the event. Beckman said "as a former youth pastor, I asked myself what I would need to make this event effective, then with that in mind we created the kit." People interested in the Party Plan Kit and hosting the party can get more information by calling toll-free 1-800-947-6411.

"The TV show gives an athlete a chance to talk to a large group of students at one time," he said, "and exposes a lot of students to contemporary Christian music. Sports, music and high-profile celebrities are big attractions to students, so we're just unashamedly using these strong influences for the glory of God."

Beckman, a native of Lake City, Fla., said baseball was once his god, but he gave his life to Christ behind second base during practice at Piedmont College in Georgia.

"We make no apology for asking athletes to share their experience with Christ," Beckman said. "Usually everybody talks but no one does anything. We're asking people to do something."

"We're getting a lot of community support because the parties are tied in with a national event. We're taking influences that are already there and using them with integrity."

FamilyNet is a broadcast television program service owned and operated by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, carried by 120 TV stations reaching more than 40 million homes. Pyramid, headquartered in Dallas, is the largest, full-service video communications company in the Southwest. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes is a Christian movement serving students and coaches in more than 4,000 schools at the junior high, senior high and college levels. Founded in 1954, FCA conducts summer camps serving some 10,000 athletes and coaches each year.

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First Baptist Dallas
considering O.S. Hawkins

By Christopher Boyd
The Dallas Morning News

Baptist Press
8/24/93

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (BP)--Asking for its prayers, Pastor O.S. Hawkins told his teary-eyed congregation Aug. 22 that he faces a "monumental" decision on whether to take the pulpit of First Baptist Church of Dallas, the nation's largest Southern Baptist church.

Hawkins, who has led First Baptist Church of Fort Lauderdale through 15 years of rapid growth, is a search committee's choice to become pastor of the 125-year-old downtown Dallas church, the committee's chairman told the Dallas congregation Sunday.

Applause broke out in the towering sanctuary of the 28,000 member Dallas church when committee chairman Herschel Forester announced the choice of the Fort Worth, Texas native. A formal announcement had been scheduled for Wednesday, but news accounts revealed Hawkins' name.

Hawkins told worshipers during a Sunday sermon that he would preach in Dallas Aug. 29 before announcing his plans. The Dallas church, a national center of conservative Christianity, is to vote on Hawkins' appointment after the Sunday evening worship service.

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"I'm going to make the most monumental decision of my life in the next few days," Hawkins said. "I'm not 100 percent sure of what God's will is yet. If it's God's will for me to be the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, it will not be God's will for me to stay here."

Hawkins would become heir to W.A. Criswell as leader of the Dallas church, considered among the most prestigious Baptist pulpits in the nation. He would replace Joel C. Gregory, who was the church's pastor for less than two years.

In announcing his resignation last year, Gregory cited differences with Criswell, 83, now the church's senior pastor. Hawkins was considered a favorite of Criswell's and a leading contender for the post that Gregory won.

The eight-member search committee tried "only to seek God's will" during the nine-month search, Forester told the congregation. The panel reviewed 75 prospects before unanimously settling on Hawkins, he said.

Several Dallas church members said they were happy to see Hawkins nominated after a year with no permanent pastor. Some were still reluctant to see Criswell take a back seat three years after he relinquished the pastor's role.

"We're very excited to get a new pastor," said church member Susan Tannehill. "I'm also sorry to see Dr. Criswell leave. He's been a great man and a tremendous influence on the church."

The 45-year-old Hawkins has deep roots in Texas. He grew up in Fort Worth, where he attended Sagamore Hills Baptist Church and graduated from Texas Christian University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"His major gift is that he is a very people-oriented individual," said Lawrence Klempnauer, who was Sagamore Hills' minister of education when Hawkins was a youth group member there. "He has been able to relate to all ages, even as a young teen-ager."

After graduating from seminary, Hawkins returned to his home church as minister of youth. Klempnauer said he has seen Hawkins develop into an excellent preacher and an experienced church leader.

"What he did at First Baptist in Fort Lauderdale was very significant, leading them into an important building program," Klempnauer said.

The prospect of losing Hawkins has jolted his Fort Lauderdale congregation.

Under the pastor's tutelage, the downtown church's membership tripled to more than 10,000. In a region where many mainstream churches are in steady decline, Fort Lauderdale's First Baptist has bucked a trend.

After Sunday's services, parishioners gathered in small groups in the lobby of the massive 3,500-seat church that Hawkins built three years ago.

"He's a truly special man," said Bob Brunges, a member of the church for two years. "He called me when I was searching for a new church, and he came to see me in my study at home. It was amazing. You get the feeling he wants to know everybody."

Annette Quigley, a church member since 1970 and a singer in the choir, said Hawkins' accessible style and penchant for the unconventional contributed to the church's popularity.

Under his direction, the church yearly prepared Thanksgiving feasts for the homeless, began a program for divorced members, and adopted a unique Christmas tradition.

"During our Christmas pageant, he brought large animals into the church -- I mean goats and camels. It was truly spectacular," Quigley said. "He says a lot of churches wouldn't permit animals inside. But then he adds that a lot of those same churches don't do a very good job of bringing people in, either."

Dennis DeHart moved to Fort Lauderdale last fall after Hurricane Andrew destroyed his house in Homestead. He said Hawkins helped him through a tough period.

"When we lost our home, this church filled a void," DeHart said, his eyes growing moist. "The love we needed came from that pulpit up there. We feel proud and honored to have known him. We know that if he leaves, a new preacher will come to us with God's word."

"We have to remember that as much as we need O.S., it's possible that there may be an even greater need for him in Dallas."

After listening to Hawkins recall the changes that he's made during his life and the pain he felt in leaving former ministries, Gladys Sterling said she was reluctantly prepared to lose her preacher.

"He's one of the most thoughtful and loving pastors anywhere," Sterling said. "If he leaves, he'll take a big chunk of my heart with him. But I know that if he goes, God's will will be served."

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