

**(BP)**

**-- BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2355  
Herb Hollinger, Vice President  
Fax (615) 742-8919  
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

**BUREAUS**

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522  
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232  
NASHVILLE 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
WASHINGTON Tom Storde, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

January 14, 1994

94-8

BELGIUM -- Iranian man sentenced to death for converting to Christianity; list.  
BELGIUM -- Iran targets Christians again with new decrees.  
ALABAMA -- Wrap-up: WMU leaders vote to streamline missions education approaches.  
VIRGINIA -- Pittman to head public affairs at Foreign Mission Board; photo.  
DALLAS -- Church gains new life by giving itself away.  
MIAMI -- Language pioneer still pioneering creative ways to reach ethnics.  
FLORIDA -- Gator quarterbacks share faith as power behind their lives.  
NASHVILLE -- Beware of fundraisers who cannot fulfill their promises.  
NASHVILLE -- Correction.

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SCIENCE  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

EDITORS' NOTE: This story updates and replaces the (BP) story with the same headline dated 1/13/94.

**Iranian man sentenced to death  
for converting to Christianity**

**Baptist Press  
1/14/94**

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)--An Iranian man has been sentenced to death for becoming a Christian.

Mehdi Dibaj, 59, was scheduled to be executed Jan. 12 -- or at any time after that date -- for "apostasy," or turning from Islam, by an Islamic court in the northeastern city of Sari, Iran. Church leaders in Iran familiar with the case think he could be executed within 10 days after Jan. 12.

Dibaj has been in a prison in Sari since 1983. He has been repeatedly tortured, and he spent two of those years in solitary confinement in an unlighted 3-by-3-foot cell.

He is an evangelist affiliated with the Assemblies of God in Iran, an indigenous group with fraternal ties to the Assemblies of God in other parts of the world. Earlier reports had listed him as not affiliated with any one group.

The U.S. State Department has called on Iran to abide by the human rights agreements it has signed and release Dibaj, whose case file number, according to released documents, is 1690/69 K7. The verdict prescribing the death sentence is number 1766/72, issued by Branch Number 7 of the Punitive Court of Sari.

Dibaj was declared innocent of the charge of cursing the prophet Mohammed. But in finding him guilty of apostasy, the court reasoned that Dibaj was born Muslim because his mother and father were Muslim. At age 12 Dibaj observed some of Islam's religious duties, the court record noted, but from age 12 to 19 "he did not have faith in any religion, but was non-religious." At age 19, however, he chose "the religion of Christianity."

The court cited three passages from Islamic law as support for its ruling. One states that a person who is "born a Muslim" but chooses a non-Islamic religion or discards Islam "should be given the opportunity to repent or be killed."

A 1993 change in Iranian law makes the death penalty automatic for anyone accused of apostasy -- that is, converting to any non-Muslim religion.

--more--

But Dibaj criticized the way the Islamic court reached its final decision. The court used five different legal traditions "each of which contradicts the other," he wrote, instead of applying the law.

In a pivotal trial Dec. 3 Dibaj was given a chance to renounce his Christian faith or face death. But he refused and answered instead with a strong affirmation of his faith in Christ.

Three times since that trial the original death sentence has been referred to Iran's Supreme Court after Dibaj wrote letters of protest. Each time the court has affirmed the original sentence. Dibaj refused to write a fourth appeal.

"Since he is not ready to write a protesting letter to the Supreme Court, his execution is most probable," a Christian leader inside Iran wrote.

Dibaj's son, Yousef Dibaj, visited his father at the Sari prison Jan. 12.

"I talked with the judge and he advised me to make an appeal and get it signed by my father," the younger Dibaj reported in a printed statement released to the West by church leaders.

"I wrote it and then visited my father in prison. I told my father that Christians all over the world were praying for him. He was so excited to hear that. Then I urged him to sign the appeal. He refused and said, 'Please tell ... all who pray for me that I believe this is my hour of trial like Abraham. I will not bow before the worldly-minded people and beg them for my release or forgiveness! I am quite ready for execution. This is a privilege that no one has the right to take away from me!'"

The son said he prayed with his father, then started towards the door to leave when he was stopped by a policeman.

"He asked, 'What were you telling your father about Christians in the U.S.A. and Europe?' I answered, 'I assured my father that Christians were praying for his release.' Then he angrily told me that he had listened to our conversation and said, 'You will also be in this prison soon.' I said, 'It is a privilege to suffer for our faith in Christ.' He was so furious that he approached the guards and told them not to let me visit my father in prison any more," Yousef Dibaj stated.

A judge told Yousef Dibaj the court would send an "execution file" to the government execution office and that a date would be chosen for his father's execution.

"(The judge) said that it could be ... two weeks or more. Forty-eight hours prior to his execution he will be informed so that his children or relatives can visit him. The judge said, 'Since he has written his will and delivered it to us and has asked us to hasten the time of his execution, then no one can stop it. Even the UN cannot help in this case.'"

Mehdi Dibaj said in a separate published statement that if his case were referred to the higher court for a fourth time, the judgment would remain the same and it would only stretch out his prison sentence. He accepts the court verdict, he said, "with joy and peace."

According to his printed statements and to those who know him, Dibaj is prepared to die.

"When they gave me the verdict, my heart was filled with joy because I see my name goes to be listed among the names of the people who were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ," he wrote. "This is for the test of our faith to show how far we are ready to follow Him."

In a brief part of the statement intended as his will, Dibaj asked the court to "expedite the process of carrying out the sentence." He also asked for communion to be served by two church leaders, asked that a cross remain around his neck and that his body be given to a medical school.

"I donate my belongings to the church and give my children into the hands of God who is able to keep them safe so that they grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," he wrote.

Christian workers familiar with the case have appealed for world prayer support. They also are seeking to focus world attention on increased abuses of religious liberty in Iran.

"Thus far the authorities have not acknowledged the fact that in Iran people are being persecuted because of their beliefs," said one Iranian Christian leader living outside Iran. "It is felt that prayer and action will help to bring this issue before the government and end threats and persecution against these converts."

Government leaders publicly insist Iran has freedom of religion and that no one suffers for his beliefs. But church leaders in Iran have begun to document and publicize the widespread abuse they suffer, hoping international attention will help them. They have sent statements from Dibaj and a translation of his court record to churches outside Iran, for example. The church leaders have appealed to the United Nations and others for help.

Assemblies of God leaders in Iran recently voted to speak out against the persecution they have suffered, reaching the conclusion that their policy of "let us keep silent and see what will happen next" is wrong.

"We have nothing else to lose. We have been tolerant all these years and kept silent. Nothing has changed," one leader wrote. "Our Iranian Muslims are quite aggressive. Maybe we have to be aggressive too."

Iranian believers react sharply to claims by government leaders that churches are free. On Oct. 17, they point out, the country's parliament passed a law requiring the religious affiliation of all Iranians to be marked on government identity cards required for any business transaction. Last May the government ordered non-Muslim shopkeepers to post signs on their shops announcing their religious affiliations.

In June the government ordered all Christian churches to sign statements declaring they would not evangelize Muslims. Not all the churches cooperated.

In Kermanshah members of an Assyrian Pentecostal group have been beaten and hanged upside down for many hours at a time. One member's arm was broken. Meetings have been stopped and the pastor forbidden to leave the country.

In October the government closed an Assembly of God church in Gorgan, a city in northeastern Iran. Five Muslim converts who are church members were beaten for hours and forced to deny their faith in Christ. They also were forced to be videotaped "confessing" that they were deceived by Christians to convert.

In Mashad, Mohammed Sepehr, also a Muslim convert who is pastor of a church, has been taken into custody by police weekly for questioning and repeatedly beaten. Sepehr replaced Hosein Soodmand, an evangelical pastor who was hanged in December 1990. Other members of the church also have been questioned and beaten.

Last June police stormed an Assembly of God congregation worshipping in a garden in the city of Isfahan. Police scaled the walls of the garden, surrounded the group and demanded to see the identity cards of all worshipers. The group's pastor was questioned and pressured to sign a statement affirming he would not allow Muslims to enter his church. He refused, explaining it wouldn't do for an Iranian to turn away a visitor.

Two days later Islamic guards on motorcycles surrounded the church and kept out anyone with a Muslim background. Fifteen Muslim converts who had attended the church have not been allowed to worship since then. In Isfahan and Shiraz, Muslim converts of Anglican congregations also have been interrogated, threatened and prevented from attending services.

Despite such problems, some church groups have been pressured by the government to write letters to the United Nations saying they have full freedoms inside Iran. But Iranian Christians are anxious to show that persecution is happening -- and that Dibaj is being executed for nothing more than leaving Islam, as court records show.

"As you pray for Dibaj, please don't forget to pray for the salvation of 60 million Iranians for whom Christ laid down His life on the cross," wrote one Christian leader outside Iran.

"No nation has been won to Christ without witness that accompanies sacrifice. Iranian Christians are ready to die for their Lord because they believe it is in the plan and purpose of God to bring many Iranians to Christ by the proclamation of the gospel."

--30--

What you can do for Mehdi Dibaj

Iranian Christians have called on Christians around the world to pray and intervene on behalf of Mehdi Dibaj, condemned to death in Iran for accepting Christ as his personal Savior.

Iranian Christians outside Iran have provided the list below of Iranian officials to contact by fax, telegram, telex or express mail to express concern at the sentence passed against Dibaj.

The leaders suggest Christians appeal not only for Dibaj, but also that the arrest and torture of Muslim converts to Christianity be stopped and that the converts be allowed to attend church. American Christians also are urged to contact their congressmen.

Ambassador Kamal Kharrazi of Iran  
Permanent Representative to the United  
Nations

United Nations  
New York, N.Y. 10017  
Fax (212) 867-7086

Iran Interests Section  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
Embassy of Pakistan  
2209 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20007  
Phone (202) 965-4990  
Fax (202) 965-1073

Copies of appeals can be sent to:

His Excellency Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Avenue  
Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
Phone in Iran: 011-98-21-3211

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar  
Hashemi Rafsanjani  
The Presidency  
Palestine Avenue  
Azerbaijan Intersection  
Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
Phone in Iran: 011-98-21-6161  
(They will not speak English.)  
Telegrams: President Rafsanjani,  
Tehran, Iran  
Telexes: 214231 MITI IR; 213113 PRIM  
IR

(Marked for the attention of President  
Rafsanjani)

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Ayatollah Seyed Ali  
Khamanei

The Presidency  
Palestine Avenue  
Azerbaijan Intersection  
Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
Phone in Iran: 011-98-21-6161 (They  
will not speak English.)

His Excellency Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi  
Head of the Judiciary

Ministry of Justice

Park-e Shahr

Tehran

Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Tehran,  
Iran

Telexes: 214231 MITI IR; 213113 PRIM IR

(Marked for the attention of Justice  
Minister)

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Mohammad Ali Besharati  
Jahromi

Ministry of Interior

Minister of Interior

Dr. Fatemi Avenue

Tehran

Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Tehran,  
Iran

Telexes: 214231 MITI IR; 213113 PRIM IR

(Marked attention of Interior Minister)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Appeals for action also can be sent to:

Amnesty International, International  
Secretariat  
London, United Kingdom  
Fax: 011-44-71-9561157

United Nations New York Office  
Center for Human Rights  
Fax: 212-963-4097

Iran targets Christians  
again with new decrees

Baptist Press  
1/14/94

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)--Iran has again lashed out at Christian churches by passing two new laws intended to inhibit their growth and ministry.

One decree forbids Muslims to enter church buildings while a second bans church services conducted in Farsi, Iran's official language.

"This affects all Protestant churches, which in Iran are composed of converts from Islam for whom it is natural to worship in Farsi," said Patrick Sookhedeo, director of the International Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity.

The London-based institute, which reported on the new rulings, monitors events in Iran as part of its work in helping churches in Muslim areas.

Iran drew new international attention to its harsh anti-Christian stance when it announced Jan. 12 that one Muslim convert, Mehdi Dibaj, would be executed for "apostasy," or turning from Islam. The sentence was expected to be carried out within 10 days.

Sookhedeo said the new decrees are "moderate" compared to demands from fanatical elements in Iran that want to execute all converts to Christianity who refuse to return to Islam. Islamic law in fact decrees that all male "apostates" should be killed, he said.

"There are estimated to be at least 10,000 Muslim converts in Iran," Sookhedeo said. "Given that the Iranian government has already executed approximately 95,000 political prisoners since the revolution of 1979, the Protestant churches take v ry seriously this threat of extermination."

If Iran executes Dibaj, it would not be the first time the state put an Iranian to death for embracing Christianity. The government hanged Hossein Soodmand, 55, an Assemblies of God minister charged with spying, in December 1990.

Soodmand was imprisoned and tortured for two months before his death. He had worked with the Iranian Bible Society and sold Bibles across Iran. Later he worked as an evangelist in a Christian hospital in Isfahan and worked with a mission for the blind. Soodmand's body was never returned to his family.

In December 1992 another convert to Christianity was about to be executed when he signaled to his executioners that he would remain a Muslim; his life was spared. Other believers have disappeared without a trace and are assumed dead, Christians in Iran have reported in recent years.

A similar incident occurred last year when a church member was ordered to appear in court and report on his pastor's sermons. When he refused he was accused of apostasy and condemned to death. A noose was placed around the man's neck and his family was marched in before him. Officials told him to repudiate Christianity and be loyal to Islam or they would hang his family after him. He broke under the pressure and agreed to give up Christianity.

In June all Christian churches were ordered to sign a statement declaring they would not evangelize Muslims. Pastors and church members have been arrested and beaten by police, services disrupted and churches closed during recent months, Christians report.

--more--

But such actions are not new in Iran. In 1990, for example, the state closed down the Iranian Bible Society. Earlier the printing of Bible portions was prohibited and the importation of Farsi-language Bibles was banned. In the case of one Bible-based booklet, the government's Office of Religious Minorities told the society it could not refer to Jesus as "Son of God" or "Lord," but only as "prophet." The society did not print the booklet.

Publicly, Iranian government officials have denied religious persecution in Iran.

--30--

### Wrap-up

WMU leaders vote to streamline  
missions education approaches

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press  
1/14/94

TALLADEGA, Ala. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union executive board continued a yearlong task of streamlining WMU programs for more simplicity, flexibility and relevance at its Jan. 8-13 meeting.

The board voted to move from two adult missions education organizations ("Baptist Women" and "Baptist Young Women") to one called "Women on Mission," effective October 1995.

It also voted to publish a new magazine -- "Missions Mosaic" -- to succeed its current "Royal Service" and "Contempo" magazines in October 1995. It will also publish "Missions Mosaic Executive" for adult leaders.

In merging "Baptist Women" and "Baptist Young Women" into "Women on Mission," WMU leaders emphasized that missions education for young women will continue.

Women of all ages may configure Women on Mission for young groups flexibly -- retaining the "Baptist" designation if they wish -- and customizing groups on the basis of such factors as age, task, common interest or needs, according to WMU Executive Director Dellanna W. O'Brien.

The changes represent business left over after last year's action when the board adopted a new "Church WMU Base Design," the document which defines WMU tasks and what WMU will be like in the local church.

The five-day meeting reflected an upbeat spirit of working together to streamline and retool programs to strengthen missions support, education and action. It was attended by state WMU presidents, who make up the board; state WMU executive directors and their staffs; national WMU staff and others.

But the meeting also reflected a desire to make an impact on issues which affect people's lives -- such as hunger, AIDS and the problems of children.

WMU will confront those three issues, launching national projects on hunger, 1994-95; AIDS, 1995-96; and child advocacy, 1996-97.

"Project Help: Hunger," designed by WMU to share the gospel by meeting physical and spiritual needs, will feature a variety of approaches, including a drive to collect one million cans of food by Feb. 12, 1995, to distribute to hungry people.

WMU will also ask for a donation of 25 cents per can to buy additional staples such as beans, rice and flour.

The hunger project will be funded with \$67,600 from WMU's Vision Fund, created last June to accept contributions for missions projects and the ongoing work of the Woman's Missionary Union. The fund has received more than \$100,000 since it was announced.

WMU also approved Vision Fund support for several other projects, including \$30,000 to establish a missions museum at the WMU national office in Birmingham, Ala., in honor of Alma Hunt, WMU's fourth executive director.

The executive board also voted to raise the 1995 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions goal to \$50 million, and anticipate voting in June to raise the 1995 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions goal to \$100 million.

--more--

The goal changes, requested by the presidents of the Foreign and Home Mission Boards, would point toward Southern Baptists raising \$150 million for missions during the Southern Baptist Convention's 150th anniversary.

Both presidents, Jerry Rankin of the Foreign Mission Board and Larry Lewis of the Home Mission Board, addressed the WMU executive board.

Rankin cited breakthroughs which have opened formerly closed countries to missionaries and resulted in escalating evangelism and church growth overseas. He said, "God is on mission" in the world and that Southern Baptists may achieve their Bold Mission Thrust goals if they focus on what God is doing, rather than their own strategies, methods and plans.

Lewis, citing projected income shortfalls, challenged his audience to re-double their efforts in supporting the 1994 Annie Armstrong Offering, as well as the denomination's Cooperative Program.

He challenged Southern Baptists to lead their churches to increase CP giving by at least one percent a year to at least ten percent.

In other action, the executive board also launched a five-year membership campaign beginning in 1995 to enroll more members in WMU age-level organizations and begin new units in churches with WMU and without WMU.

Besides changes in the adult-level publications, WMU will introduce in 1995 a new magazine -- "GA World" -- for older Girls in Action (GA) members in grades 5-6. "Discovery," the current publication for GAs in grades 1-6, will encompass grades 1-4.

The WMU executive board also:

- Awarded \$69,300 in Second Century Fund grants to finance 27 women's foreign and home missions projects. The fund, which now has \$1 million invested, is a permanent endowment created by WMU during its centennial year in 1988 as a gift to future generations of women in missions.

- Named a committee to explore needs expressed by churches for age-level co-educational missions study and action.

- Voted to adapt WMU programs on college campuses to merge with the new Women on Mission organization.

- Approved an Acteens Base Design, which included creation of Acteens Advantage, an advanced program for high school juniors and seniors. Acteens is the missions education organization for girls in grades seven through 12.

- Heard announcement of the 1994 Acteens National Advisory Panel, made up of Jennie Kaye Bell of Murray, Ky.; Melissa Kay Bryant of Shelbyville, Ky.; Kayla Katherine Giska of Wisner, La.; Megan Johnston of Springfield, Mo.; Sornalay Rasavong of Amarillo, Texas; Carrie-Ann Segraves of Huntingdon, Tenn.; Cynthia A. Segura of Waco, Texas; and Ashley Marie Ward of Florence, S.C.

- Adopted the 1996-97 Dated Plan, which outlines activities, curriculum and products for WMU work in churches for that year.

The next meeting of the WMU executive board will be June 11 in Orlando, Fla.

--30--

Pittman to head public affairs  
at Foreign Mission Board

By Mary Jane Welch

Baptist Press  
1/14/94

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Sam Pittman has been named executive director of public affairs for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Pittman, 64, a 20-year veteran with the board, will continue his long-term responsibilities for relationships with other Southern Baptist Convention entities, state conventions, associations and churches. He also administers the board's Cooperative Program emphasis and supervises public affairs staff who work to enhance relationships with Southern Baptists and other Christian groups.

Pittman has been acting executive director of public affairs since November 1992, when Zeb Moss returned to missionary service in Africa. Before that, Pittman had been associate executive director since 1989.

--mor --

Pittman has filled a variety of other positions, including associate executive vice president, since coming to the board. But he has carried an ongoing responsibility for denominational relations for most of that time. Denominational relations once focused only on the board's relationship with other convention agencies, said Pittman, but since has grown to include state conventions, associations and churches.

"No one could be any better qualified to represent us and give guidance to our public affairs function," said board President Jerry Rankin. "Sam is well-known and respected, and (his work) will benefit and enhance the Foreign Mission Board in all that we're trying to do with Southern Baptists."

Public Affairs includes the Global Desk, the Foreign Mission Board's touchpoint with other evangelical Christian agencies and groups. The Global Desk relates consistently to more than 60 other Christian groups, said Pittman, and has contact with 150. At least seven missionary-sending agencies have been born through the work of the Global Desk, said Pittman, as groups use Foreign Mission Board research to "go out and take hold of a little piece of the world that nobody's touching."

Public affairs staff also plan events such as the Foreign Mission Board's report at the Southern Baptist Convention, the weekend MissionsFests that bring missionaries to cities across the country, and a dialogue with seminary professors held in early January.

The latest seminary dialogue resulted in seminary professors and administrators entering into a covenant with FMB president Rankin. Before their next dialogue in two years, they agreed, each seminary will have developed one major missions initiative with the Foreign Mission Board. One seminary, for example, may develop a month-long curriculum for furloughing missionaries. Another is considering a partnership with an overseas seminary.

Public affairs staff also work with other agencies in planning missions education; place missionaries in churches and meetings throughout the convention; coordinate promotion of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions; and maintain contact with the Foreign Mission Fellowship of former and emeritus missionaries, journeymen and International Service Corps workers.

Before coming to the Foreign Mission Board, Pittman was director of missions for the Beaverdam Baptist Association in South Carolina and was pastor of churches in Six Mile, Pickens, Anderson and Greenville, S.C. He also served on the General Board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, as a trustee of the South Carolina Baptist Hospital and as chairman of the board for the McCall Royal Ambassador Camp, Sunset, S.C.

Pittman, a native of Greenville, is a graduate of Furman University there and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He is married to the former Ann Mayhugh of Louisville. They have two grown children.

--30--

(BP) photo (mugshot) mailed Jan. 14 by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet Newsroom.

Church gains new life  
by giving itself away

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press  
1/14/94

DALLAS (BP)--Second Baptist Church of Garland, Texas, an inner-city congregation with a diminishing Anglo membership, has gained new life by giving itself away.

In recent years as the population of their community moved steadily from Anglo to Hispanic, members of Second Baptist faced some tough decisions.

Like many inner-city congregations, they considered selling their property and moving to the suburbs, but membership dwindled to the point that moving was no longer feasible, said Aubrey Patterson, director of church and mission development for Dallas Baptist Association.

--more--

When Nueva Vida (New Life) Baptist Church was begun a mile away, the 19 charter members faced the question of whether they could pay the rent on their facility.

Membership grew until a larger facility was necessary.

Meanwhile, the membership of Second Baptist was steadily declining as the community changed from Anglo to Hispanic and black families.

"We did all we knew to do to try to reach the people," said Vignon Jones, teacher of the Naomi Sunday school class for women ages 65-90.

"There's a dire need for the Word of God in the community. When I drive to church on Sunday morning, I see so many children out in the yards."

Finally, with assistance of the Dallas Baptist Association, about 50 remaining members of Second Baptist deeded their buildings and equipment to the association. The association is in the process of transferring it to the Nueva Vida congregation.

Jones and other members of the Naomi class, who plan to join Nueva Vida, are thrilled at the expanded use of their church plant.

"Members and former members who contributed so much to Second Baptist can take joy in knowing that the church plant will go on spreading the Word of God long after we've gone to be with the Lord," Jones said.

On a cold Sunday morning, Jan. 9 at about 10 a.m., hundreds of Nueva Vida members of all ages sang joyously as they marched the mile from their older building on Chandler Street to begin a new era in the 650-seat sanctuary of Second Baptist Church.

Garland Mayor Bob Smith and representatives of Dallas Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas participated in a service of praise and worship with the Nueva Vida congregation.

Several members of Second Church joined Nueva Vida. The dedicatory message was by Efraim Diaz, pastor of Theo Avenue Baptist Church, San Antonio, which received a similar gift that helped it become one of Texas Baptists' fastest-growing congregations.

"Go out of these walls, because lost people are waiting out there, hungry for the Word of God," said Diaz.

"As soon as you start proclaiming and praying, the Devil's going to be waiting for you. Let the Holy Spirit do the work. If we are willing to give him the praise, God can do mighty things through his people."

At the close of the 11 a.m. worship service, Nueva members linked hands and formed a human chain around the perimeter of their new home to dedicate it to God's glory.

"Although the new facilities are much larger, Nueva Vida will continue to hold two worship services on Sunday morning because we feel the membership will grow to fill the new sanctuary," said Pastor David Galvan.

Services will be conducted in English at 9:15 a.m. and in Spanish at 11 a.m. A bilingual service will be held Sunday evenings at 6 o'clock.

Nueva Vida members are also excited about the larger space at Second Baptist for their New Life Christian Academy which enrolls students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Despite limited space at their older building, Nueva Vida was able to have a growing Sunday school/Bible study program by having 18 "growth groups" meeting in homes, said Pastor Galvan.

"Now we are planning to double our number of growth groups.

"I just don't have the words to express my gratitude for what God has done through the dedication and obedience of the members of Second Baptist and our Dallas Baptist Association."

Other Dallas-area Anglo Baptist churches which have given away their property in transition communities in recent years, said Patterson, include Cedar Temple, Tremont, North Dallas and East Dallas. Also, Bishop Avenue Baptist Church of Dallas voted recently to give away its facilities.

"Their gifts have culminated in reaching and ministering to many more people in Christ's name," Patterson said.

"In giving themselves away for Christ, they gained new life, and their gifts will go on serving the Lord till he comes again."

--30--

Language pioneer still pioneering  
creative ways to reach ethnics By Jack Brymer

Baptist Press  
1/14/94

MIAMI (BP)--With his appointment by the Home Mission Board in 1945 -- at the age of 19 -- Milton Leach became a pioneer in Southern Baptists' effort to share the gospel with ethnics. After almost 50 years, and now officially retired, the Texas native continues to pioneer creative ways to reach language groups.

Although Leach retired in January 1992 as director of ethnic education for the Palm Lake and Gulf Stream associations, he continues to serve part-time for the Gulf Stream Association. Just last year, he put together a four-year new work model for missions that want to grow. It is titled "Four Years to Victory."

No stranger to South Florida, Leach first served in Miami for 10 years from 1954-64. He returned to the area in 1982 after serving 13 years in Puerto Rico and five years in Texas working with refugees. In an interview with the Florida Baptist Witness newsjournal recently, Leach shared his "calling" and those early years of his ministry.

"When I was a little boy, 9 or 10 years old, my father was pastoring an Anglo church in Big Wells, Texas," he reminisced. "He and my mother planned to go to China as missionaries but couldn't because of the Great Depression. After 20 years of preaching, he realized he didn't have to go to China to be a missionary since there were more Mexicans in Big Wells than Anglos.

"He asked the church to allow him to have a revival with someone to translate in Spanish. He was given an OK, but only if the Mexicans would sit on one side of the building and not mix with the whites.

"Nearly every Mexican in that group made a profession of faith that week," continued Leach. "My father began travelling around preaching to Mexicans, and I went nearly everywhere he went. So, by the time I got to college -- Howard Payne in Brownwood, Texas -- I already had that much background, and during my freshman year there, I felt a definite call to Mexican mission work. From then on, the main concern in my life has been to win Mexican people to the Lord. Later I found out there were Spanish-speaking people besides Mexicans," he said with a smile.

When he came to Miami in 1954, Leach said he learned there were still other kinds of ethnics he had never heard of and his vision grew and enlarged.

"I've always enjoyed starting new work," he said. "Consequently, I have had the privilege of working where little work had been done."

Leach said he has found among ethnics a hunger for the gospel and an inclination to listen, since most everything shared is new to them. "I never tire of the thrill of working with people who have never heard the gospel," he said, "watching as they become Christians and growing to become leaders as they dedicate their lives to winning people to the Lord.

"I envision that someday, a lot of the people we are winning here -- thousands of them -- are going to go back to their homelands with the sole purpose of taking the gospel which they learned here," he continued.

In fact, Leach said he is convinced one reason so many ethnics are coming to America is that Southern Baptists have not fulfilled the Great Commission. "We didn't go to them, so God is letting them come to us so we can witness to them," he said.

Leach said he feels good about the fact Southern Baptists have taken the lead in reaching ethnics. "When I first got involved in language missions, ethnics were not always welcomed in our churches," he said. "Part of that was because most Baptists were uninformed about ethnics.

--more--

"In my case I didn't know there were any Spanish-speaking people except Mexicans," he continued. "But through the years, I've seen attitudes change throughout our convention and there is more acceptability now."

The most important element in language mission work, according to Leach, is being a true Christian friend. "Many ethnics have never experienced the racial prejudice we went through in the 1930s and 40s, so they come with open hearts looking for open doors," he said. "Be a Christian friend and open your heart to them. They will be open to the gospel."

I've never had an ethnic to turn me away when I spoke to them about the Lord.

"The importance of ethnic work is greater today than it has ever been," Leach contends, pointing out from a newspaper article there are 500 million Spanish-speaking people in the Western Hemisphere. Yet, a major obstacle to the work is a lack of understanding in our churches of the urgency and necessity of winning ethnics to the Lord.

"Here in South Florida the problem is not having meeting places," Leach said. "Lots of our churches have space they could share. We just need them to recognize the need and urgency of sharing it."

Leach's "Four Years to Victory" is a step-by-step plan to ensure both the host church and the mission group have a successful and happy experience. The key is working together and being accountable to commitments, according to Leach.

--30--

Gator quarterbacks share faith  
as power behind their lives

By Polly Haines

Baptist Press  
1/14/94

GAINSVILLE, Fla. (BP)--University of Florida's two 1993 quarterbacks -- sharing the spotlight all season -- now share the sweet excitement of leading the Southeast Conference champion football team. The Florida win over Alabama iced the way for the champions to play the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans on New Year's Day.

Not only do both Terry Dean, a six-foot-two redshirt junior, and Danny Wuerffel, a six-foot-two redshirt freshman, share team leadership, outstanding grade point averages of 3.9 and 3.87 respectively and long lists of awards and accolades, but Florida Gator Chaplain Otto Spangler said they also share faith in Christ as the power behind their lives.

"Terry gave his testimony after the SEC championship game. He wanted to give Jesus Christ the credit," said Spangler. "They both are outstanding kids and great athletes."

Spangler said not knowing who would be starting each game could have caused problems, but the two didn't allow that to happen.

"Both function in different ways and have different personalities," Spangler said. "There's bound to be competition, but it doesn't come out in negative ways. They have respect for each other as Christian brothers. God is using both of them."

Dean said a locker-room prayer, the 1992 University of Florida/Florida State game and his family's support helped him land the thrilling position as quarterback of the Gators.

During 1993 spring training, UF coach Steve Spurrier selected Dean, a junior business major, to fill the quarterback spot vacated by Shane Matthews. Before that time, Dean said sitting on the bench for the prior three years was one of the hardest times of his life.

That all changed with his most frightening moment, he said. With television cameras rolling and the stands full and primed at the 1992 UF/FSU game, the word reached Dean that he was to play.

"I remember coach coming in at half-time, saying, 'You're going to be playing the second half. Relax and don't get nervous.' That was in front of national television and 70,000 people were there," Dean said. "I just remember going over to my locker and sitting down and praying."

--more--

"I just was thrilled with how it went," he continued. "It really gave me confidence and built me up to where I am now. I've always felt that game really saved my career. It inspired me to keep going. I just know the Lord is looking over me. He has really blessed me."

Lori Fox, a UF journalism student said when she first met Dean she could tell he was special.

"When I met Terry, I automatically knew he was a Christian because his light just shined," said Fox. "He was just the perfect guy."

Dean credits his parents with the training in faith he received as a young person. Several of those early years were spent in First Baptist Church in Naples.

"Ever since I can remember, my family has been a real strong Christian family," Dean said. "I was saved when I was nine. My parents were my Sunday school teachers. I'm really close to my dad -- and my mom, too."

"Those three years I sat on the bench were the hardest time in my life," he continued. "My dad really helped me through that time, I talked to him almost every night on the phone."

Bench sitting did take its toll on Dean, however.

"It seemed like I was down all the time during that period," he said. "But Dad always encouraged me. He's never been the kind to push me, but during that time even he told me, 'If you want to quit -- quit.'"

But known as a winner, Dean didn't quit. Not before he was selected as quarterback, and not when he found himself on and off the bench throughout the 1993 season as he shared the job with Wuerffel.

As a Gator quarterback, Dean said he sees no conflict between his Christian walk and his position -- just the opposite.

"I don't think there is any kind of contradiction there," he said. "I think it's a way for me to glorify God's name and share his Word. It's given me the opportunity to give my testimony."

"I think that is how he (God) uses football to reach people, especially in this day when so much junk gets publicized," Dean said. "I think people like to see that."

Lounging in an overstuffed orange chair in the Gator Room on the University of Florida campus, Dean's confidence flowed through his words.

"It's such a glamorous sport," he said. "The media coverage is so great in football. I just think that personally I can reach a lot of people through that. It's a good vehicle for me to share the Lord's Word."

Running back Terrence Foy said he sees Dean's faith in action on the field.

"You can tell he's always concerned with what he's doing," Foy said. "He's keeping his mind on his work and on the Lord at the same time."

Dean's first college choice pointed to Auburn, but that, along with his football career, changed with prayer.

"When I was trying to decide where to go to college, I prayed about it a lot," Dean remembered. "My folks prayed about it a lot. I just really felt like the Lord led me to the University of Florida, and my parents stuck by me."

"It's funny because my whole family has always hated Florida," Dean continued, but now, "you wouldn't find them not wearing orange and blue."

It was during the first game of the 1993 season against Arkansas State Dean began to share the spotlight with Wuerffel.

Spangler said from then on Spurrier used both quarterbacks throughout the season in different situations for different reasons.

Wuerffel's father, an Air Force chaplain stationed at Edward's Air Force Base in California, said the things that bring him joy aren't necessarily hearing Danny's name connected with football, or that he was valedictorian and Mr. Citizenship in high school.

"The things that make us feel good are how he helps other people," Chaplain Wuerffel said. "He tries to share the love of Christ in a real sort of way."

The senior Wuerff 1, a Lutheran, said the fact Danny was raised in the military chapel setting rather than a local church has afforded his son a different view than many who remain in one h metown church their whole lives.

"He's been able to see all faith groups at work," Wuerffel said. "He's basically seen Christians of different denominations working together in the same setting."

In Chaplain Wuerffel's first pastorate, an African-American Lutheran Church in Pensacola, his son learned another lesson.

"He didn't know he wasn't the same color as those around him until someone told him," Wuerffel said. "Children don't know. He had an early education in color blindness."

Chaplain Wuerffel said a ligament injury during the 1993 UF/FSU game that resulted in recent surgery for his son was a reminder that God is in charge.

"Having surgery, he was reminded that he is helpless before what the Lord wants him to do," Wuerffel said. "His attitude is ... if the Lord wants him to play, he will."

Chaplain Wuerffel said another commonality links Dean and his son. "They might have both been in a Baptist church last Sunday," he said. "Danny attends with his girlfriend who is a Baptist."

--30--

Polly Haines is a freelance writer from Waldo, Fla.

**Beware of fundraisers who  
cannot fulfill their promises**

**Baptist Press  
1/14/94**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Carl Hoffman, executive vice president of the SBC Stewardship Commission, is cautioning churches to beware of fundraisers who make promises they cannot fulfill.

Hoffman said the recent recession propelled a number of individuals out of their established commercial fundraising firms and into fly-by-night one-to-five-person operations without proven track records or credentials. Many of these new companies operate out of little more than a suitcase and a phone booth, he said.

"Unfortunately for unsuspecting churches who hire these outfits, these companies are more like the proverbial traveling salesman -- unreliable and difficult to pin down," Hoffman said. "Churches that hire these folks get only the limited experience of one or two individuals and no solid foundation to guarantee success."

Hoffman, who has raised more than \$60 million for local SBC churches through the Stewardship Commission's Together We Build program, said, "Hiring a consultant to help a church raise money is the best approach for a church to take, but the church needs to be sure the consultant it hires can produce the results the church expects.

"To be effective, the consultant needs support materials and properly trained personnel," he said. He suggested these three guidelines for churches seeking to hire an outside consultant to raise funds:

- 1) Clearly establish how long the firm has been in business and lean heavily toward those that have been in existence at least 10 years.
- 2) Get an accurate picture of how many other fundraising campaigns the organization has conducted and gravitate toward those that have led hundreds instead of just a few.
- 3) Inspect carefully the materials the company plans to use to be sure of their quality and originality.

He said the Southern Baptist Convention and some state conventions have established fundraising programs which provide reliable and consistent services to local churches.

--30--

---

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "HMB's Lewis challenges WMU to re-double efforts," dated 1/13/94, please change the number of ongoing HMB-WMU partnership projects mentioned in the last paragraph from 114 to 107.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

BAPTIST PRESS is available on

**CompuServe**

To order an SBCNet kit call 1-800-458-2772.  
For more information contact David Haywood  
at 1-800-325-7749, ext. 2895,  
or at CompuServe ID 70007,5000.

HOUSE MAIL

**(BP)**

**BAPTIST PRESS**  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, TN 37203

Southern Baptist Library and  
Archives