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July 12, 1995

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WMU expands product line
with CBF-related pieces

Baptist Press
7/12/95

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Woman's Missionary Union announced July 12 it will produce "missions education supplements" for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The supplements, according to WMU, will "accompany selected existing WMU materials for churches wanting to study the work of missionaries appointed by the Foreign and Home Mission boards and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship."

The announcement comes a week before the annual CBF's annual General Assembly, July 19-22 in Fort Worth, Texas -- and less than a month after the Southern Baptist Convention formally added an affirmation of WMU to the sweeping denominational restructuring adopted June 20 in Atlanta.

WMU's decision to produce the new materials, to be available for every age level by early 1996, follows actions adopted by its executive board in January 1993, one of which states WMU will "produce resources for Southern Baptist groups involved in missions at their request." The board reaffirmed that decision during its June 17 meeting in Atlanta.

According to Dellanna O'Brien, WMU executive director, the decision to publish materials for churches affiliated with the CBF, an organization formed by Baptist moderates in opposition to the SBC's conservative leadership, falls in the same category of WMU production of a Mission Friends product for Korean Baptist churches. WMU has been and continues to be involved in negotiations with several Baptist groups in North America about the production of tailor-made missions education resources, according to the WMU announcement July 12.

"We are aware that our decision to produce materials in cooperation with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship will concern some Southern Baptists," O'Brien acknowledged. "But we hope and pray that all Southern Baptists will see this decision as the fulfillment of our commitment to meet the needs of local Southern Baptist churches."

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Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee, voiced a different assessment in a July 12 statement: "This announcement is astonishing. In light of WMU's strong appeal to have its loyalty to the SBC recognized in the restructuring report adopted just last month in Atlanta, I am disappointed. The decision of the national WMU leadership to customize materials in support the work of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship -- the Southern Baptist Convention's most vocal critic -- will be regretted throughout the SBC."

O'Brien noted in the WMU announcement that churches wanting these new materials would have to specifically order them. "No church or individual will receive these materials unless requested," she said.

"In addition," she continued, "our magazines, including our new Missions Mosaic along with Dimension, Accent, Aware, Discovery, GA World, Share and Start, will include information on Foreign and Home Mission board-appointed missionaries only." The supplements, she explained, will be designed to accompany WMU's coed missions education materials, which like the periodicals named above, center on the work of FMB and HMB missionaries. Churches wanting to include the CBF-related information in their missions education programs would have to order the coed materials and the supplements in order to have a blended plan, she said.

"Again, churches or individuals who normally order our coed materials will not receive the supplements unless they specifically ordered them," O'Brien stressed.

Larry Lewis, Home Mission Board president, said July 12, "I discussed this issue with Dr. O'Brien by telephone yesterday and expressed again my desire that WMU would continue its historic role of supporting only the two Southern Baptist mission boards. She did indicate the new line of materials will be generic missions study materials which could be used by any group desiring to support Christian missionaries. She said the generic materials could be customized for a group like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. However, Dr. O'Brien assured me the customized materials will not appear in any publications which SBC churches routinely receive from WMU."

Lewis also said, "WMU has also assured us that none of the funds which the Home Mission Board sends to WMU will be used to support development of the generic or customized materials."

Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin was unavailable for comment July 12. David Button, the agency's vice president for public relations and development, issued a statement noting Rankin "is in South America visiting missionaries. The Foreign Mission Board does not have a response to the WMU action at this time."

WMU's willingness to help Southern Baptist groups -- and other evangelical groups -- in producing missions education materials grows out of its desire to encourage and equip individuals to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, said O'Brien and WMU President Carolyn Miller.

"Our effort is to win the world for Christ," said Miller. "If that is to be accomplished, all Christians must be involved."

"Southern Baptists cannot do it alone," she added. "We need to recognize that we share the responsibility with other evangelicals."

O'Brien agreed. "The Foreign Mission Board has led us to see that we can and must partner with other evangelical groups to fulfill the Great Commission," she said. "In this day when millions die without knowing the offer Christ makes for eternal life, we must find new and more inclusive ways of sharing the gospel."

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Compiled by Art Toalston, with reporting by Teresa Dickens.

Jericho festivals pull down
barriers to missions ministry

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
7/12/95

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptists will capture a fresh vision of what God is doing in the world and find out how to join him in bringing the world to Christ during the seventh annual "Jericho" missions festivals.

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"Experiencing God through Missions," the theme for the 1995 conferences, will challenge participants to see how God works in the United States and throughout the world, Walker said. Henry Blackaby, author of "Experiencing God" and "Fresh Encounter," will lead daily Bible studies on the theme.

Additionally, a wide array of hands-on activities, interactive displays, practical conferences, inspiring worship services and one-on-one conversations with home and foreign missionaries offer opportunities to personally explore Southern Baptist missions at the two 1995 festivals. They are scheduled July 29-Aug. 4 at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center and Aug. 12-18 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Jericho aims to break down barriers that keep Southern Baptists from joining God's mission by giving them firsthand experience and challenging them to get involved, said Marshall Walker, publicity chairman for the events.

Worship experiences will be led by a husband-and-wife team, Ragan Courtney, an actor, playwright and conference leader, and Cynthia Clawson, an award-winning Christian musician. "The Company," a drama troupe from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, also will assist in theme interpretations.

The Jericho program includes tracks for children, youth and adults. A day camp program will provide singing, crafts, missionary visits and Bible studies for children grades one through six. Youth Jericho offers fairs, festivals, special interest conferences, missions Bible studies and after-worship events to help teen-agers catch a global missions vision. Child care is available evenings, as well as all day.

Among the special features of the 1995 festivals:

- personal interaction with more than 100 home and foreign missionaries;
- a Missions Fair featuring 56 creative booths exploring virtually every type of Southern Baptist missions ministry;
- 70 missions-oriented conferences that get down to the nuts-and-bolts of doing missions;
- Missions Encounter, where visitors can meet missionaries, hear about their work, see and touch artifacts and taste foods from different cultures;
- commissioning services for Home Mission Board US-2 missionaries and, at Ridgecrest, a Foreign Mission Board missionary appointment service.

An information packet is available by calling 1-800-866-3621. To register for Jericho at Glorieta, call (505) 757-6161; Ridgecrest, (704) 669-8022.

Accommodations are on a first-come, first-served basis. Registrations are accepted up to the start of the conference. A special one-day rate is available. There is no charge for groups attending one evening service.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed 7/12/95 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet News Room.

Former Vietnam missionaries
relive joy, pain of service

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
7/12/95

FRANKLIN, N.C. (BP)--Easter weekend, 1975. Artillery shells rip Danang as the North Vietnamese army reaches the city's outskirts. Southern Baptist missionaries Bob Davis and Gene Tunnell watch in dismay from a freighter edging into the South China Sea with a cargo of 5,000 terrified souls.

Within days, South Vietnam falls. Tens of thousands of panic-stricken refugees clog the airports and seaports, desperate to escape the communist onslaught. And the door slams shut on Southern Baptist missions in Vietnam, a door open all too briefly, 1959 to 1975.

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Thirty-two former Vietnam missionaries relived that abrupt, painful departure -- and dozens of happier memories -- in their first reunion since Saigon fell 20 years ago. Accompanied by family members, they met June 22-24 about three weeks before the United States announced reopening of full diplomatic relations with Vietnam.

Cloistered at a retreat center in the foothills of North Carolina's Smoky Mountains, they renewed friendships, enjoyed Vietnamese food, sorted through old photographs, sang Christian songs in Vietnamese and talked about the hole evacuation had left in their hearts.

The forced departure struck to the very core of a missionary's identity, said Sam James, who served in Vietnam 1962-75 and now is the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's vice president for creative leadership development.

"I was a missionary and a pastor of a church," James told the group. "That's who I was. When we lost South Vietnam, everything I counted precious in my identity was stripped away. Eventually God taught me my identity is in Christ, and that it has no geographical boundary and isn't limited by time."

"Leaving was like losing all your family at once," said Dottie Hayes of Lafayette, La. "It was a crushing experience. It took us a long time to get over it." She and her husband, Herman, the first Southern Baptist missionaries to South Vietnam, arrived there Nov. 1 1959.

The Vietnam the former missionaries remember is not the war-ravaged country most Americans saw on the evening news.

"It's hard for Americans to realize there were as many peaceful areas as there were," said Ida Davis, who served with her husband, Bob, from 1961-75. "The Vietnamese people were so friendly. Doors were wide open to us, even strangers' houses. We could just walk inside, and they would serve us tea, and we could sit and talk about why we were there."

Their new friends welcomed the gospel. By the time the Americans were forced to leave, 50 Vietnamese Baptist churches had 3,000 members. Thirty-five mission personnel had set up a seminary, media and publication work and various human-needs ministries. Their work touched not only Vietnamese, but also American servicemen, who by the spring of 1969 numbered 543,000.

Some powerful memories of how God worked in Vietnam from 1959-75 are in a new book, "Stories That Won't Go Away," published by New Hope. The 100 recollections, by 24 women of the Vietnam mission, relive the best and hardest experiences of those 16 years -- and the lessons God taught through them.

The former missionaries' abiding love for the Vietnamese and their adopted country colored the entire retreat. Their interest, however, was more than nostalgic. They hung on every word about progress of the gospel in Vietnam.

Indeed, Vietnam today offers many opportunities to demonstrate Christian concern through a variety of human needs and development outlets, said a spokesman for Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist relief and development agency. When President Bill Clinton announced reopening of diplomatic relations on July 11, the door to Vietnam swung wide open.

"We have more opportunities and invitations than we have people for," Bill Smith, CSI field associate for work in Asia, said in a telephone interview from Hong Kong. "We have tremendous opportunities in the north."

Six CSI volunteers teach English in Vietnamese universities and three career workers have been appointed, Smith said. Medical and agricultural projects multiply as fast as volunteers and equipment become available.

One long-term project seeks to place CSI workers at each of the five national agricultural universities that train extension agents to work at the village level in even the most remote areas of the country.

Opportunities for missionary work in Vietnam, however, appear nowhere on the horizon. So those with a burden for the country do what they can -- pray.

One result of the retreat was an agreement to form a prayer network to support the work of Southern Baptists currently in Vietnam, said former Vietnam missionary Lewis Myers, now Foreign Mission Board vice president for World A strategies.

Many also expressed interest in another form of prayer ministry gaining in popularity -- the prayer pilgrimage.

Former Vietnam missionaries Jim and Mary Humphries of San Marcos, Texas, will lead a prayer pilgrimage in March 1996 that will begin in Hanoi and conclude in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) on Easter Sunday. Participants will travel to locations that bear strategic significance for spreading the gospel and pray for the people of Vietnam and the witness of Vietnamese Baptists.

Mrs. Humphries, in her third term as president of Texas Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, wouldn't miss that trip for anything.

"Part of my heart will always be in Vietnam," she said. Then she lapses into silence, a faraway look in her misty eyes.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed 7/12/95 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet News Room. For home state connections, the following 32 former Vietnam missionaries attended the reunion. Many were accompanied by family members. ALABAMA: Ron and Betty Merrell, Fulndale, Ala.; GEORGIA: David and Barbara Wigger, Lilburn, Ga.; LOUISIANA: Herman and Dottie Hayes, Lafayette, La.; MISSISSIPPI: Doug Kellum, Tutwiler, Miss.; NORTH CAROLINA: Bill and Audrey Roberson, Shelby, N.C., and Gene and Prissy Tunnell, Franklin, N.C.; SOUTH CAROLINA: Jim and Barbara Lassiter, Irmo, S.C.; TENNESSEE: Jim and Paulette Kellum, Bartlett, Tenn.; Joe and Gloria Turman, Jackson, Tenn.; TEXAS: Rosalie Beck, Waco, Texas; Bob and Ida Davis, Athens, Texas; Jim and Margaret Gayle, Denton, Texas; Jim and Mary Humphries, San Marcos, Texas; Sam and Marion Longbottom, Waco, Texas; and Peyton and Celia Moore, Beaumont, Texas; VIRGINIA: Sam and Rachel James, Richmond, Va., and Lewis and Toni Myers, Richmond, Va.

One reunion covers span
of 20 years, 100 refugees

By Suzanne Darland

Baptist Press
7/12/95

ELIZABETHTOWN, Ky. (BP)--Ill and feverish and tied to a buddy so he wouldn't be lost, Bounchanh Vongsurith swam the Mekong River with other escaping Laotians, desperate for freedom in Thailand.

The year was 1975, and the Laotian government had fallen in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Miraculously spared from capture because a soldier recognized him as a neighbor, Vongsurith survived in a refugee camp for nine months, until a poignant letter to a friend in Vine Grove, Ky., achieved its desired effect: A family would sponsor him in America.

Fast forward 20 years to a reunion with 40 other Laotians who were given a chance at new life by Thurman and Mary Witten, an unassuming couple who live on a 75-acre farm near Fort Knox.

Boon, as Bounchanh Vongsurith calls himself, returned to Kentucky June 10 for the celebration. He now lives in Oklahoma City, where he is pastor of a Laotian church, translates training and evangelism materials for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, serves as president of the Laos Southern Baptist Fellowship and as education director for the Laos Conference of Churches in North America.

"I wouldn't be here if it weren't for you," he told the Wittens during the surprise tribute to them. "You rescued me from a living hell on earth."

One after another, other Laotians who had traveled from Illinois and California and places in between to be at the reunion told similar stories.

"We owe everything to them," said a tearful Praseuth Douangmala, who with his wife, Mayvina, and 5-year-old daughter was the first family to stay with the Wittens.

Douangmala was one of seven people at the reunion who had first met the Wittens while stationed at Fort Knox in 1972 and 1973 for Allied officers' training. A member of the Wittens' church, Vine Grove Baptist, suggested church members "adopt" military officers stationed far away from their families.

Through this ministry, several Laotian military officers shared meals with the Wittens and fished in the ponds on their farm.

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Only a few years later, these same officers wrote the Wittens from refugee camps they had escaped to in Thailand. "We were no more officers now. We were refugees," Douangmala explained.

Mrs. Witten said she could not ignore the letters. She felt compelled to help her Laotian friends in their time of need.

"I don't think I'd ever gotten into an experience I knew nothing about," she said. "Yet day by day the Lord provided."

She began contacting refugee agencies who were settling Laotians and Vietnamese in Louisville and other large cities. By January 1976, she had signed the papers to sponsor two families, four adults and four children.

Only one of the Wittens' five children was still at home. The rest, including a foster child, were in college or married. But those empty bedrooms held no allure for the Laotians, she recalled. They preferred to sleep on mats in the living room.

"They'd been in crowded refugee camps," she explained. "It didn't bother them to be crammed up. They just wanted to be secure."

Mealtime created no search for space either, she said. Someone spread out a sheet or blanket on the floor while others cooked. "We just all sat on the floor."

She and her husband learned to like Laotian cooking; he especially likes egg rolls.

Over the years, truckloads of sheets, mattress pads, clothing and food were donated by area churches and groups. The Wittens and their refugee friends always had plenty of garden produce and fish.

At the reunion, Mrs. Witten told about a time several men stood knee-deep in mud in the Wittens' dried-up pond, flipping fish onto the shore.

In all, more than 100 refugees found their way to America through the Wittens from 1976 to 1980. Families would stay a month or so, then find housing in time for another group to arrive.

Often the refugees' first homes would be one of four apartments the Wittens owned in Vine Grove and made available rent-free for up to three months.

Mrs. Witten ferried the refugees to job prospects and English classes and cared for children while the parents worked.

And she took the families to church.

Vine Grove Baptist Church began a Laotian ministry on Saturday afternoons. In time, when refugees began moving to other parts of Elizabethtown, Severns Valley Baptist Church began a similar ministry.

Once, a family of seven arrived at the Wittens' house unexpectedly, after their sponsor in North Carolina pulled out at the last minute. The refugee family did not learn of the problem until they were at the airport in Bangkok. Had the Wittens not agreed to sponsor them, the family would have been sent back to the refugee camp.

Boon Vongsurith was among a group of four single adults and two families with eight children that arrived in the United States in 1976.

Boon was already a Christian and felt God was calling him to full-time ministry. So Mrs. Witten went to work on enrolling the four single adults at nearby Campbellsville College.

At first the answer was no because the refugees had poor English skills and no papers to prove they had graduated from high school. But the young people fasted and prayed for a week, and Mrs. Witten persisted in her cause.

Finally, the four Laotians enrolled at Campbellsville in January 1977, and the Wittens' daughter, Kathy, transferred from Western Kentucky University to Campbellsville to help them.

All four Laotians graduated in 1981.

Boon moved to Oklahoma City to serve as a pastor and later earned a master's degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas and a doctorate from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Tennessee. His three friends moved on to other cities to seek jobs or reunite with other family members or friends.

But on June 10, they all came back to Elizabethtown to honor the Wittens, whom they call "Mamma" and "Pappa." They brought gifts and speeches of appreciation.

"Mamma and Pappa helped us establish a new life," said Mayvina Douangmala. "We have a good life. We appreciate them."

"We came from nothing to something beautiful," Boon added. "You inspired us. You helped us look to the future."

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Suzanne Darland is a state correspondent for the Western Recorder.

Volunteers leave legacy
of water, faith in Haiti

By Jim Johnston

Baptist Press
7/12/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--If it had been left up to him, Harry Campbell never would have selected Haiti as the site of his first foreign mission project. But the 55-year-old resident of Killeen, Texas, wasn't in charge of the travel itinerary for himself and his wife, Nancy.

"The Lord selected us to go," Campbell said. "And we believe very strongly that you go where the Lord leads -- wherever it is."

The Campbells left Haiti July 8 after spending nearly six months in the Third-World nation coordinating a Brotherhood Commission world relief project that included water well repair and food distribution. With the aid of more than 200 short-term Southern Baptist volunteers, 132 wells were repaired, giving 264,000 Haitians drinking water.

The impact of the volunteer effort, which began in December 1994, will be a lasting one, said Mickey Caison, Haiti project manager for the Brotherhood Commission.

When Caison first traveled to the island last October to meet with Southern Baptist missionaries Mark and Peggy Rutledge, the initiators of the project, he was amazed by the hardships caused by the lack of water. The wells were not functioning because political unrest in Haiti had prevented proper maintenance and because the United Nations' embargo of the country had kept spare parts out of technicians' hands.

"People were walking many miles with gallon jugs of water on their heads," Caison said. "Now, they have water in their towns. That's a real ministry."

The work was accomplished because people like the Campbells were willing to give of themselves. Harry, a veteran of two tours of Army duty in Vietnam, rededicated his life to Christ three years ago and has been serious about his missions involvement ever since.

"I'm not a Sunday school teacher," he said. "I work with my hands. It was time I put them to work for the Lord."

First, he put them to work in disaster relief in the United States, spending nearly a year on the road ministering to the victims of disasters in California and Texas. Then he decided it was time he and Nancy hit the road in ministry together.

"We're partners in life," he said. "And we're partners in ministry."

The Campbells needed the Lord and each other as they worked and endured hardships during their mission. They went into Haiti two weeks after President Clinton's visit there and found the country and its people in a quandary because of political unrest and the impact of a major hurricane hitting the island.

"There were massive amounts of garbage everywhere," Campbell said. "The people were apprehensive. They were out and about, but they were definitely not relaxed. It was a tough situation for everyone there."

Roads also were in pitiful condition and nearly impassable in many places. Harry recalled one trip that required him to travel four hours while driving in second gear in a pickup truck. When he grew impatient with the snail's pace of the trip, he shifted into third gear and promptly damaged the front end of the truck when it ran into a truck-sized pothole. Despite the obstacles, the Campbells gained more of an appreciation for each other and the people of Haiti during their service there.

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"The people there are very industrious and hard-working," Campbell said. "They're willing to pull themselves up by their bootstraps; that's what they're doing now because they've had a little help. It's just that they haven't been able to accomplish very much because the political environment there has held them back for a hundred years."

He said he believes most Americans have mistakenly stereotyped Haitian people as lazy and bloodthirsty. Their cleanliness and attitude spoke a much different language to the Campbells.

"Everyone you meet is wearing spotlessly clean clothing," he said. "Keeping their clothes white is a source of pride. And they do it by washing them in muddy water. I still don't know how they do it. They accomplish a great many things down there that I don't understand how they accomplish. They're a very resourceful people."

The Haitians also were extremely appreciative of the food and water they received from the Southern Baptist relief projects.

"They noticed," Campbell said. "If you saw a bunch of people of another race running around your neighborhood, you might be suspicious or skeptical. But they were very open and appreciative, and they let us know it."

The work of the Campbells and the remaining volunteers was an important first step toward ministry in Haiti, one that should be followed with more substantial projects in the future, Caison said.

"They know Southern Baptists have been there, from the evangelism at the food distribution sites to the dedication of the wells at the sites," Caison said. "When every well was repaired, its service was dedicated to God. They will remember the Christians who repaired their wells and the God that sent them there forever."

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RTVC radio programs reach
estimated 388 million weekly

By G.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
7/12/95

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Five weekly radio programs produced by the SBC Radio and Television Commission (RTVC) reach an estimated worldwide audience of 388 million people each week.

The Commission's June radio marketing report shows "Country Crossroads" as being the most popular RTVC-produced program, airing on 887 stations a total of 946 times per week. It airs in 213 different markets worldwide and in 36 of the top 50 markets in the United States.

The program is a combination of the latest in country music, interviews with country music personalities and inspirational thoughts from hosts Bill Mack and Jerry Clower.

"Powerline," a mix of adult contemporary music from the '70s, '80s and '90s along with inspirational vignettes, airs on 608 stations a total of 674 times per week. It is carried in 205 markets worldwide and in 38 of the top 50 U.S. markets.

The third most popular RTVC program is "MasterControl," which is carried by 500 stations and airs 545 times each week. It is in 162 markets worldwide and 39 of the top 50 U.S. markets.

The program uses a magazine format and features interviews with experts on health, finances, self-help, entertainment and travel.

"On Track," featuring contemporary Christian music, is carried by 416 stations and airs 447 times per week. It is in 138 markets worldwide and 28 of the top 50 U.S. markets.

The oldest of the RTVC-produced programs, the historic "The Baptist Hour," is carried by 372 stations and airs 390 times per week. It airs in 111 markets worldwide and in 20 of the top 50 U.S. markets.

The program features sermons by Frank Pollard, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.

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"Our radio programs play a vital role in reaching the masses with the gospel of Jesus Christ," said RTVC President Jack Johnson. "The Southern Baptist Convention made an early commitment to radio that is the foundation of our media ministry today. We're grateful for the foresight of those early pioneers. What they began has resulted in, and will continue to result in, many people coming to know Christ as Savior each year."

All RTVC-produced radio programs are provided to stations as a public service and are carried without charge to the RTVC.

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Choirs offer senior adults
opportunity for witness

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
7/12/95

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--In a time when many senior adults resist being stereotyped in "second childhood," senior adult choirs have emerged as examples of valued activity and continued Christian witness.

A phenomenon that is now approximately 30 years old, the senior adult choir has matured in many churches, discarding the stereotype of keeping retired people busy singing silly songs. Today's senior adult choir is more likely composed of people from not-yet-retired-mid-50s to upper 90s who enjoy doing something mentally challenging and of value to others.

Philip Sherrod has led senior adult choirs through almost 20 years of the evolution of an ever-growing national trend, and he recalls a time when senior adult musicals "had a second childhood mentality to them."

Sherrod, minister of music at Central Baptist Church, Carthage, Texas, said during Church Music Leadership Week at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center he "respects the intelligence of senior adult choir members." Consequently, he works them "pretty hard on musical principles. People listening to them sing shouldn't know they are a senior adult choir by the sound. We work on pronunciation and vowel sounds harder than a regular church choir."

And as for repertoire, Sherrod seeks variety, including some hand-motion and fun songs, as well as challenging musicals that require extensive memorization.

"We don't sing just funeral kinds of songs that give the idea we don't think we have much time left to live," he observed with a grin.

Nor is singing the only purpose for a senior adult choir, he said. "Unless they are a ministry group, they have no reason to exist," he insisted. Senior adult choir members minister to each other and serve as inspiration and witnesses to other senior adults, youth and younger adults.

Sherrod said he believes senior adult choirs demonstrate to everyone who sees and hears them, "You don't outgrow being a Christian witness."

Senior adults derive a feeling of continued usefulness, fellowship, physical benefits, new friendships, a new awareness of ministry and a means to continue their witnessing from participation in a choir, he said.

Such groups sing in a wider variety of settings than the first senior adult choirs, he observed. In addition to their own churches, many times on Sunday mornings, senior adult choirs are singing for a variety of clubs, schools, local and state festivals and fairs, rallies and gatherings of other seniors in nursing homes, retirement villages and seniors clubs, such as the American Association of Retired Persons.

Choir tours, some built around fall trips to Senior Adult Chautauquas at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference centers, are becoming more frequent, and some trips involve air travel.

Sherrod recalled the first senior adult choir he took on an airplane trip to a Baptist camp in the Northwest years ago.

"We had decided we would sing 'I'll Fly Away' as the plane took off. Some of those folks had never been on an airplane before. Well, you can imagine what happened. As we took off, the choir began, 'I'll ... fly aahhhhhhhHHH ...' Some of them never sang any further than that!"

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Church Music Leadership Week was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's music department.

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Your children aren't possessed;
they're teens, therapist says

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
7/12/95

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The most emotionally intense ages of adolescence -- 13 to 15 -- may lead some parents to wonder if their children are possessed by evil forces, a child and family therapist joked with music ministers and their spouses during Church Music Leadership Week at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

"We can walk out of a hospital with a newborn child and not have to have any sort of license, like we do for cars and other things," observed Barry McCarty, a therapist in private practice and member of South Main Baptist Church in Houston.

And while a license to steer teen-agers might sound appealing to parents who are frustrated with unpredictable, uncharacteristic behavior from a once-loving child, church staff parents may well have a more difficult time with their teens.

The pressures associated with being part of a church staff family can bring incredible social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual pressure on a teen who felt the need for super performance before physical and emotional changes began.

"It can make them more rebellious, or the rebellion may be put off and emerge later," McCarty observed.

"Watch where they are stressed out," he urged. "We need to cut our expectations, telling teen-agers, 'You can't be perfect at everything. We want to take the pressure off of you.' Encourage them to choose one area in which to excel, and if other things can be done with enjoyment, continue those without the pressure to be perfect.

"We have to model that, too," he told church musicians. "We have to decline requests. It may be in your best interest to respond to a request by saying, 'To be true to myself and my family, I have to say no.'"

McCarty said parents need to be aware of the stressors they bring into the family, including job dissatisfaction or other church-related problems. These can add to the stressors affecting teen behavior.

"You will see their worst behavior," he said. "The good news is, they are saving their best behavior for friends, school and church."

Among the factors affecting teens, according to McCarty, are:

- hormones going crazy, coupled with tremendous physical growth.
- intense feelings.
- a radically changing body and self-image.
- increased sensitivity to peer opinion/pressure.
- a school format changed from one teacher to several, along with a range of different subjects.
- feelings of insecurity and extreme self-criticism.
- sexual thoughts that both frighten and excite.
- fantasies about romance.
- girls are already adult size and shape, while some boys are mature and others are clumsy.
- in many ways, they are still children.
- slights and rejections are a big deal.

McCarty offered suggestions to help harried parents survive their teen's transition toward adulthood:

- try not to take their moods personally.
- break through their walls with humor and games.
- have adult conversations.
- treat them as adults, but expect them to act like children.
- compliment them on their mature moments.
- don't expect them to be part parent to younger siblings.
- think of creative ways for them to pay off mistakes.

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-- cut them some slack; don't confront every behavioral infraction.

-- do not give up.

"Don't build your lives around your teen-agers. Invest in peer relationships," he urged. "It is important to have old and new friendships. Have dinner with another couple and agree not to discuss your children for at least two hours.

"Go for rides to get away from the house and the teen-agers," he advised. "In a few years they'll be doing that to you."

Church Music Leadership Week, July 8-14 at Glorieta, was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's music department.

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Evangelistic musician named
to Southeastern's faculty

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
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WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--A church musician with a heart for missions is the latest to be appointed to the faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Moran Whitley, who has been teaching adjunctively on the seminary's faculty since earning the master of divinity degree at Southeastern in 1982, was appointed instructor of instrumental music and music education July 11 at the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary.

In announcing his appointment, Southeastern President Paige Patterson complimented Whitley as a "fabulous musician," noting "his devotion to taking Jesus to the world."

An accomplished musician who spends his free time playing with a local Dixieland jazz group, Whitley has traveled to Santa Domingo, Dominican Republic, to teach church music at the Dominican Baptist Seminary in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board during the past seven years.

"Ran Whitley has a heart for missions and evangelism," said L. Russ Bush, Southeastern's vice president for academic affairs. "He is able to use his musical talent to open many doors for Christian witness."

Bush added Whitley also has an awareness of the ministry needs of the local church, having served full time as associate minister of music and education at Durham Memorial Baptist Church, Durham, N.C., nearly 15 years. "Ran's expertise in instrumental and electronic music coupled with his experience on staff will make him a great asset to Southeastern. Students will leave his classes better prepared to lead in worship in a local church setting."

Whitley said music is a powerful means to get the message of the gospel to a lost and dying world: "Music is a medium that communicates in a very powerful way, sometimes on a different plane than the spoken word. It is another important avenue in communicating the truth about the gospel.

"Music is both a teaching tool and a means of proclamation," Whitley continued, emphasizing church musicians are called to be ministers first.

"When people integrate a tune into their heart they naturally carry the verses with them wherever they go."

Whitley also has earned a doctor of ministry from Southeastern and a bachelor of music from Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. He and his wife, Nora, have three children.

A native of Morganton, N.C., Whitley also served as minister of music at North Rocky Mount Baptist Church, Rocky Mount, N.C.

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