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September 26, 1995

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Weekend prison outreach helps
church see beyond stereotypes By Joyce Sweeney Martin

Baptist Press
9/26/95

WINCHESTER, Ky. (BP)--After 65 men from Central Baptist Church, Winchester, Ky., spent three days ministering at the Eastern Kentucky Correctional Complex, "we couldn't shut them up," according to Mark Miller, coordinator of the lay-led revival.

Most of the men never had been behind a prison wall, much less inside a prison cell. And although four of them told the others they had nothing to worry about, most still were apprehensive, Miller said.

"We didn't know what to expect," said Brotherhood director Bill Blakeman, who "button-holed" some of the men to get them to go to the 1,500-bed state prison in West Liberty, Ky.

But once they got past the tight security screening -- some even had to remove their rings and false teeth -- they had an eye-opening experience which they still talk about, Blakeman said.

The men were in the prison at the invitation of chaplain John Ramsey to lead a fast-paced weekend of witness patterned after the Bill Glass "Parade of Stars" prison ministry. While Miller, Bill Kennon, Louis Atchinson and Dave Hoffman from Central Baptist and people from other area churches regularly minister in the prison, this was the first time a local church had taken on such an intensive weekend of activities, Ramsey said.

On Friday afternoon, three music groups performed rap, rock and traditional music on the prison yard to "draw the inmates out," Miller said.

Interspersed with the performances were testimonies from three ex-convicts who had become Christians.

On Saturday, Central's men mingled with the inmates in the dorms and on the yard, counseling and witnessing. "For the most part, the inmates were willing to listen," Blakeman said.

On Friday and Saturday evenings and on Sunday morning, the 200-seat chapel was full for the services in which Central's pastor, Don Mathis, and two other staff members preached.

Not only did 30 inmates find freedom through making professions of faith in Christ, but Central's men were no longer held captive to their pre-conceived notions about prisoners, Blakeman said.

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Stereotypes of "unkempt, dirty, tattooed" prisoners didn't hold up, he said. "What we saw were all kinds of men, including some clean-cut Ivy-league types. We saw the very young and the very old."

Miller agreed. Central's men discovered the inmates were real people, he said. That change in attitude was his greatest thrill.

"They even found lots of inmates who knew more about the Bible than they did," he said.

And the laymen gained new personal insights as well.

"I looked on the prison yard and thought, 'There but for the grace of God go I,'" Blakeman said. "It could be any of us up there."

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Luis' blast leaves St. Maarten
in need of Baptist ministry

By Jim Johnston

Baptist Press
9/26/95

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--The living conditions on the Caribbean island of St. Maarten were deplorable to begin with for many of its inhabitants.

After Hurricane Luis blew through on Sept. 5-6, the situation became even worse. More than 1,000 Haitians living on hillsides in cardboard boxes were left without any shelter. Even those residents lucky enough to have 10-by-12-foot shacks with tin roofs prior to the hurricane's arrival were left with only remnants of their homes.

To make matters worse, tourism supports 90 percent of the island's residents and the tourists won't be back until the resorts are rebuilt. Even the cruise ship industry is dying because the ships can't get into the wreckage-clogged port. It's a desperate situation, but it's also one where God is at work.

"There is a tremendous opportunity, but we've got to respond as Southern Baptists," said Mickey Caison, World Relief director for the Brotherhood Commission. "God is at work there and we've got to join him."

Volunteer construction teams will begin arriving on St. Maarten Sept. 30, with each 10-person crew working for two weeks before returning to the United States. The crews will be repairing Bible Baptist Church, on the south end of the island, before fanning out across St. Maarten to work on five other churches, missionary homes and residents' homes.

In the course of their work, Caison hopes the volunteers will be able to mobilize missionaries. Tourists from all over the world who sailed into the port of St. Maarten to escape the hurricane are still trapped there, awaiting the removal of debris. If Southern Baptists could minister to those tourists and tell them of the saving power of Jesus Christ, they would be emissaries for Christ wherever their voyages take them.

"It's just another one of the great opportunities we have there," Caison said. "But we must act now."

John Hamilton can relate to the urgency voiced by Caison.

On July 11, just three days before the Southern Baptist missionary left the island of Antigua for furlough in Memphis, he was a part of the first worship service inside Cedar Grove Baptist Church. It had taken 12 years of sweat and anguish to see the 30-by-35-foot building completed by himself, volunteers from Charlotte, N.C., and church members.

When Hurricane Luis struck the island, he feared the worst for the Cedar Grove facility. His fears turned out to be reality.

"Half of it was destroyed," said Hamilton, who served as the interim pastor of the church and worked on the island for eight years. "And no one in that community has the resources or the skills to rebuild the church."

Since Hamilton is on furlough and his chances of returning are dimming because of an illness, he's doing all he can in Memphis to make sure Cedar Grove and others like it are rebuilt. As the co-project director of Caribbean Disaster Relief for the Brotherhood Commission, he's recruiting volunteers to travel to the Leeward Islands and do the construction work that is so desperately needed.

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"Those people down there are hurting," Hamilton said. "Their lives have been turned upside down. Before the hurricane, they lived in meager homes. Now, they have absolutely nothing."

Through his current volunteer position at the Brotherhood Commission, Hamilton hopes to change that reality. The relief effort will continue through the end of November.

If the effort is to be successful, Hamilton is convinced volunteers must listen to and act on God's call to service.

"I really believe God placed me here for this purpose," Hamilton said. "That church will not be rebuilt unless Southern Baptist volunteers do it. We must have their help."

To volunteer for service in the Caribbean Disaster Relief effort, contact the Brotherhood Commission at 1-800-280-1891.

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FIRST-PERSON

Church's compassion can fill
isolation of people with AIDS By Dianne R. Fuller

Baptist Press
9/26/95

SAVANNAH, Ga. (BP)--"Just give me a call when he's dead."

Stunned, I hung up the phone in bewilderment that a father could respond so coldly to the news that his son was dying of AIDS.

As the assistant director of a homeless shelter, I discovered there was no one and no place to care for Richard during the last stage of his life. Richard had been found living in an abandoned building, and having no family willing to care for him, the last resort was a homeless shelter.

For the next month, workers at the shelter spent their time haphazardly caring for Richard. I tried desperately to find some answers to the situation. Why was there no place for Richard? Where was the church? Where were family and friends?

AIDS is an issue we would like to avoid, but the disease is touching the lives of people from all walks of life. I find the responsibility of Christians to the sick and hurting unquestionable. Interestingly enough, AIDS is an issue that the church is especially adept at avoiding. We want to find someone to blame, like the homosexual or the promiscuous to avoid responding to the crisis. We are more comfortable with people who contracted the disease through socially acceptable means (no fault of their own) like birth or a blood transfusion. The Bible is clear that when we help those who are considered "the least of these" it is as if we have helped Jesus himself. It is tragic when people assume that by loving and helping those with HIV/AIDS, they are automatically condoning sinful activity.

The reality of the disease is that people living with AIDS (PLWAs) live in fear of rejection and that rejection becomes reality too often. PLWA can lose their health, friends, family, employment, home and their sense of identity. Surprisingly, the leading killer of people between the ages of 25-40 is AIDS. People in this age category do not yet have the financial security and resources secured to fall back on when they become sick. They usually do not have children who are old enough to care for them.

Rachel (not her real name), a 28-year-old single mother, is dying of AIDS and she is my friend. She has two beautiful children, ages 10 and 8. She struggles each day in deciding whether to tell the children or shelter them from the terrible reality that mommy is dying and the stigma that this disease brings.

Even though she has not told them, I sense they know something is terribly wrong. They wonder why their mother is sick all the time, is hospitalized periodically, and cries most of the night. She has had to make decisions regarding who will care for them when she dies or becomes too ill to manage. She lives in constant pain and depression. Some days are better than others.

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Recently, she called me complaining of depression and pain that made me wonder if she would commit suicide. That evening, I took the family to McDonald's. As the children played on the playground, Rachel sobbed she just didn't want to be alone. Not being exactly sure what she meant, I muttered, "You and the kids can always spend the night in my home." Later, I realized her statement reflected more of a feeling of isolation from bearing the disease alone than being alone that night.

The reality is that unless the church, family or friends are there to provide support and love, thousands of people will die alone and isolated, like Richard and Rachel.

Fortunately, there are groups cropping up all over the country made up of laypeople, clergy and concerned citizens whose purpose is to advocate for, minister to and provide direct care for people struggling to live with HIV and AIDS. The AIDS Interfaith Network of Savannah is such a group. After several years of sponsoring faith, hope and wholeness worship services and educating the public about AIDS, the group is now mobilizing local congregations to create care teams to work with people struggling to live with HIV/AIDS. The care teams will help with transportation, meals, respite care and just being a friend, according to the assessed and expressed needs of the person living with AIDS.

Even with groups like the AIDS Interfaith Network and the positive changes in attitude and acceptance for those with AIDS, the severity and stigma of AIDS is devastating. Real solutions to the issue of AIDS starts by getting involved and ministering to people like Richard and Rachel. When we attach real people to the problem, we can develop a compassionate approach to the AIDS crisis.

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Fuller is assistant director of Grace House, Savannah, Ga.

HIV victim found acceptance
after opening up to friends

By John D. Pierce

Baptist Press
9/26/95

ATLANTA (BP)--Jon is a typical Christian college student who shares a house near campus with some friends; works hard in his classes; and occasionally leads a campus Bible study group. One evening as he spoke to fellow students during Bible study, Jon did something risky. He was honest with his fellow Christians, though he was uncertain about the response he might receive.

He first asked for prayer "because I am living with two illnesses." Though unplanned, Jon shared that in addition to the pressures of studies and relationships, he was living with hemophilia and the HIV virus. He had not planned to share the details. "It kind of slipped," he recalls.

Rejection was the response he feared. He had experienced that with a former roommate.

To his pleasant surprise, the students in the group were most supportive and offered prayers for him.

"I know I have 100 percent support from them," he said with a smile. He has also been embraced by his Sunday school teacher, student minister and pastor at his college church. This kind of care and inclusion is of great encouragement to him. However, he is aware that not all church-related people respond this well when confronted with a person who is HIV-positive.

How should the church respond to those living with HIV/AIDS?

"If you love God, you're going to feel compassion for that person because they are in a situation where they need love and someone to talk with," said the 23-year old student. His hope and prayer is others will find the same Christian concern he is experiencing from the church and the campus group. According to Jon, that acceptance has led to more openness and trust.

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Jon tested positive in 1988 when hospitalized due to numbness. The virus was traced to tainted medicine. Surprisingly, he has never needed a blood transfusion. "I was kind of young and really didn't understand," he said of first hearing the news. He was determined not to let this situation control his life. "It's (HIV) a small part of my life, like hemophilia," he emphasized.

Honesty and acceptance are helping Jon to live out his life in spite of these concerns. "People told me that I'd be rejected," he said. But what advice would he give to others? "Don't be afraid ... it's very smart to be honest," responded Jon.

"I don't know where God is going to lead me," Jon confessed. He will graduate in the spring of 1996 with a degree in graphic arts. Like many students, he is unsure about where he will live and exactly what kind of work he will do. But he is certain about one thing. "HIV nor hemophilia is controlling my life."

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Baptist association leader stirs churches to grasp their mission By Dave Parker

Baptist Press
9/26/95

TULSA, Okla. (BP)--He rides a bike 17.5 miles to work and back every day. Each Friday he does volunteer work in area shelters. His "desk" is a conference table, and he has two bicycles hanging on the wall next to it.

To say Steve Bass is unconventional is an understatement -- as is saying he is successful.

In 1992 Bass became one of the youngest men ever elected director of missions in the Southern Baptist Convention, when he was named executive director of Tulsa Metropolitan Baptist Association. This summer, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board honored Bass as metropolitan DOM of the year for the western United States.

Accomplishments cited by the HMB included relocating the associational offices, building a new Baptist Student Union facility and expanding DaySpring Villa, a shelter for homeless and abused women.

Bass, 38, said the association has accomplished a great deal in those projects, but he said the more important changes have come through a "radical transformation" in the way Tulsa area churches are thinking.

Bass succeeded his former pastor, Garnet Cole, who retired in 1991. He said Cole "had the association on stable financial ground. He accomplished a lot, and he helped me accomplish a lot."

When Bass was elected, though, he said Tulsa association churches were looking for a new way of doing things.

"They were not only asking for someone from a different generation, they were after a different way of doing missions," he said. "The churches in Tulsa association were ready for some pretty drastic changes and shifts.

"I had no image, or 'paradigm' as it's now being called, for how the previous generation did missions, so the first thing we did was to hold 'Metro Thrust,' a strategic planning process."

Like the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma's strategic planning process, he said Metro Thrust helped the association refocus its energies.

"It caused us to rethink the very basis for what an association is in the first place," he said. "All around us we saw the crumbling of traditional denominational structures, built with 1960s money."

In the 1950s and 1960s, he said the way to solve problems was always to add another staff member or create a new program, which led to large bureaucracies. What was effective then is not so in the 1990s, he said.

One of the association's first steps was to change its name to include the word "Metropolitan." Then it came up with a mission statement that begins, "We affirm that each church is on a mission ..."

"We believe our association has the right to ask churches, 'What is your mission?'" Bass said.

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Some churches may see their mission as including a strong Sunday school and discipleship training program, while other churches may have a more nontraditional approach to reaching people.

"We realize that each church is different, and we don't want them to be the same," he added. "When they tell us what their strengths are, we say, 'That's wonderful. Now, what are you going to do with them?'"

The association will go to a church, meet with members and develop a personalized mission statement and set of priorities.

"These help the church to know how the programming fits in," he said. "Programming is critical, but we've raised a generation of Baptists who don't know why we're doing what we're doing."

Bass said Metro Thrust reached the same conclusion as the state convention's strategic planning process: "We are here to serve churches. We need to be reminded that we work for them."

One of the biggest transformations he has seen has been in the association's staff. He said the old structure stifled creativity and growth.

"Our staff meetings are learning times," he said. "One of the staff members is assigned a book to teach, and so we are constantly learning new ideas.

"We also have tried to make them feel their ideas are important," he said. "Anyone can bring up suggestions and we will discuss them. By doing this, everyone quits worrying about his/her department and is able to see the big picture of what we can accomplish as an association."

Bass said that leads to more learning, as well as staff members giving their best efforts.

"I have real trust in them, that they are professional people who will do their jobs," he said. "My problem with this staff is I have to hold them back. People want to make a difference, if you let them."

One step taken was using more volunteers.

"We asked ourselves how we could work smarter," Bass said. "There are people all around just waiting to share their gifts. It is amazing that I would be recognized for leadership, when all I said was, 'What do you want to be?' and the people did it."

Volunteers include Alan Davis, who heads up the mission service organization and oversaw remodeling of DaySpring Villa; Bill Gray, a retired pastor, who oversaw construction of the BSU building, and Jarene Robison, Woman's Mission Union director, who furnished all the rooms at DaySpring Villa. Bill Gwartney, retired from The Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma, helped with fund-raising.

One area Bass predicts the association will give greater emphasis to is the health of its churches.

"We don't talk about church growth here anymore, we talk about growing healthy churches," he said. "We feel that a healthy church is growing. And the growth and health of the church is directly tied to the growth and health of its pastor. If pastors are not growing, the staff will not grow.

"Our No. 1 call is to help that pastor get on a track of personal growth and leadership development," Bass said.

Continuing education is essential, he said.

"A recent study showed that when a Tulsa University computer student walks across the platform to get his diploma, what he learned as a freshman is already out of date," he said. "When we talk about missiology, you need something fresher than what a Southwestern Seminary professor told you in 1942."

When he goes to DOM training conferences, he said the sessions led by Foreign Mission Board missionaries reflect their awareness that "America is not a Christian nation; it's a mission field. We need to teach that to our pastors."

Bass has been successful at nearly everything he has done. As a teen-ager, he raced go-karts, and in 1974 won the Oklahoma state championship, finishing fourth in the nationals. He was in the National Honor Society and student newspaper editor at Tulsa's Webster High School before entering the ministry.

He also ran competitively until knee problems led him to take up biking. He now rides competitively with the Tulsa Wheelmen.

After graduating on the president's honor roll at Oklahoma Baptist University in 1979, Bass received a master's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., in 1981 and a doctorate from Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, Tenn., in 1983.

His Oklahoma pastorates were at First Baptist Church, Beaver; First Baptist Church, Inola; and Olivet Baptist Church, Tulsa. Bass praised the members of each church for what they contributed to his ministry.

One thing he started at his first pastorate was having Friday as a volunteer missions day. Every Friday he and his wife, Dottie, do mission work, whether it is sacking groceries for indigents or cooking meals for women's shelter residents.

"We started doing this because I am convinced that people will not hear what I say, they'll see what I do," he said. "This is one way of staying involved with the people of the community."

On Sept. 12, he passed the exam to get a food handler's license.

"So now, if this doesn't work out, I can get a job at McDonald's," he joked.

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Fast-food-type communion
to be distributed by B&H

By Ray Waddle

Baptist Press
9/26/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The latest innovation in an ancient Christian practice soon goes public -- a small pack that contains a communion wafer and grape juice.

It looks like nondairy creamer with a wafer on top, wrapped in adhesive plastic. It's being both hailed as God-inspired and dismissed as religious kitsch -- "McCommunion" -- for a throwaway culture.

Whatever it is, "Remembrance" communion sets -- sanitary, convenient, \$29.99 per box of 210 -- will be in Christian retail bookstores in November.

Promoters think it's perfect for outdoor worship settings, nursing homes and prisons. It also should cut down on the time it takes to serve communion in large, indoor churches.

"It came to me in a vision on my way to church one day -- an inspiration from God," said Jim Johnson, a Chicago businessman who invented the communion kit.

Johnson, a Protestant, aims to produce 100 million kits a month. He's working on a wine version. It's patented in 68 countries.

Broadman & Holman, a division of the Baptist Sunday School Board, will be the sole distributor to Christian bookstores. The kits are produced by Compak Corp. in Chicago, where Johnson is president.

Johnson believes the newfangled sets will allow more people to experience communion, also called the Lord's Supper.

The sets don't need refrigeration and have a shelf life of a year or more.

One skeptic calls the set not a breakthrough, but a breakdown of tradition.

"It comes across as religious fast food," said Ralph Van Loon, a Lutheran minister and head of Liturgical Conference, an ecumenical organization in Silver Spring, Md., devoted to liturgical renewal.

"It may be regarded as appropriate for some traditions, but it seems to me it doesn't heighten an awareness of the unusual sacredness of the communion act."

Interest in the one-stop communion set underscores the dramatic differences among Christians over communion practices.

"This set won't be for everybody," said Libby Eaton, a spokeswoman at Broadman & Holman. "There's no intent to replace anyone's communion practices. It meets some communion needs that some communion products don't meet."

Catholics and Episcopalians probably won't have much use for it, because they take wine from the "common cup," not tiny individual cups. They also believe the bread and wine contain the "real presence" of Jesus Christ, once it's blessed by a priest.

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Most Protestants don't see the communion elements as the real Christ but a symbol. Their practices tend to be less formal.

But Johnson said he thinks some "common coppers" might go for his communion pack for health reasons. Studies show traces of bacteria can appear in a communal cup during worship.

"But I'm not selling the fear factor. The main point is convenience and affordability."

He also says it's environment-friendly: The kits could cut down on waste by reducing leftover bread and juice at services.

Also, the cups are recyclable -- people will be able to send them back to Chicago, he said.

"There will be people who say this is too modern, but they said that about the telephone.

"I think Jesus would say that the important thing is that you take communion, not how you take it."

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College students open doors
for gospel witness overseas

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
9/26/95

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Ken Dillard and a team of 13 other students and student ministers hiked through remote areas of the Himalayas this summer, claiming territory as they went.

No, they weren't staking out land for themselves, but claiming it as an "open territory" for Christ.

"We started each day with a time of prayer and devotion. And then as we walked, we would pray that an openness to Christianity would come about in the area and that the spirit of God would make himself evident through us," said Dillard, metro student ministries director for the Cincinnati area.

Dillard and his team members were participating in Global Student Involvement, a cooperative missions initiative sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's National Student Ministry (NSM) and the Foreign and Home Mission boards. GSI is designed to involve students in short-term mission projects around the globe.

The 1995 projects were primarily in "World A" countries closed to a traditional missionary witness. Since the program's launch in December 1994, 126 students and directors representing 33 Baptist Student Unions and local churches have served in 14 countries around the world.

"These are really teams of seed planters," said NSM consultant Brad Gray, coordinator of the program. "They aren't really going to open doors for missionaries. They're building door frames, laying a foundation for ministry and the gospel."

Cost varies from project to project, Gray said, adding he has heard several "amazing testimonies" from students about how God provided the funds necessary for participation.

"Students are learning that if God wants them to go, money won't be a problem," he said.

As they walked through the mountains of the Asian country where they served, Dillard said members of his GSI team encountered several opportunities for ministry.

"We had a medical doctor with us who was a real door opener. We were able to meet several medical needs; we played with children; and were even able to share the gospel a few times."

Dillard said team members came away "with a greater ability to focus in prayer and a better grasp of the need to reach the world for Christ."

As a member of a six-member team serving in a former Soviet republic, Shiloh Edwards worked in children's camps, sharing about America and her faith in Christ.

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"The (local Christians) got the children interested by saying, 'Come and hear the Americans.' And then they showed the Jesus film. Five hundred children and youth accepted Christ," Edwards, a senior and BSU member at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, recalled.

"God doesn't have to use anybody to do his work," she said, "but he chose to use us. I'm very thankful for that."

Gray said GSI is open to churches, BSUs, individuals and combinations of the above. The majority of mission projects take place from late May through early August and are approximately two weeks in length. Some projects are available in December and January.

For more information, write to Global Student Involvement, National Student Ministry, MSN 153, 127 Ninth Ave. North, Nashville, TN 37234; or call (615) 251-2397 or (615) 251-2777.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following story, with corrected and updated information, subs out a story with the same headline, dated 9/22/95.

Missionary to Lesotho dies
in car wreck in South Africa By Mary E. Speidel

Baptist Press
9/26/95

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (BP)--Glenda Middleton, 56, a Southern Baptist missionary to Lesotho, died in a Sept. 22 accident while driving alone behind her husband to a prayer retreat in Midwaters, South Africa.

Funeral services are tentatively set for Oct. 6 at First Baptist Church, Bienville, La., depending on when her body arrives from South Africa.

Middleton, from Bernice, La., lost control of her four-wheel-drive vehicle just before going over a hill, said her husband, Charles, in a Sept. 25 telephone interview from Johannesburg, South Africa. Her right front tire apparently edged onto the paved road's shoulder; tire marks indicated she probably turned too sharply trying to realign the truck, he said. She died upon impact when her vehicle turned over several times.

Her husband, from Shreveport, La., had just passed over the hill when he looked in his rear-view mirror and realized his wife had disappeared. He turned his truck around to investigate.

"When I didn't see her on the road (in the mirror), I knew something was wrong, but I wasn't sure if she'd just stopped or if she'd had a flat or what," he said. "I got back to her within two to three minutes."

When he arrived on the scene, a farmer who had been working on a nearby windmill was already there. The farmer had heard the vehicle crash and saw it flip over a fence, the missionary said.

"He told me not to go over there (to the vehicle), that it was really bad," Middleton said.

When Middleton got to the truck, she was still strapped in her seat. Using CPR, he tried to revive her. About 30 minutes later a physician pronounced her dead at the scene. Later it was determined the impact broke her neck, arms and some ribs. The accident occurred between 10 a.m. and noon about 40 miles from Midwaters in South Africa's Orange Free State.

The Middletons are assigned to Maseru, capital of the tiny country of Lesotho surrounded by South Africa. He is a church developer. Much of her work as a missionary has been in literature development.

After appointment by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1968, the Middletons served in the southeastern African country of Malawi 13 years. They did church planting, publications and media work. In 1982 they transferred to Transkei -- also in southern Africa -- where they worked in church and literature development for a decade.

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The Middletons wrote and edited a number of tracts, Sunday school and religious education materials, said John Faulkner, who directs Foreign Mission Board work in southern and eastern Africa from a base in Nairobi, Kenya. "She's always been involved in some kind of literature development. She was a very dedicated and capable missionary," Faulkner said.

"She worked with church women and was planning literacy training with them," said missionary colleague Martha McAlister, whom Mrs. Middleton helped with language study. "The work there is fairly new. The people are difficult to reach. But she was always upbeat, always cheerful, no matter what.

"She was an encourager. She was a real strength to her husband."

Before her appointment Mrs. Middleton, the former Glenda Evans, was a teacher in Bienville, La.; White Settlement, Texas; and Ringgold, La. She earned the bachelor of arts degree from Louisiana College, Pineville. Middleton was pastor of First Baptist Church, Bienville; New Bethel Baptist Church, Arcadia, La.; and Liberty Hill (La.) Baptist Church.

Besides her husband, Mrs. Middleton is survived by a daughter, Vicki Blackwell of Bossier City, La.; a son, Carl Middleton of Hawkins, Texas; four grandchildren; five sisters and four brothers.

"Our family appreciates all the prayers," said Middleton. "My wife had an unusual prayer burden that leaders (African Christians) would be called of God to work in the country of Lesotho. I think that would be the prayer request she would like to leave (with Southern Baptists)."

Mrs. Middleton's body was to be flown to the United States Sept. 29 or 30, her husband said. He was to arrive in Louisiana Sept. 26, after attending a Sept. 25 memorial service for his wife, led by Foreign Mission Board missionaries in Johannesburg. An earlier memorial service was led by FMB missionaries attending the prayer retreat in Midwaters.

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EDITORS' NOTE: In (BP) story titled "He wants you to be prepared if Jehovah's Witnesses knock," dated 9/25/95, please add the following editors' note: Further information about witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses is available from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department at (770) 410-6220, with additional materials available from HMB customer services, 1-800-634-2462.
