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August 3, 1993

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Historic San Francisco church  
gutted by early-morning fire

By Bob Allen

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (ABP) -- Fire destroyed the sanctuary of historic Dolores Street Baptist Church in San Francisco's Mission District early Aug. 2.

The fire, reported at 12:05 a.m. Aug. 2, originated on the outside of the church between the sanctuary and adjacent community center, said Lt. Hayes White of the San Francisco Fire Department. An arson investigation is continuing, she said.

Fire officials estimated damage to the community center at \$500,000. The sanctuary, valued at \$1.5 million, was a total loss and was ordered demolished by the city's building bureau.

Twenty-six fire units and 95 firefighters fought more than three hours to control the fire, as flames shot into the night sky, attracting a large crowd of onlookers. No injuries were reported.

A photo of the raging fire was distributed by Associated Press and appeared in newspapers nationwide, including the New York Times.

It is not the first time the church -- at one time funded by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board -- has been in the news.

The congregation, which has a reputation for social activism, adopted a statement in 1981 welcoming all persons "to minister" through the congregation, opening the door to participation by homosexuals. Subsequently, the California Southern Baptist Convention and the San Francisco/Peninsula Southern Baptist Association withdrew fellowship from the church.

However, the church continued to contribute to the SBC until the convention's 1992 action ousting two North Carolina churches -- one for licensing a homosexual divinity student to the gospel ministry and the other for holding a service of "blessing" for a gay couple.

Last January Dolores Street announced it was severing ties with the

Southern Baptist Convention to protest the denomination's stance against churches which affirm homosexual behavior.

In 1983 Dolores Street Church gained national attention when then-pastor Jim Lowder, his wife, Rose Ann, and nine other Dolores Street members gave their individual names as "Southern Baptist Convention" after their arrest during a nuclear protest. They were among more than 1,000 protesters arrested and charged with obstructing traffic outside the Livermore Research Laboratory.

That action drew a reprimand from leaders at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the California convention, which at the time jointly funded salary assistance for the church.

The church is currently without a pastor. Lowder remains on staff as director of the community center. He was vacationing in North Carolina at the time of the fire and unavailable for comment.

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Senate confirms Ginsburg  
to U.S. Supreme Court

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg received overwhelming bipartisan support Aug. 3 in gaining confirmation from the U.S. Senate to the Supreme Court.

She is the 107th justice and the second woman to serve on the nation's highest court. The 96-3 confirmation vote followed the unanimous recommendation of the 18-member Judiciary Committee, which held four days of hearings to examine Ginsburg's judicial philosophy and record.

Ginsburg, the first Democratic nominee to the high court in a quarter of a century, will replace retired Justice Byron White.

Ginsburg, 60, has served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia -- often called the nation's second highest court -- since nominated by President Jimmy Carter in 1980.

Judiciary Committee chairman Joseph Biden, D-Del., said that Ginsburg was one of the "brightest nominees" to come before the committee in the nearly 20 years he has been on it.

Voting against confirmation were Republican Sens. Jesse Helms of North Carolina; Don Nickles of Oklahoma and Robert Smith of New Hampshire.

In an Aug. 2 floor speech, Helms said "never have I been more disappointed in a nominee." Ginsburg's beliefs are 180 degrees in opposition to principles held by the majority of Americans, he said.

In addition to her support of abortion rights, Helms said he feared Ginsburg "is likely to uphold the homosexual agenda."

During hearings, Ginsburg said that she could not speak to homosexual rights issues that could come before the court. However, she said that "rank discrimination" of any kind is un-American.

Ginsburg's nomination received the highest possible rating of the American Bar Association -- a unanimous judgment by a 15-member panel that she is "well qualified" for the highest bench in the land.

Oliver Thomas, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee and a member of the Supreme Court bar, said: "We have every reason to believe Judge Ginsburg will serve with distinction. Her background and writings also suggest she will be a strong advocate of religious liberty and the separation of church and state."

Ginsburg is best known for pioneering women's rights in the 1970s -- a

distinction that has led some to herald her as the "Thurgood Marshall of the women's movement," in reference to the court's civil-rights champion. During the 1970s, Ginsburg argued six women's-rights cases before the high court and won five of them.

She said her nomination is significant "because it contributes to the end of the days when women, at least half the talent pool in our society, appear in high places only as one-at-a-time performers."

President Bill Clinton said he nominated Ginsburg because he wanted to have a consensus builder on the court, adding that she was too thoughtful a judge to be labeled either liberal or conservative.

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Committee votes to recommend  
Elders as surgeon general

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Senate confirmation of Joycelyn Elders as U.S. surgeon general moved a step closer July 30 when the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee voted to recommend her to the full Senate.

The vote was 13 to 4, with four of the committee's seven Republicans voting against her nomination.

Elders, the oldest child of a sharecropper father and a teenage mother, said she wants to be "the voice and the vision for the poor and the powerless.

Elders, a pediatric endocrinologist and former director of the Arkansas Department of Health, has been awash in controversy since President Bill Clinton nominated her to become the nation's chief physician.

While receiving endorsements from more than 200 groups and former Surgeon General Everett Koop, she has been staunchly opposed by the Religious Right, which objects to her views on teenage pregnancy and school-based sexuality education.

Committee chairman Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., said Elders "is just what the doctor ordered for this nation at this time in our history, with all the problems we face in public health.

"Her ideological opponents may never relent in their opposition. But I suspect that before long, millions of Americans -- especially the 13 million children who live in poverty -- will be calling Dr. Elders their doctor too."

Kennedy, who opposed tactics that delayed Elders' confirmation hearing, also said that he intends to "do all I can" to see that the Senate confirms her before the Aug. 9 recess.

"The Senate owes her an apology, not a filibuster," he said. "It is time for this harassment to end."

Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, R-Kan., said she had some concerns about Elders, but the policy on school-based health clinics that Elders outlined during her confirmation hearing is a sound one.

Kassebaum, the ranking Republican on the committee, said she was concerned that Elders' outspoken and controversial nature could cause the health-care focus to be on the messenger rather than the message.

While Kassebaum said she did not agree with everything that Elders has said, she said she believes that Elders should be heard and that perhaps she could reach teenagers and children in a way that Kassebaum could not. She deserves a chance to try to reach these children, Kassebaum said in defense of her vote in favor of Elders.

Some of Kassebaum's Republican colleagues disagreed, saying that Elders lacked the "judgment" to be surgeon general and that she would breed divisiveness at a time when the nation needs healing.

Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, acknowledged Elders has "an impressive resume" and "the positive regard of a number of people in the health community." He also noted that the hundreds of calls to his office have been running 100 to 1 against her.

Hatch said he agreed with Elders' concern regarding the nation's young people and the teenage pregnancy rate. "Teaching abstinence and responsibility is not always easy but that should be our first priority," he said.

However, Hatch said he could not understand Elders' decision, while head of the Arkansas Department of Health, not to notify the public when a shipment of condoms distributed in health clinics and schools was found to have an unusually high failure rate.

She said she reported the problem to federal authorities and recalled the condoms that had not yet been distributed. She said young men do not like to use condoms and that a public fear of defective ones potentially could have hurt more teenagers than the faulty products.

She told the committee that it was a difficult choice and one that she would not change if she had a chance to do it over again.

"This is of particular concern to me," Hatch said, "since I believe the nation's doctor must have the trust and confidence of all citizens. This error in judgment, as well as her well-known differences with millions of Americans who do not share her views, means that Dr. Elders would be a surgeon general who did not have that confidence."

Sen. Dan Coats, R-Ind., echoed Hatch. He said Elders' decision not to inform young people about defective condoms represents an almost unexplainable judgment.

Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, interjected that Elders was the only state health director who notified the Food and Drug Administration of the defective products.

Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., said that Elders would be the kind of surgeon general "who will call upon all of us to be our own best selves."

Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., said he opposed her because "her liberal philosophy is not in line with the thinking of the people I represent."

Among the critics of Elders' nomination are leaders of the Christian Life Commission, the Southern Baptist Convention's moral-concerns agency. James Smith, CLC director of government relations, said Elders "represents everything that is wrong with federal policy on sex education and abortion" and predicted "things will only get worse under her administration as surgeon general."

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Southern names woman  
as associate VP

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Marsha Ellis Smith, an editor at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, has been named associate vice president for academic administration at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

President Al Mohler and David Dockery, vice president for academic administration, announced the appointment Aug. 2, Mohler's first working day as president.

The position is a new alignment of duties previously held by Harold

Songer, who retired last year as vice president for academic affairs. Smith will oversee academic scheduling, the seminary catalogue, academic records, enrollment services and other mechanics of the academic process.

Smith and Dockery worked together at the Sunday School Board, where Dockery was general editor of Broadman Press before joining the seminary.

Smith, 42, currently is series acquisitions editor with the Holman division of the Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn. She has worked with projects such as the "Holman Bible Dictionary," "Holman Bible Handbook," "Holman Student Bible Dictionary" and "The Family Worship Bible."

She holds the doctor of philosophy degree in biblical backgrounds and archaeology and the master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. She also earned the bachelor of arts degree in music education from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark.

Smith is a native of Malvern, Ark. She has been an adjunct professor at Southwestern as well as at Texas Christian University and Hardin-Simmons University, a visiting professor at the Baptist Theological Seminary of Zambia, and associate director and Bible teacher at the Baptist Student Union of the University of Texas at El Paso.

She is married to William Smith.

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-- By Mark Wingfield

Harlan Spurgeon joins  
Fellowship missions staff

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Missions veteran Harlan Spurgeon has been elected associate missions coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Spurgeon, 62, was elected unanimously July 28 by the Fellowship's Global Missions Ministry Group. His responsibilities begin August 1.

Spurgeon recently left his post as vice president of the office of mission personnel at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, citing philosophical differences with trustee leaders.

He is the third high-level FMB administrator to join the two-year-old Fellowship since February. He joins former FMB President Keith Parks, now Fellowship global missions coordinator, and former FMB Vice President for the Americas Betty Law, now Fellowship associate missions coordinator.

The trio brings an average of 34 years of missions experience to their roles. All three joined the Atlanta-based Fellowship in the wake of trustee-imposed changes at the FMB.

Spurgeon will assume three primary assignments: coordinating the missionary appointment and orientation process, directing the Fellowship's missions program among internationals in the United States, and developing a program of urban evangelism and ministry in major urban centers in the U.S. and other parts of the world.

Parks praised Spurgeon as "a tremendous addition to our team. He brings a lifetime of proven experience and missions leadership and a broad network of trusted relationships.

"Our missions program is growing so rapidly that we simply could not afford the downtime that would be required to train and orient someone with less experience," Parks added. "Harlan can hit the ground running and enable us to move forward immediately in some critical areas."

The most pressing need, Parks said, is to activate a process for

screening mission applicants and training new missionaries. The Fellowship's Global Missions Ministry Group hopes to double its current missionary corps of 20 by next spring.

Spurgeon, and his wife, Joann, were missionaries to Taiwan from 1957 to 1972. He served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Bolivar, Mo., for seven years and then as president of Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar for four years before rejoining the FMB as vice president in 1983.

Spurgeon said he and his wife "felt the Lord was leading us in this direction at this time in our lives."

"We have watched for more than 10 years as our beloved missions program and our denomination have been stolen from us," he said. He added he was drawn to the Fellowship "because it represents what Baptists really are and who we have been historically. Rather than become bitter about what has been lost, I'm looking forward to being a part of preparing something for our children and our grandchildren.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to work creatively with others in an organization where I think the sky is the limit in terms of missions opportunities."

A Missouri native, Spurgeon served as pastor of churches in Missouri and Kansas before his appointment as a missionary in 1957. He is a graduate of William Jewell College, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

Joann Long Spurgeon has been pre-school director at Second Baptist Church's Creative Learning Center in Richmond since 1984. She is a graduate of Southwest Baptist University. The Spurgeons have four grown children and four grandchildren.

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-- By David Wilkinson, communications coordinator for the Fellowship.

Moderate Baptists start  
alternative youth camp

By Greg Warner

BRADENTON, Fla. (ABP) -- Moderate Baptists have started their own youth camp as an alternative to the popular "Centrifuge" program sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The week-long camp, called "Passport," was held July 19-24 at a Christian retreat center in Bradenton, Fla. A total of 162 teenagers attended from 12 churches in four states -- Florida, Georgia, Kentucky and South Carolina.

Passport was put together by five former Centrifuge staff members and sponsored by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida, which put up the money to get the camp off the ground.

Plans for next year call for three weeks of camp serving 250 to 350 teenagers. A new location farther north is being sought.

Although patterned after the popular Centrifuge summer camp, Passport also incorporated some noticeable changes -- like having a woman as camp pastor. Passport also employed a greater emphasis on missions and a less zealous approach to evangelism.

"The winds are changing, and it's time to offer youth something other than just a 'turn or burn' evangelistic approach," said Jim Bush, camp coordinator.

In fact, the Passport staff didn't count the number of teenagers who made public faith decisions during the week. "We had a time of individual decision, and decisions were made," Bush said, but the appeal was "low-pressure."

"Any program you get together can get kids to walk an aisle," said Bush. Passport will be judged by a different standard, he said.

Bush said the tiny camp poses no threat to the massive Centrifuge program, which this summer -- its 15th -- will handle 40,000 campers at seven sites over a 10-week period.

"Centrifuge is probably one of the best week-long programs going on for young people," said Bush, a six-year Centrifuge staff veteran and now minister of youth at First Baptist Church of Fort Myers, Fla. "We don't want to be putting Centrifuge down."

Still, he said, he and other youth workers are convinced something else is needed.

Bush said Passport was not trying to make a statement by having a female as worship leader. "It was not an issue. We just let it happen."

Bush and other Passport participants said worship leader Coleen Burroughs, a student from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., did an excellent job in that role. There was no negative reaction from the campers or the church counselors, Bush said.

Although the campers took little notice of the female worship leader, her presence demonstrated the differences between Passport and Centrifuge, which does not hire women as camp pastors. Bush said the women's issue was one thing that helped convince him that an alternative to Centrifuge was needed.

As a Centrifuge camp pastor in 1990, Bush said, he "got in trouble" for encouraging young women to respond to God's call to ministry. "I would tell them, 'If God is calling you, you don't need to let others tell you otherwise,'" Bush recalled.

That brought Bush into conflict with Centrifuge leaders, he said.

Joe Palmer, manager of the Sunday School Board's Centrifuge-Crosspoint section, said he knows Bush but has no knowledge of the conflict.

Palmer said Centrifuge organizers "have never seriously considered" having a woman as camp pastor because most Southern Baptist churches don't have female pastors or accept the concept. "We do what we feel is in the best interest of the churches," he told Associated Baptist Press.

Palmer said Centrifuge avoids high-pressure evangelism. "We do not want to manipulate any kid, and we work with the pastors and music people to make sure that doesn't happen," he said. "I don't believe we put pressure. We put an opportunity for them to respond."

"What we are trying to do is introduce young people to Jesus Christ, and those who know Jesus Christ we want to grow," Palmer continued. "Our concern is to get them properly related to Jesus Christ."

Palmer said he was aware of Passport and the desire of some Centrifuge veterans to make some changes, but he said Centrifuge still can minister "to all the churches that are out there."

To address the broad spectrum of Southern Baptist churches, Centrifuge goes "to neither extreme," he said. "We try to meet the needs of the kids but not to alienate the churches at the same time."

Bush said Passport's emphasis on missions was intentional. Although Centrifuge offers missions as one topic of study for campers, all Passport participants took part in a mission-action project.

For this year's camp, the youth built hurricane shutters for use in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's relief project in Miami. "This was a wonderful opportunity for the youth groups to just sweat it out together,"

Bush said.

Campers also heard from Fellowship missionaries in Miami and Poland and viewed a videotaped missions message from Keith Parks, Fellowship missions coordinator.

The nine Passport staff members led campers through a daily schedule that mixed Bible studies, topical seminars and worship experiences with fun and games, including a square dance one night.

Bush said he was pleased the Fellowship's Florida chapter could support Passport without insisting on control of the camp's schedule and content. "That's not typical."

Passport operated on a budget of \$10,000 and charged each camper \$150 for the week. The camp fell \$1,000 short of recouping all expenses, but the Florida Fellowship absorbed the loss.

Pat Anderson, coordinator of the Florida Fellowship, said the investment was well worth the expense. "This may be the most important thing we are doing this summer, because we're dealing with the next generation," he said.

Passport "modeled what the CBF is all about," Anderson added. "Without any real fanfare, the Passport camp modeled hands-on missions, inclusive worship and worship leadership, and deep individual relationships with God."

While the camp was sponsored by the Florida Fellowship, one of the most active and innovative state CBF chapters, the national Fellowship was uninvolved. And it may stay that way next year, even though Passport's organizers want to attract more churches and youth to the camp.

David Wilkinson, communications coordinator for the national Fellowship, said the CBF is interested in the camp and its success, but it is not committed to sponsoring a myriad of ministries.

Bush and Anderson agreed that is one of the Fellowship's strengths.

"Why do we have to have everything sanctioned by the national organization?" asked Anderson, a member of the national Fellowship's Coordinating Council. "I'm not sure the Passport concept would be enhanced by the national organization imposing any kind of standard on the content."

Bush and the four other youth workers who organized Passport make up an independent organization called New Paradigms. "This shows how different parts of the body of Christ can share their gifts and do something without conflict," Bush said.

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Texas conservatives at odds  
over how to advance cause

DALLAS (ABP) -- Baptist conservatives in Texas are at odds about how to advance their cause, and the result is two organizations pursuing different objectives.

Both groups want the Baptist General Convention of Texas and its agencies to reflect a more conservative viewpoint.

But while the newer of the two organizations, Baptists with a Mission, will take a political approach -- attempting to cut funding for Baylor University and promoting "a slate of biblical conservatives" for the convention's elected offices -- the older Texas Baptist Conservative Fellowship will limit its activism to prayer.

Randy McDonald, president of the Texas Baptist Conservative Fellowship, said the two groups' goals "are not compatible."

Ernest Gregory, a San Antonio physician who heads Baptists with a

Mission, disagreed, saying the two groups have the same goals, "but we are too aggressive for them."

Gregory's group has adopted three objectives: electing a slate of candidates for BGCT offices; cutting the \$63,000 in annual BGCT funds that go to the Baptist Joint Committee in Washington; and reducing BGCT funding of Baylor and other state convention agencies that reduce Baptist representation on their governing boards.

The organization, which surfaced in June, is described in a press release as "a grass-roots group" of Baptists, primarily lay people, committed to "bringing the Baptist General Convention of Texas in line with the current conservative direction of the Southern Baptist Convention."

In the release, media coordinator Jack Chambers of Austin said the group will take a "proactive" approach. "Therefore, while still supportive of the pastors' group (Texas Baptist Conservative Fellowship), BWM will be pursuing its goals independently. And BWM will now broaden its membership to include pastors as well as laymen."

The group hired Perry Ellis, former director of the Conservative Fellowship, to coordinate speaking engagements, Gregory told the Baptist Standard of Texas.

The anti-Baylor strategy, which was revised from an earlier more drastic plan, would reduce BGCT funding for any state convention agency or institution that reduces BGCT control -- which Baylor did two years ago with convention approval.

The cuts would be in proportion to the loss of BGCT control. For Baylor, which now allows the BGCT to elect only one fourth of its regents, Texas Baptist funding would drop from \$4 million a year to \$1 million.

The Baylor issue is one key area of disagreement between the two groups. Conservatives, led by the Conservative Fellowship, failed to block BGCT approval of Baylor's revised governing structure in 1991.

"We will not get involved in the Baylor controversy," said McDonald of the Conservative Fellowship. "That is not an issue with us. What we are trying to do is get out of the political mess and back to just conservatives participating in the convention."

"We won't present a slate of officers" at the fall BGCT meeting, said McDonald, pastor of Baptist Temple in McAllen. "Our goal is to make it more of a prayer organization of conservatives praying for the convention."

Of Baptists with a Mission, McDonald said, "We are no longer connected in any way whatsoever."

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-- By Toby Druin

Gilyard returns to Florida  
as pastor of non-SBC church

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- Darrell Gilyard, the controversial former Southern Baptist pastor, has returned to his native Florida to become pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church in Jacksonville.

Gilyard, 31, who two years ago was the most sought-after black preacher in Southern Baptist circles, fell out of favor with his prominent Baptist backers in July 1991 amid recurring allegations of sexual misconduct with female members of his congregations.

Gilyard denied the allegations, but he later admitted to unspecified "improprieties" and resigned as pastor of the multiracial Victory Baptist

Church in Richardson, Texas, which he had led to become one of the fastest-growing churches in the nation.

Although advised by his mentor Paige Patterson of Dallas to refrain from preaching for two years, Gilyard and about 125 former Victory members formed a new congregation in nearby Garland two weeks later.

He left that church four months ago and began preaching at Shiloh, a non-Southern Baptist church in Jacksonville. In that time, attendance has risen from about 300 people to 1,000 each week, according to Ella Marie Sykes, director of church ministries.

Gilyard was installed as pastor July 25.

Sykes told the Florida Times-Union the church is not concerned with Gilyard's past but with the future.

"He has taken the church from a dying church to a very progressive one," she told the newspaper. "We're going to stand by him. We do love him and believe in him."

Gilyard, who declined to be interviewed, was "discovered" in the early 1980s by Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville and later Southern Baptist Convention president.

Vines helped Gilyard enroll in Criswell College in Dallas, where he was befriended by then-President Paige Patterson. With Patterson's endorsement, the young preaching phenom became a rising star on the predominantly white Southern Baptist speaking circuit.

Gilyard gained the national spotlight on Jerry Falwell's "Old Time Gospel Hour" and at various Baptist state conventions and evangelistic rallies with his heart-wrenching story of growing up homeless beneath the St. John's River bridge in Palatka, Fla., south of Jacksonville.

The tale was recounted in "The Darrell Gilyard Miracle Story," a videotape produced and distributed by Falwell's ministry. However, the Dallas Morning News later reported that Gilyard, who was abandoned as an infant, actually was raised in a comfortable Palatka home by a woman who reared him as if he were her son.

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-- By Greg Warner and Ken Camp

Missionary couple will return  
to Hong Kong after 27-year absence

By Don McGregor

STARKVILLE, Miss. (ABP) -- A former missionary couple who served in Hong Kong will return after 27 years to help the Hong Kong Baptist Seminary relocate.

Marvin Bond of Starkville, Miss., recently retired after 20 years on the faculty of Mississippi State University, where he was professor of civil engineering. He will use his engineering skills to help Hong Kong Baptist Seminary build a new \$13 million facility.

Bond and his wife, Jean, served as Southern Baptist missionaries in Hong Kong from 1961 to 1966, working for Hong Kong Baptist College. He was chairman of the college's civil engineering department and director of the college's building program. Jean Bond taught foreign languages.

After five years on the mission field, however, they returned to the United States because of family health problems.

Although away from the Orient for 27 years, the Bonds said their call to

work with Chinese people has never waned.

Despite their earlier association with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and their more recent work with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Bonds will not be affiliated with any mission-sending agency on this trip.

Their new assignment came at the request of the seminary itself, which like Hong Kong Baptist College is owned by the Hong Kong Baptist Convention.

They will leave Aug. 16 and be gone for about 18 months. The seminary will pay their traveling expenses and provide housing, but the couple will receive no salary.

Last year Jean Bond served as co-chair of the global missions ministry group for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. She resigned as a member of the Fellowship's Coordinating Council when the Hong Kong project arose.

While they are away, a Fellowship missionary couple will live in their Starkville home. Paul and Margie Thibodeaux, also from Mississippi, will be on furlough from their assignment in Europe.

First Baptist Church of Starkville, where both Bonds have served as deacons, held a brief commissioning service and farewell for the couple during morning worship July 25.

Jean Bond has been involved in volunteer work with many of Mississippi State's international students through programs at First Baptist. Earlier she taught English part-time at the university.

The Bonds' continued interest in witnessing to the Chinese people was illustrated when they took into their home a young Chinese student at Mississippi State. In a short time, under the Bonds' influence, the woman made a profession of Christian faith and was baptized at First Baptist of Starkville.

Later the woman's adolescent daughter came to live with her in the Bonds' home, and she made a profession of faith. So did the woman's husband when he came for a visit.

Once in Hong Kong, Marvin Bond will be technical consultant to the seminary's board of trustees and supervisor of the building project.

Since 1951 Hong Kong Baptist Seminary has been located in downtown Kowloon, a busy commercial area on a peninsula across the harbor from Hong Kong Island.

The seminary's property has become very valuable in recent years, Bond explained. It has been appraised at \$360 million in Hong Kong currency -- or about \$47 million in U.S. dollars.

A Hong Kong developer approached the seminary with a persuasive offer -- in exchange for the seminary's property, the developer would find a new site and build a facility two-and-a-half times as large as the present one.

In addition, the developer will provide an endowment of \$100 million in Hong Kong currency and make available another \$25 million to finance the relocation. The seminary agreed.

The new location will be in the region called the New Territories, which is farther inland on the peninsula where Kowloon and the seminary are located.

There will be four buildings at the new location, which will be on a mountain facing Tolo Harbor. The buildings will include 100,000 square feet of space and be worth not less than \$100 million in Hong Kong currency, according to the developer.

The construction will include a new church on the seminary grounds. The Hong Kong Baptist Convention has 50 churches and 30 chapels.

When the relocation is completed, the developer will tear down the present seminary building and construct high-rise apartment complexes.

The seminary's construction is not the only sign of change in Hong Kong,

which since 1842 has been a crown colony of Great Britain. In 1997, the British will return the 32-square-mile island -- plus Kowloon and the New Territories -- to Chinese control.

According to the Chinese-British agreement, all of the economic, governmental and societal arrangements now in place will be allowed to continue for 50 years. Bond said he feels the new seminary will be able to continue in operation without any major problems.

Both natives of Mississippi, Marvin and Jean Bond earned master's degrees from Louisiana Tech -- he in engineering and she in English. While Marvin worked as a project engineer in highway construction in Ruston, La., in the late 1950s, the couple attended First Baptist Church there.

The pastor, Avery Lee, received a letter from the vice president of Hong Kong Baptist College asking for help in filling two positions -- a civil engineer to head the college's construction and someone to teach English. Lee thought of the Bonds.

The couple went to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for a year and then on to Hong Kong to take up those assignments.

When they came back to the United States in 1966, they again returned to New Orleans, where Marvin obtained a doctorate in civil engineering from Tulane University.

They lived and worked in Kentucky for five years before moving in 1973 to Starkville, where Marvin joined the faculty of Mississippi State.

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