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MULTICULTURAL BELGIUM AND FRANCE OUR EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURS

SEPTEMBER 1992

PRICE 25p



Cover picture:
Selling cloth at
Liège Sunday market

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Telephone: 0235 512077 Telex: 94070435 BMSB G Fax: 0235 511265

GENERAL SECRETARY Revd Reg Harvey **OVERSEAS SECRETARY** Revd Angus MacNeill
EDITOR Revd David Pountain **DESIGN** Anthony Viney
Enquiries about service overseas to: Personnel Secretary, Janet Claxton

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Difficult decisions for shoppers at Liège market



MULTICULTURAL EUROPE



NO, THE FRONT COVER picture was not taken in Kinshasa, nor anywhere else in Africa for that matter.

It is a scene in the weekly market held on the banks of the river Meuse at Liège in Belgium. But it could quite easily have been in

Brussels, or Lille or Paris. Europe, like Britain, has numerous immigrants who present many challenges and opportunities to our churches.

In recent months, both in London and in Paris, Zairian Baptist churches have been founded. The one in Paris was received into the Baptist Federation in the summer.

In Belgium, Baptists from all parts of Zaire are to be found worshipping in the French speaking churches. They were present at the centenary celebrations of the Union of Baptists in Belgium and some of them sang with one of the choirs.

It is good to see how such people, often rejected by the rest of society, are being accepted into the churches. In Belgium, they have been ministering to refugees from Romania. One couple, with their two children, have been received into the membership of the church at Middlekerke. The husband is the first Romanian refugee to be accepted officially into Belgium. The church helped him with his papers and with the negotiations with the authorities. ▶

HERALD

SOME PEOPLE still find it difficult to accept France and Belgium as legitimate areas for missionary work. They are relatively prosperous and not at all in the third-world tradition of BMS activity.

This attitude irritates one BMS worker in France. 'I feel called to lead people in France to Christ,' he says. 'That's the burden God has put on my heart.' He wonders why Baptists in Britain quickly rush off to places like Romania to offer help and tend to ignore Western Europe. Not that he considers it an either/or situation, rather that we are into world mission and that must include the so-called affluent countries which are nevertheless poor spiritually.

Baptist churches in France, where BMS has workers, are not, however, exclusively French. The congregation at Bron is 95 per cent African. The church at Versailles has members from places like Martinique, Brazil and Mexico. At Clermont-Ferrand are people from Germany, the United States and Stoke-on-Trent. And it is good to see this mixture of people from all over the world coming together in Baptist churches as one family in Christ.

However it does make outreach to the French population a little more difficult.

Baptist churches are seen as places for minority groups. Yet they see the spiritual poverty of large areas of the French population. The occult is addictive and most people have at least one story to tell about mediums, spiritualistic healing and fortune telling. Children's television often features fortune tellers reading the future for young children by the use of tarot cards.

BMS is committed to work in Europe both East and West. It is a ministry to the poor in both senses.

EUROPE



A REAL PROBLEM

that Sam Verhaeghe, President of Belgian Baptists, would like to solve.

MANY PEOPLE in Belgium are addicted to drugs and alcohol. We would love to help them 'kick the habit' but there is no Christian place in Belgium to which we can send them.

In the past I have sent addicts to a home in Holland. Of course they really had to have the will to go to a place like that. They have to sign a form agreeing that they will not leave until they are free of the habit and this can take six months to a year. They have to make their own decision and once they sign they must stay.

Drug addiction is a real problem even here in Ostend. In some cases it has been given to school children in chewing gum. Once a whole school was affected by it.

I am praying for the day when we can open a home in Flanders to help people addicted to drugs. But we need property and dedicated people. ■

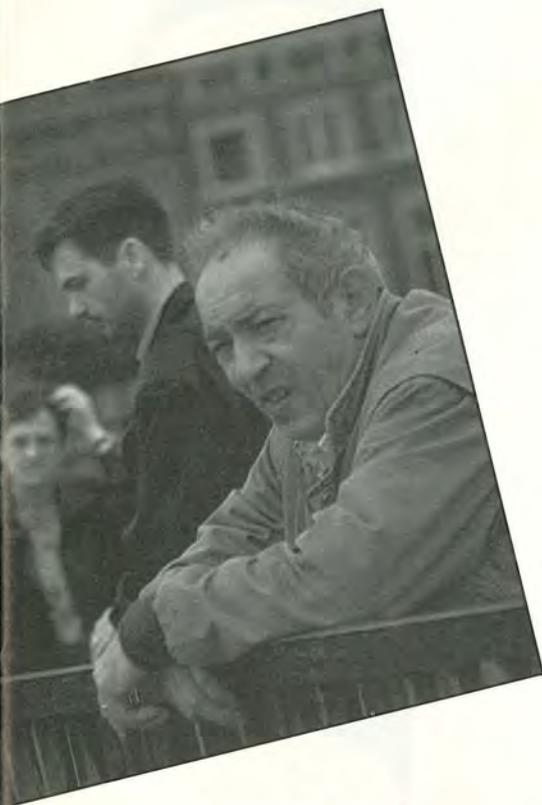
my life is now completely changed and I am the luckiest man in all the world.'

Manuel is unemployed. In fact, although only in his early 30s, he is regarded as disabled and receives a small pension.

'I had an operation on my back which went wrong. So I cannot do my work as a carpenter in the building trade.'

Yet he is a skilled craftsman. Using nothing more than a fret-saw, he creates beautifully designed lamps. To celebrate the centenary of Baptists in Belgium, he has made some wooden plaques. For the churches he has produced illuminated text boxes.

Sam Verhaeghe, President of the Union of Baptists in Belgium, presented one of Manuel's text boxes to the BMS at the Kettering General Committee. It commemorates the BMS BiCentenary and the Belgian Centenary. ■



Top above: Samuel Verhaeghe, President of the Belgian Baptist Union
Below: Manuel at work

I'M THE LUCKIEST MAN IN THE WORLD

MANUEL IS A MEMBER of the Middelkerke Baptist Church, near Ostend in Belgium. He has been a Christian now for two years. He first heard the gospel whilst in prison. He is an alcoholic and evidently, under the influence, could be quite violent.

When he was released from prison, his problems continued, especially within his marriage. So he and his wife decided it was about time to part.

They filed papers for separation and eventual divorce.

'But then my brother-in-law asked me whether I wanted to renew my life.'

They were invited to watch a film which was being shown in the Baptist church. On leaving that evening they decided not only to go back to the judge to withdraw their divorce papers but also to give themselves to Jesus Christ.

'Through taking Jesus into my life



HAPPY TO BE FREE TO TALK ABOUT JESUS

CARMEN IS ANOTHER member of the Middelkerke Baptist Church near Ostend on the Belgian coast.

Talking about the church to Andy Smith, she explained that it is 'a small church of mainly older people. But

Carmen with her sister, mother and brother



now we are growing with young people too. It is really nice to see the love of God within the fellowship.

'We also have a lot of tourists in August and July.

'I work in the Sunday School and sometimes translate for English people. In our youth group we prepare prayer cards for people if they are sick and also send out birthday cards.

'In our church we have a special prayer meeting on one Sunday each month and then once a fortnight we have a prayer and Bible study meeting. For the women there is the Dorcas meeting. Every Friday we have a choir rehearsal. The young people meeting on Saturday and of course on Sunday we hold our services of worship.

'Not all of my family are Christian. My youngest brother, who is 26, and my father are not. My father used to come to the services but not any more. In fact he doesn't like me, my mother, my sister and my other brother being Christians. He is always looking for trouble and is trying to use the fact that we belong,

as he says, to a "sect" as a reason to threaten my mother with divorce.'

Andy asked Carmen whether she found it difficult to be a Christian.

'It is not easy to be a young Christian in Belgium today. People look at you and say, "You are so young. You are a fool. How can you believe in God. Maybe it is better that you follow the New Age, but not to belong to a 'sect'."

'In the beginning it was not easy to share my testimony about Jesus with others and to say why I was a Christian. But now I say it is all up to the Lord. But people really respect me and see that I am polite and like to do things for other people.'

Asked what made her happy as a

Christian Carmen said that first of all it was God Himself.

'In all the situations I have been through, the hardest brought me closer to God. It makes me happy that we have a free country and we can always go to church. That we are free to do all sorts of things for the Lord — free to share the gospel. It makes me happy that we can talk to other people about Jesus.'

However, she asked for prayer for her family.

'Because my father was a Christian and now he says he hates God. He tries to manipulate his children and wants to divorce my mother. We love God and have the joy of God, but are destroyed inside because our father never hugs us and never says he loves us. I am afraid, myself, to marry because I wonder whether my partner would change in the future, even though he might say he is a Christian now.'

GRAIN



Right and below:
Baptismal service at Glain

IT WAS IN 1928 that Sikora Wladislaw moved from France to Liège in Belgium to work in the coal-mines.

He had been baptised in France and took with him his Polish Bible. So he began to talk about his belief in God to his fellow miners who had also left Poland after the First World War.



THE STORY OF A POLISH CHURCH IN BELGIUM

The first person he baptised in 1928 was Woytala Piotr and by the end of the year there was a worshipping group of nine baptised people. They were joined the next year by a Christian couple. By 1931 the group had grown to 15 and was meeting in the Belgian Missionary Church in Liège.

Growth continued and in 1935 there was a total of 45 baptised members and a few sympathisers. They did not belong to any denomination but just met as the first Christians did – singing, praying and reading God's Word together.

Each Sunday they met around the Lord's Table taking it in turns to preside. Baptisms took place in the river where there were always many curious spectators.

In 1935, the church began to make contacts with Polish Christians in other churches and to receive Christian literature from Poland. One man particularly was interested in the group. He was Gotze Boleslaw from Warsaw, a Baptist pastor and editor of a Christian paper, *Slowo Prawdy* which means 'Word of Truth'.



He visited the group several times and led evangelistic meetings. The Liège group came to see that their beliefs were very close to those of Baptists. So they began to call themselves Baptist Evangelical Christians.

The group divided into two in 1936. Twenty-two people moved into a reformed church building whilst those who stayed behind took the name 'Wide Brothers'.

The group of 22 eventually moved into the back room of a house in the district of Glain where they were led by one Bibista Stanislaw.

At the close of the Second World War, the group discovered that among several deported

persons then living in Holland was a Polish pastor, Zabko Potapowich. With the help of a Flemish pastor they persuaded him and his family to join them at Glain. He stayed with them until the beginning of 1947.

They organised their first Sunday School in 1945. By then the church had 47 baptised members, 45 children and 20 young people and a few sympathisers.

The church grew quickly and so they had to enlarge the room where they met. In 1952 they joined the Union of Baptists in Belgium and also bought a piece of land on which to build a new church. With financial help from the USA they built the church with their own hands. It was opened in 1956.

That building was destroyed a few years ago during an earth tremor. It has since been rebuilt and was opened for worship only last year.

The original Polish community worshipped in their own language but later generations, although they understand Polish, are much happier using French. This too gives them the

GLAIN

BBU Centenary – Mixed Choir



opportunity of reaching out in mission to their French speaking neighbours.

On Pentecost Sunday this year they played host to the new Baptist Church at St Nicolas which had four young candidates for baptism but no baptistry.

The building was full to overflowing, mainly with young people and folk in their 20s and 30s. It was a hot afternoon – stifling in that crowded church, and the service lasted for over two hours. But no one was bored. There was friendship, joy, togetherness and a real sense of purpose. Throughout, there was a feeling of expectancy and hope heightened when Anik, Didier, Ingrid and Joelle (the youngest) gave confident and sincere testimonies to their new found faith.

It was a good indicator of the life which is there at the heart of the small Baptist community in Belgium and of the many opportunities facing the churches. ■

three international Baptist churches.

Sam Verhaeghe is the only full-time pastor and whilst working with the Middlekerke Baptist Church he is also President of the Union.

'We need more full time pastors,' Sam believes, 'but to achieve that we would need support for the next 20 years.'

'I have several international contacts and one pastor in Dallas asked me how many pastors we needed. I told him approximately 16 to 18 and he said that he would send 18 couples to help us for the next 20 years.'

'But that wouldn't be really helping us because Belgian Christians wouldn't be getting the chance to do anything. We have many young Christians who are receiving a call to train for some kind of ministry.'

'We believe that we ought to start with a theological course by extension. But then we have another problem. If we train them we cannot place them because we cannot pay them. We are too weak and if we are too weak we cannot support pastors and so we stay weak.'

'So we need help to build up four, five, six or seven strong churches. Then we can work with a home mission system – seven churches working together to start a new work. We could then support a pastor and a team.'

'Because Baptists are few we are often seen as a sect. So we find it difficult to rent a building for a church. Sometimes when we have a building and have made all the alterations they kick us out.'

'This means we have to buy. But if the membership is only 30 people and you first of all have to buy a building then you can't afford to pay a pastor.'

'Our members are generous. They often give more than a tenth of their income. On top of this they give special gifts for the needs of places like Romania and for social work.'

'We have received an invitation from the Protestant Church in

Belgium to come under their umbrella. If we did that then our pastors could be paid by the state and our problems would be over. But then we would lose our Baptist identity.'

'What Belgium needs is a good witness from a free people who are not bound by a system. We have something special to offer to our country.'

'That's why we need a special centre where people can see us. A place which can be used by our young people, or as a conference centre and as a base for our theological extension course.'

'If there is a place which is known as Baptist and people can see how we work together that is something very important to offer to Belgium.'

'We are the only group in Belgium where both Walloon (French speaking) and Flemish work together. Others have separate groupings.'

'At our youth weekend we had nine nationalities living and working together for four days. We used a school building and when I returned the keys to the caretaker and handed over a school where everything was tidy and clean he said he had two questions to ask me.'

'He said, "Is it true that there were 120 young people, boys and girls together, because we didn't hear a lot of noise and there was no vandalism?"'

'And I told him that was because most of them were Christian young people and they don't act like that.'

'Then he asked, "Is it also true that Walloons and Flemish people were together?"'

'He didn't believe it could happen because normally if you do that kind of thing in Belgium you start the Third World War!'

'So we had the opportunity to share what it was all about, that it was God at work within these young people. When we can also work together as pastors it is a big witness to give to the rest of the country. That is something very special about our identity as Baptists.' ■

BAPTIST IDENTITY

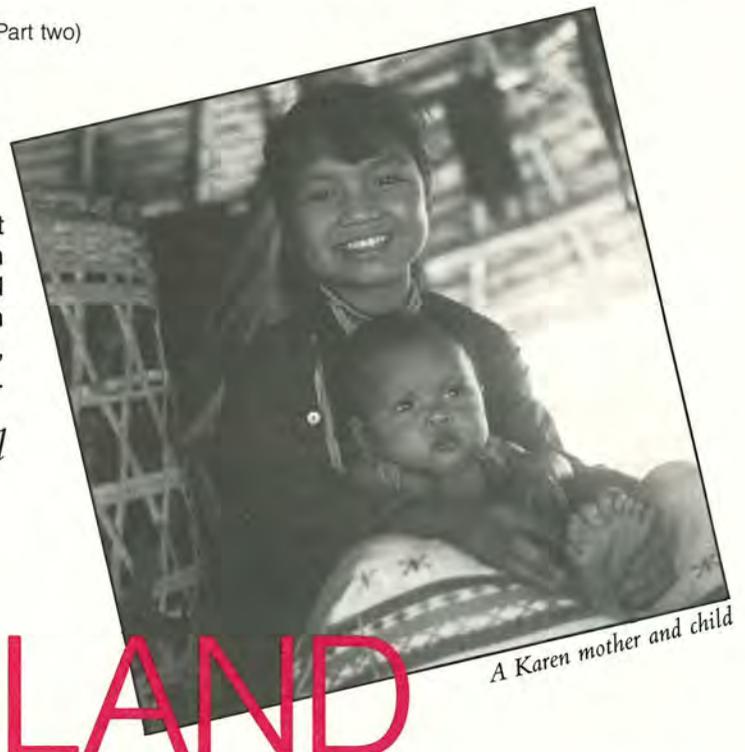
WITHIN THE UNION of Baptists in Belgium there are 21 preaching posts and churches. This includes

BEHOLD I AM DOING A NEW THING

(Part two)

In the July edition we looked at the new work that was in various stages of bud and fruition in Europe. Now we move our gaze further afield and look at the changes that have taken place with BMS involvement in other areas of the world, notably Asia and Central America.

by Jan Kendall



A Karen mother and child

THAILAND

This is a country which has been in the headlines recently because of its riots for democracy. At other times it has been brought to our attention because of charges of illicit drug smuggling that have descended on duped Europeans, and the resulting barbaric prison conditions. It is also well known because of the increased trade in tourism and as an offshoot the huge prostitution rackets in such cities as Bangkok.

Behind all this is a mostly Buddhist country which is the only state in South-East Asia never to have come under colonial rule, the majority of whose people are under 35 years, predominantly rural and generally in debt.

Missionary work began in Thailand in 1833 with the arrival of Revd and Mrs John Taylor-Jones of the American Baptist Mission. As a result of their work the first Protestant church in South-East Asia was formed in 1837, the Maitrichit Chinese Baptist Church, in Bangkok. This work continued until 1900

by which time all American Baptist missionaries had left Thailand. Mission work was taken up again by the American Baptists in 1951 when the Revd and Mrs A Q Van Benschoten arrived in the north of the country to work amongst the Karen people. A year later the Revd and Mrs Carl Capen arrived to work amongst the Chinese speaking people. There was an understanding made at the time by one of the national church groups, The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) that the American Baptists would work among the ethnic Chinese and the tribal people living in the northern and western regions of Thailand.

Two decades later the Australian Baptist Missionary Society (ABMS) wanted to expand its work in Asia and after consultations with the Americans decided to join in with their work. In 1972 Miss Betty Edmonds went to work at the Chiang Mai Co-educational Center and Miss Josie Falla at the Kwai River Christian Hospital.

Now that both American and Australian Baptists were working in Thailand the Thailand Baptist Missionary Fellowship (TBMF) was founded in 1974. Two years later Revd and Mrs Anders Hovemyr, missionaries from the Baptist Union of Sweden (BUS) joined in the work in Thailand.

In 1988 negotiations with the British Baptists resulted in a decision whereby the Baptist Missionary Society would send its first missionary to work together with the TBMF.

So there were four co-operating boards working together in Thailand: the American Baptists (BIM), the Australian Baptists (ABMS), the Swedish Baptists (BUS), and the British Baptists (BMS) supporting a number of missionaries, and working together with five national church bodies: the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), the 12th District of the CCT (12th Pakh), the Kwai River Christian Mission (KRCM), the Thailand Karen Baptist Convention (TKBC) and the Thailand Lahu Baptist Churches (TLBC).

Jacqui Wells was the first missionary to be sent to Thailand by BMS arriving there at the end of 1988, studying first of all in Bangkok and then moving to Mae Sariang in the north-west to study the Karen language (which is different from Thai and is written in Burmese characters). And just this last month Jacqui has been able to move into her own house in Chiang Mai, the second largest town in Thailand, a purpose built Mission house built in a mango orchard.

Chiang Mai is also a centre for handicrafts like cotton and silk weaving, pottery, silverware, and lacquerware. Here the Karen Baptists have set up a hostel in response to the plight of the hill-tribe girls. These girls are often unable to attend school and are at the mercy of city brothel owners who lure young girls from the north to Bangkok. The girls' families are poor and believe they will be given good jobs, but the reality is that they will end up as prostitutes.

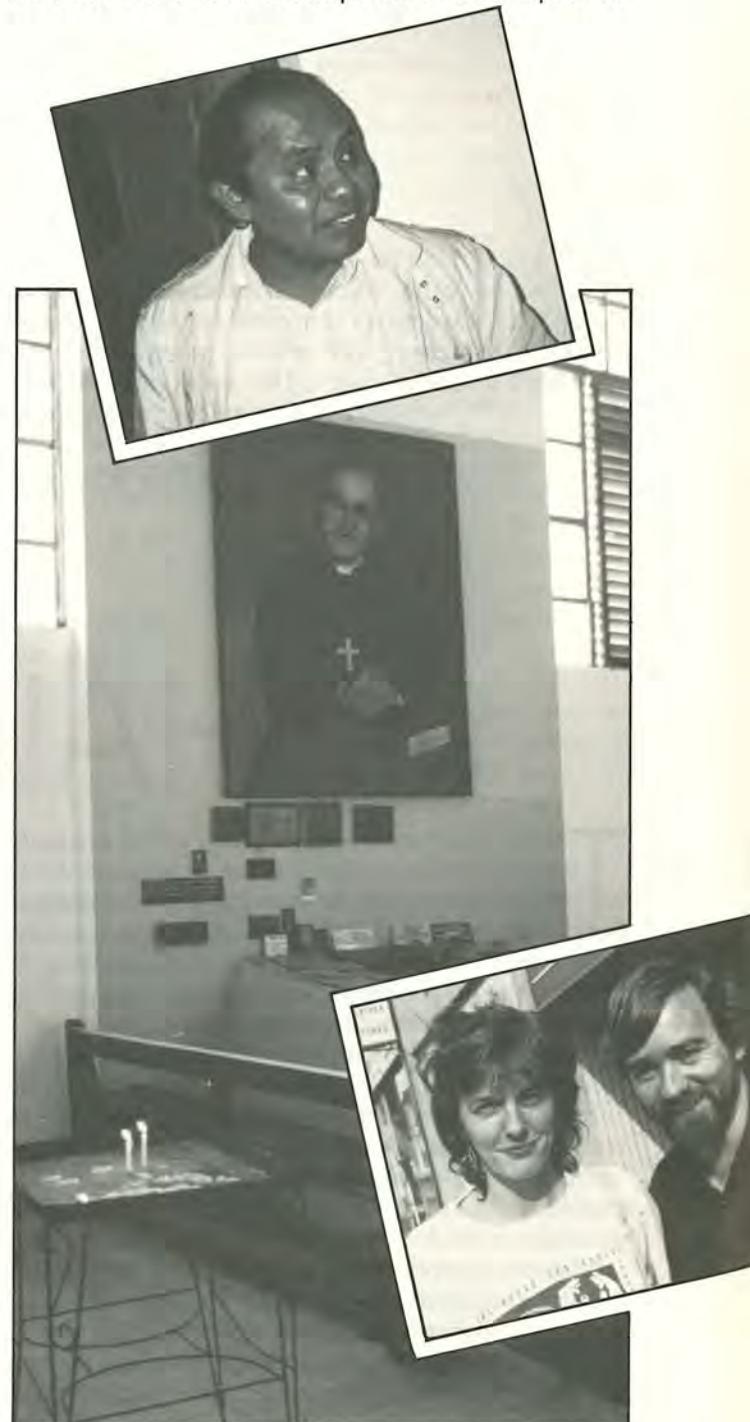
Shortly after Jacqui Wells went to Thailand BMS sent a missionary family to work there. They are Geoff and Christine Bland, along with their two children, Kristi and David. From a pastorate in Surrey Geoff and Christine went first to language study in Bangkok, and then out to Udon Thani in the north-east (generally recognised to be the poorest part of the country) to be involved in church work.

Numerically the church in Thailand is not large and there are many Christian groups working alongside one another. The great change that has overcome the whole country in terms of materialism, advanced technology, and large-scale building programmes (Bangkok is hardly recognisable to anyone who has not visited it in the last ten years!) have affected the Christians as well as the non-Christians. It has brought benefits like better houses and roads, and better education along with ownership of cars, televisions and video recorders — once beyond the dreams of most Karen and Lahu people. Factories and industry have shifted vast

portions of population to the big cities, with ensuing social problems. These changes should be producing opportunities for the Christian church to witness as never before, but at the moment the church is caught up in the surge of change that is overcoming the country, and not responding to the opportunities as well as perhaps she could. There is a real need for the church to be strengthened and built up in the faith so that she can take seriously the command to witness.

EL SALVADOR

El Salvador is the smallest country in Central America and it won its independence from Spain in



1821 after 25 years of rebellion. Since then the poor have become poorer as the land has become more and more concentrated in the hands of the wealthy landowners, and whenever they have tried to change things, they have been put down in a most brutal way.

They are still poor today, and life is a daily struggle. Life expectancy is 45 years. At least half the population is underemployed, and in rural areas this is more than 70 per cent. Half the population does not have adequate housing, and 250,000 children between the ages of seven and 15 have no opportunity to go to school. Only one third get medical care (50 health centres have closed since 1979) and the infant mortality rate is 75:1,000. The public maternity hospital has 70 beds for 1,500 births per month. Fifty-five per cent of all children are malnourished and 400 children die a week from malnutrition.

In a report given by Angus MacNeill, BMS Overseas Secretary on a visit to El Salvador in 1987, he recalls how he was asked by Revd Carlos Sanchez, the Executive Secretary of ABES (El Salvador Baptist Association) as to whether he knew it was the British who started Baptist work in El Salvador? Apparently two Englishmen, Mr Humphreys and Mr Chapman from the British and Foreign Bible Society were sent to Central America at the beginning of the century. These men began an evangelistic work which later became part of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society (ABFMS). On a later part of that visit Revd MacNeil was able to speak with 94-year-old Pastor Ovidio Funes who worked with Mr Humphreys in 1912. He says: 'As Pastor Raphael swung in his hammock, pushing himself from side to side with his stick, his eyes lit up with pleasure when he shook my hand, keeping hold of it as he talked, and told me about the past.'

The ABES was founded in 1932 out of two smaller associations in the east and west of El Salvador; it now has 58 churches. These vary from the 'proper' traditional Baptist Church of the First Baptist Church in San Salvador, to the less formal, more socially orientated Emmanuel Church also in San Salvador. The background is still one of Roman Catholicism, historically seen as a prop to the power struggle in El Salvador, but in a recent survey done by the

University of Central America 16.4 per cent confessed an 'evangelical faith' compared with 33.5 per cent who claimed to be 'practising Catholics'. So Protestant denominations and sects are growing, particularly the Assemblies of God and Elim Pentecostal churches but also Lutherans, Baptists and Episcopalians who are all establishing themselves as a realistic alternative to people disillusioned with traditional Roman Catholicism.

All this makes El Salvador seem like many another Southern European or Latin American country. But, sadly, as we know well, this is not the case. As mentioned above El Salvador has a history of economic injustice between the few who are rich and the very many poor. Throughout the 1970s there was much political and social unrest — an estimated 100,000 people marched through the streets peacefully in protest. The response by the military was violence, repression, and death. Hundreds were killed in single incidents; both civilians and priests, the best known being that of Archbishop Oscar Romero whilst saying Mass (24 March 1980). A change of government in 1984 promised prosperity, economic and political reform and above all, peace. But five years later the country was still in a state of civil war, with human rights abuses horrifying the most desensitised conscience.

The war has claimed at least 70-75,000 dead, the majority of whom were civilians. There are now 1.5 million refugees, half of whom are in the USA.

So, recently, the BMS entered into partnership with ABES, and in 1988 David Quinney Mee, who for six years had been a minister in the West Midlands, was sent out to El Salvador. He worked in the east of the country, in a garrison town, Sensuntepeque, in his own words with: 'a handful of adults and more than a handful (!) of children'. Now married to Rachel Quinney, who is involved in literacy work, more of their work has been centred around the capital, San Salvador.

In 1991 they were joined by the Grote family, James and Susan, with children Daniel and Cameron, who are presently undergoing language study and orientation, with a view to church work similar to that of the Quinney Mees.

NICARAGUA

Nicaragua is the largest of the Central American countries. It is the size of England with one of the smallest populations (nearly four million). The density per square mile is 69.7 compared with 641.6 in El Salvador. It is a beautiful and potentially prosperous country, with sandy beaches stretching along its Atlantic and Pacific coastlines, magnificent lakes, rugged countryside and spectacular volcanoes! But it is a land oppressed by brutal dictatorship and divided by civil war. Names like 'Somozas', 'Sandinista' and Regan's 'Contra' war are familiar to us from media coverage, and although the war is over, it is a fragile, uneasy peace.



Top:
Revd Carlos Sanchez
Far left:
The tomb of
Archbishop Romero
Mid left:
Rachel and David
Quinney Mee
Left:
James and Susan
Grote with
Daniel and Cameron

NICARAGUA

Baptist witness was begun on the Atlantic coast in the last century by Caribbean Christians, and there are still English speaking churches in that region today. In the Spanish speaking part of the country, like El Salvador, Baptist witness began with work associated with the Bible Society in the early part of this century. In 1917 the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua was founded and since then has grown to its present number of over 80 organised churches with 8,000 members, and a community of 21,000 people. In the early years of the work Baptists founded their own institutions such as schools, a university, a hospital with 60 beds and a theological college. These all still function.

Between the new government (a 14 party coalition) taking office in April 1990 and December 1990 there were 50 devaluations of the cordoba, and inflation was running at over 4,000 per cent. With the ensuing cutbacks this has had its effects on both the Baptist Hospital and the University. For example, in the case of the University, to have continued to offer free education would have been severely restricting. At the Hospital charges for fee paying patients were at a high level although the equipment used was old and inefficient. The United States stepped in to give a generous donation to the Hospital, which will enable them to complete some long overdue extensions. In

Board of Directors, Nicaraguan Baptist Convention



June 1991 the Baptist University has about 1,800 students enrolled in its ten courses (Agriculture, Administration, Architectural Drawing, Banking and Finance, Communication Graphics, Industrial Design, Insurance Administration, Marketing, Nursing and Statistics). It is hoped that homeopathic medicines will be added in the near future.

Other development projects are taking place around the country; five loans as grants from the Nicaragua Baptist Convention (NBC) are good examples of self help establishing self esteem. The projects are involving shoe making and the use of treade type sewing machines for women to learn sewing.

This is a new area of work for BMS, and to this country, fresh from working with BMS in Trinidad Peter and Sheila Brewer have gone to work (after language study in Guatemala) where Peter and will be co-ordinating a programme of theological education by extension. This means that instead of students gathering together to study in one central building, Peter will travel round and about the country to meet with smaller groups of students.

In June 1991, Revd David Martin, the Assistant Overseas Secretary of the BMS, with special responsibility for Central America visited Nicaragua. One of the highlights of his visit was to go and see the town of Murra, near the Honduran border in former 'contra' territory, where the NBC had organised a new church — its 81st. David was asked to preach at its first service, and had other opportunities of sharing in open air witness. It is an experience he will not easily forget, and is an example of how BMS is building bridges with partner churches around the world, to follow the command of Christ, and take the gospel to all nations.

*Outskirts of Managua
Peter and Sheila Brewer*



UNINVITED AND UNSEEN GUESTS

THE LAST OCCASION, in early March, when I boarded the SwissAir MD-11 in Brazzaville bound for Geneva and subsequently London, was no exception. After the hassles, frustrations and problems of Zaire it was a relief to sink down into my seat. In comparison to the heat outside on the tarmac the aircraft was wonderfully cool. The cabin crew brought round drinks, newspapers and earphones and I soon had the music of 'Queen' coming through loud and clear on channel eight. Bliss!

The flight home was pleasant and uneventful, in-flight drinks, meals, a film, various music programmes on the earphones to choose from, newspapers, sleep, all such a vast contrast to the previous few weeks in Zaire.

Back in the UK there was the joy of seeing once again my wife and children, we all needed to catch up on each others news and so bedtime tends to be forgotten for a while. Other family members and friends are also interested to know what I have been doing and what is Zaire like these days? There is time to unwind, catch up on sleep, watch a favourite TV programme (*Thunderbirds*), read a book, or perhaps do a bit more to my model boat started many years ago!

Work also intrudes into this time, there are a couple of meetings to attend, the things learnt in Zaire have to be pulled together and there is a report to prepare and deliver, correspondence has to be caught up with, postponed visits to Link churches need to be arranged.

It was at this point just seven days after my return that my uninvited, unseen guests from Zaire began to make their presence felt, it might have been better had I not been at General Committee at the time, but these particular guests delight in

'There is always a great sense of relief and a general feeling of well being when at last after a term of service in Zaire I board the jet airliner, which will carry me back to the UK,' writes Richard Smith.

choosing the 'best' moment to manifest themselves. I thought I just had a touch of 'flu', after all one of my sons had a similar sort of thing whilst he got rapidly better, I became progressively worse.

I had a mixture of fevers, violent shivering and sweats and I felt terrible, back home I finally allowed my increasingly agitated wife to drag me to the doctor's surgery, my GP clucked sympathetically and said, 'You don't look well my friend.'

He suggested, 'Carry on taking Paracetamol, keep drinking and don't do anything too energetic.' As if I would even if I felt capable.

He arranged for blood tests to be taken the following morning at the local hospital.

I had a terrible night and Elisabeth complained that she didn't sleep because her husband's temperature regulator seemed to have gone *en panne* (broken down). I reluctantly agreed and I couldn't survive the weekend and the surgery was again contacted, but the GP was unavailable. Elisabeth drove me to the hospital for blood tests. It didn't make me feel any better when the phlebotomist stuck little yellow labels on every single bottle of my blood saying, 'Danger

of Infection' in very bold type.

On the way home I sat in the car whilst Elisabeth went in to see the GP. He said there was nothing more he can do for me and wrote her a letter arranging my admission to hospital, I wondered whether a visit to a vet might not be more appropriate.

Thus that evening I found myself installed in a hospital bed taking Quinine to kill off the malaria parasites which unbidden I had brought home with me from Zaire.

I felt lousy over the weekend and my arms were bruised where they kept checking my blood to see whether or not the parasites had taken fright after being assaulted by Quinine. After four days my temperature manages to stay below 37 degrees Centigrade and after five days I felt a lot better and they allowed me to return home.

I thought that I had left behind me Zaire and its problems when I boarded that jet airliner in Brazzaville but I discovered living with me real bits of Zaire. Things which hurt, things that were living and real and caused pain. I would have felt better had the customs official at Heathrow airport spotted them and detained them as illegal immigrants.

I can't help thinking that there is an analogy here somewhere, Zaire is far away, out of sight, out of mind, but it is full of living real people, people who are hurting and feeling pain.

Perhaps BMS should issue a warning to all its personnel who leave the shores of the UK saying: 'Boarding this aeroplane and spending time in a foreign land may damage your health!'

On reflection though, staying in the UK and swimming against the current of God's will for you, can also damage your spiritual health and wealth. ■

THE GREMLINS got into the July column. The answer to 'Why is our church profile incorrect?' got lost.

So – why are some of the profiles incorrect?

One reason is that the information has changed between the Link-Up (LU) group's returning the forms and the profile's being printed. The other reason is that churches have not told our records department of changes. If the profile is incorrect please see that the changes are sent to the BMS Records office.

We've heard that our LU missionary is due back in the UK at the end of next year. As one of our churches plans its programme a year ahead can we book a date for a LU visit now?

Life is not that simple. To arrange a programme we need to know exactly when a missionary is returning and the length of Home Assignment. The end of the year could be November or December and the time in the UK can vary from 15 weeks to ten months!

Someone arriving at the beginning of November would visit LU groups from early December but one returning the third week in November would not do any visits until after the New Year.

Because of work commitments, arrangements with other colleagues and airline timetables, Home Assignment details are not usually clear until roughly six months before the missionary is due. Once details are known the WML organiser writes to LU groups and asks them to suggest dates for a visit. This usually means churches have five to six months notice.

Does this mean you won't accept early requests?

No. The request will be noted but there is no guarantee that it will not have to be altered. And, of course, sometimes even six months notice is impossible. But that's the WML Organiser's headache!! ■

Jacqui Wells visited Naw Paw Bu, who was born into a Christian family in northern Thailand

HER FATHER DIED before she was born. Her mother did everything she could for her daughter; she studied at the Musikee Christian school and after completing her studies there went on to the Centre for the Uplift of the Hilltribes (CUHT) in Chiang Mai.

At the Centre she studied the Bible. As a teenager she accepted the Lord Jesus into her own life and made the decision that she would serve Him. Her mother and brothers and sisters supported her in her decision as did her local Church at Maw Ta.

She told me how much she 'enjoyed' studying at the CUHT and she knew that God would 'show her what to do' when she finished her Bible Course. God led her to work as an evangelist in the hills amongst the Karen. She did this as a single woman.

'I wanted to share the love of Jesus,' she told me, 'so that they could also become part of his family, his children.'

Then she married. She and her husband now have the same vision. They want to share Christ with those Karen people who are still Animists.

Naw Paw Bu, her husband and five children now split their time living in two places. They have a home in Baan Maan which is a Christian village and then they have rice fields in Ser Blu Khi.

Naw Paw Bu said that she and her husband wanted to work there (Ser Blu Khi) because all the S'gaw Karen living there are in darkness worshipping the spirits.

'People are afraid of what the spirits can do... they fear and know nothing of God's love for them. We want to tell them about Jesus,' she said.

She went on to explain: 'We

SEEIN



thought if we actually lived in the village amongst the people they could hear about Jesus but more than this, they could see the love of God in our lives! We believe that the love of God can drive away all fear and that Jesus Christ can set people free from sin and give new life.'

I enjoyed talking to Naw Paw Bu because whatever she said was so simple and yet so real. She believed all she said and her faith in God is a vibrant one.

'How much success have you had?' I asked.

'There are no believers as yet but some are beginning to listen. They observe our worship in our home – they listen to our singing and praying. We are quite free to worship. Of course, we pray at all times. We want God's love to break through into the lives of our Karen friends.'

As we talked it was so evident that she loved God and longed for His love to reach others. Her husband was away in the fields when I visited but I asked about him.

'We have the same vision and we work together. Our aim is one and

G JESUS



IN OUR LIVES

we believe that the people of Ser Blu Khi will come to know God and find the answer to all their fears in Jesus Christ. When this will happen we are not sure,' she added.

'However, God will bless these people and they will find Him at the right time.'

I love meeting people like Naw Paw Bu because Christ lives in them and His love is so evident in their lives and living. They, like we, long to see Christ's love 'spread abroad'; long to see lives changed thro' God and the power of His love and by the gift of His forgiveness; they long for the harvest.



*Karen
villagers*

Family Day For Wales

'HAVE YOU HEARD OF LLANELWEDD?'

asks Patrick Baker

IN THE HEART of the Wye Valley, just across the river from Builth Wells, the Royal Welsh Agricultural Showground lies in the parish of Llanellwedd. Earlier functional buildings on the site are now complemented by more sophisticated suites.

'Llanellwedd' is fast becoming *the* place for national gatherings — commercial, cultural, religious or whatever. Here the BMS BiCentenary Family Day for Wales will be held on Saturday 3 October from 10.30 am until 4.30 pm.

The Children's programme, young people's workshops and seminars will be available in Welsh and in English. Worship together at the beginning and the end of the day will be bilingual.

'Mission in Time' is scheduled for two showings and the Welsh Young Baptists' 'Festival of the Word in Song' — *Gŵyl y Gair ar Gân* — will form a part of the programme as well.

There will be chat shows, video displays and exhibitions throughout the day. Overseas guests will include Pastor Altair Prevedello, who will be the main speaker during the closing worship.

This unique event will bring together Baptists from the whole of Wales with its 800 Baptist churches. World mission unites us, and so it should!

Many buses have already been booked, notwithstanding the prospect of up to four hours' travel. You will be most welcome whether you live in Wales or over the border. Admission is by programme and the cost is only £3 — £1.50 for children. ■



Easter witness in Kathmandu

Celebration in Kathmandu

SIGNS OF THE NEW openness in Nepal were evident earlier this year when the churches of Kathmandu joined together in a large Easter procession.

Corry Nap, liaison person for the Nepali church, reports that groups started to walk from different places and all came together in front of the Singha Durbar from where they walked to the open air theatre in the middle of town.

There the resurrection of Jesus was celebrated in songs, prayers and short messages. Thousands of tracts were distributed and eagerly accepted by the many people who watched

the procession and celebration. It was a most encouraging experience for all participants.

Kimbanguist Leader Dies

Joseph Diangienda-Kuntima, the 74-year-old spiritual head of the Church of Christ on Earth by the Prophet Simon Kimbangu, has died in Geneva whilst undergoing medical treatment.

Diangienda-Kuntima succeeded the founder of the church, Simon Kimbangu, who died in 1951.

The Kimbanguist church claims a membership of around six million in Zaire, Congo, Angola and Europe.

Boff Resigns

A leading Brazilian liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff, has resigned the Catholic priesthood and left the Franciscan Order.

'I had to leave or submit to censure,' he said.

'Since 1971, the vigilance and censure exercised over me has intensified. It was affecting my dignity as a human being and my freedom. There was strong pressure on me to follow the official line in doing theology. But for me Christianity means freedom and not submission.

For more than 20 years Boff, aged 53, has faced Vatican scrutiny and censure. His 1984 book, *Church: Charisma and Power*, met strong Vatican objections and in 1985 he was officially silenced for a year. In 1991 he was forced to resign as editor of the magazine *Vozes*.

'The experience I have had with doctrinal power in the last 20 years is cruel and without mercy,' Boff said in his resignation letter.

'It forgets nothing; it forgives nothing; it collects everything it is due. It took the time needed and created the means to reach its end: control of theological thought.'



St Paulo Cathedral in São Paulo

'There are moments in life when, to be faithful to yourself you have to change. To change not the battle, but the trench. I am leaving the priesthood, not the church. I am leaving the Franciscan order, but not the loving and fraternal dream of St Francis of Assisi. I am and will always be a theologian who is Catholic and ecumenical, coming from the poor, opposed to their poverty and in favour of their liberation.'

Children's Programme

JOSEFITA HERNANDEZ, writing from El Salvador, tells of the Children's Reconciliation Rehabilitation Centre with which she is involved.

'After twelve years of struggle or armed conflict in which many children of seven years of age entered the rebel forces and from 14 upwards into the national armed forces, some of them have died and others have been physically and mentally wounded.

'Widowed women, orphaned children, some have been abandoned, some go round the streets trying to sell things. The deep psychosis generated by the war will last for many years in the minds of the majority of our people.

'Even though the propaganda and the growth of institutions has increased, so have levels of malnutrition, illiteracy, ill-treatment, lack of access to education and heavy work for young children. These are the realities in the communities most marginalised or those excluded from the mainstream of Salvadorian society such as those in conflict zones.



'After visiting the communities, interviewing children and their parents, pastoral team meetings and workshops to train in basic skills, we see the need to establish small, locally-run projects which will be self-supporting. The aim is to help the neediest members of the community.'

Corrections

There were some errors in the Celebration Times insert to our August Herald. Will you please note the following corrections.

- The service in York Minster is on 3 October 1992, not in June 1993.
- The Northern Area will also be holding a BiCentenary service in Durham at the Elvett Road Methodist Church on 3 October.
- The Mission in Time itinerary in the Northern Area is:

Sept 7 Gateshead
Sept 9 Thornaby-on-Tees
Sept 12 Leeds

Zaire

The National Conference which is trying to sort out the democratic future of Zaire appears to have made some progress. President Mobutu, it is reported, has agreed, after long discussions with representatives of the Conference, to the appointment of the

opposition leader as Prime Minister. Mobutu has given up some of his powers, but not all.

It is also reported that the Conference wants to go back to the old name of Congo for the country.

BiCentenary Papers

Sue Mills who looks after the BMS archives which are now kept at Regent's Park College, Oxford, is making a collection of leaflets, scripts and documents relating to the BiCentenary. She is asking churches, groups and associations to send copies of their productions to:

The Archivist
Regent's Park College
Pusey Street
Oxford OX1 2LB

Week of Prayer

Last month we promised that there would be more details of the BMS BiCentenary week of prayer which leads up to the actual day of celebration on 2 October.

A leaflet has been prepared and should be in the hands of all ministers and missionary secretaries at the beginning of September giving thoughts for prayers during each day of the week.

A Worship Pack has also been prepared. This includes drama, children's stories, discussion starters, prayers, hymns and songs and other worship materials. The pack costs £3 and is invaluable for any church wishing to celebrate the BiCentenary. Write to Didcot today for your pack.

BMS STAMP BUREAU

DIRECTOR SORTING/KILOWARE DEPARTMENT

We are looking for a director, who will deal only in stamps for the Baptist Missionary Society, who is a Christian of Baptist persuasion or with Baptist sympathies and who will carry out the following duties on a voluntary basis.

①
Receive stamps as donated by Baptist churches and others and acknowledge receipt of same.

②
Sort out those required by the RETAIL DEPARTMENT for sale to Stamp Bureau customers.

③
Trim the remainder to reduce the amount of paper surrounding each stamp and sort for suitable bulk sale.

④
Sell the remainder into the stamp trade or to other customers.

⑤
Receive money for such sales and deal/account for it as directed by the Financial Secretary of the BMS.

NOTE

'Kiloware' is the name for stamps on paper — as cut off envelopes and parcels. More stamps donated will come in this form — often with large margins of paper around the stamps. The trimming and sorting of such stamps is very time consuming and requires much free time or the help of many people, such as a number of members from a local church. It is suitable work for elderly or housebound persons providing fingers can be used with ease.

Anyone interested
please write to Reg Harvey
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Baptist House
129 Broadway
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august

MON	30
<small>Bank Holiday (not 30th)</small>	
TUE	31
WED	
THU	
FRI	

FUND FOR THE FUTURE

JOEL BOJORGE
ESTRADA is a
Regional Secretary
of the Nicaragua Baptist
Convention. He is also
pastor of the Baptist
church in San Rafael del
Sur.

He is one of the new
breed of pastors whose
job it is to have
oversight of fellow
pastors and churches in
rural areas of

Joel at home with his family



Nicaragua, offering
encouragement and
support. Many churches
have felt isolated in
their remote towns and

A fund for the future

there is no electricity. So it is particularly important that pastors like Joel make personal visits. They go to the scattered churches regularly and need reliable vehicles. That's why the Fund for the Future* aims to provide motorcycles for four of the regional centres: San Rafael, Jinotepe, Juigalpa and León.

The city of León was hit by a volcanic eruption in April, a grim reminder that political upheavals have not been the only problems faced by Nicaraguans in the recent past. Small agricultural communities were covered in sand and ash — homes and crops were destroyed. Health and housing problems have followed in the wake of this disaster, and it is in this context that the Baptist church

villages, so the Convention has created seven regions to provide a Baptist network. It aims to draw all pastors together and to stimulate evangelistic and social programmes in which churches may be involved.

There are few telephones in these rural areas, and sometimes

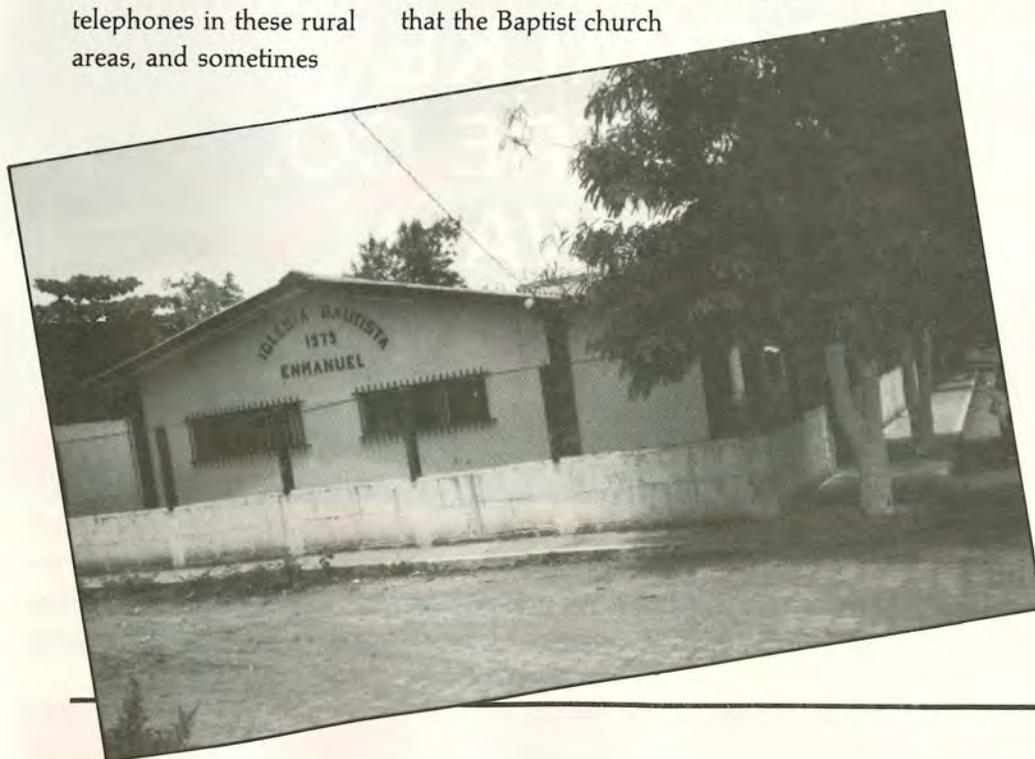
witnesses to the love of God.

The church is seeking to show this love in action, illustrated by the Baptist medical and consultation clinic opposite the church, and the Baptist high school next door.

The Nicaraguan Baptist Convention is

aiming to provide a high level of support for all its churches and to draw communities together which, at present, feel that they are struggling on their own. The gift of the motorcycles will mean better communications between the rural churches and so will help towards creating a more encouraging future for Nicaraguan pastors and church communities.

***The BMS BiCentenary Fund for the Future is aiming to raise £2 million for this and many other projects which we shall be highlighting over the next few months. If you wish to help provide motorcycles for Nicaragua, please send your gift to the Baptist Missionary Society earmarked for the Fund for the Future.**



MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS

ARRIVALS

Dannie and Margaret Calder from Zaire
Gwen Hunter from Zaire (holiday)
Michael and Daveen Wilson from Brazil
Neil and Ruth Abbott from France (holiday)
Alison Trim from Nepal (volunteer)

Robert and Ruth Ellett to Nepal
Margaret Swires to Brazil
Chris and Mairi Burnett to Albania
Jeremy and Ruth Clewett to Nepal
Ruth Montacute to Zaire

DEPARTURES

Kevin and Linda Donaghy to Brazil
Sheila Loader to Nepal
Peter and Susan Cousins to Brazil
Anne Campbell to Nepal (volunteer)
Neil and Ruth Abbott to France

STAFF VISITS

David Martin visited Nicaragua and El Salvador

CONGRATULATIONS!

To **Graham and Louise Jackson** on the safe arrival of Amy Jennifer on 12 August

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LEGACIES

Mrs V E A Cox	745.85	F E Mills	15,000.00
C Ashman	50.00	Elizabeth Williams	300.00
Kathleen A Lower	100.00	F M Prichard	8,377.26
M V Bamford	4,250.00		
Miss V Wilson	7,850.24		
Miss Nellie Smith	4,552.53		
Miss E W Taylor	14,000.00		
Miss M E Turnbull	3,341.33		
M A Peck	138.00		
Miss E Wearn	250.00		
Mrs B K Alexander	5,899.39		
Nesta B Wells	500.00		
Mr S N Bond	613.64		

GENERAL WORK

Via BU: £100.00; Anon: £10.00;
 Payroll Giving Anon: £12.55;
 Aberdeen: £20; Charities Trust:
 £9.50; Anon: £15; Messenford WI:
 £7; EME: £25; 'John W': £15;
 Medical Work: £2,000; CAF £63.65;
 CAF Northants: £50.

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NICK PAGE

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