

Brother Bill Johnson Called to a New Ministry



Brother Bill Johnson served as Editor in Chief of publications for the churches

of the American Baptist Association from 1986 until June, 2003. Elected by the messengers in Washington, D.C., in 1986, Brother Johnson had already served for seven years as Director of Promotions and Public Relations and for six years as Director of Meeting Arrangements for the American Baptist Association.

In his last report as Editor, he stated, "During the past seventeen years it has been a great pleasure to have a part in the development of curriculum materials for the Lord's churches."

Several notable accomplishments were realized during those years. In 1987 an all new curriculum was developed for Baptist Training Course, and a systematic approach was implemented to begin improvement in the art of all children's literature. In the Fall Quarter of 1989, Teen Discovery, a full curriculum for youth ministry, became a reality. During the following September (1990), Discovery Bible Clubs was published for children. Today many of our churches are reaching thousands of children and young people through Discovery. The Bible Basics Sunday School curriculum for preschool children was introduced in the Fall Quarter 1992. This literature contained all new art. It was the first produced with computer generated graphics, making us among the first publishers in the nation to use advanced computer technology in pre-press publishing. In 1994 the Bible Basics for children in school grades 1 through 6 was introduced. The new three-year curriculum for young teens was begun in 1997. A completely new three-year curriculum for high school teens was begun in 2000. The Through-the-Bible series has been improved over the years. The Devotional Quarterly was added to the curriculum as well as the popular Adult Lesson Commentary. The entire Sunday School curriculum is now available on CD. In 2002 the Beyond Basics children's chapel curriculum was published. This colorful curriculum is

designed to involve children in singing, praying, giving and other aspects of worship. In 2003 an animated video was produced for Vacation Bible School. The multi-media department is now producing DVD and VHS formats.

Brother Johnson and his wife, Rita, and daughter, Lynn, moved to Texarkana in October, 1979. He began serving in the position of Public Relations and Promotions Director during the time of Brother J. B. Powers, Business Manager, and Brother O. H. Griffith, Editor in Chief. After Brother Griffith retired from the Editor's office, Brother Kenneth Bazar was elected as Editor in Chief. Upon Brother Bazar's untimely death, the messengers elected Brother Johnson to fill the position. Brother Johnson served several years along with Brother Tom Sannes who had succeeded Brother Powers as Business Manager and then with Brother Wayne Sewell, current Business Manager.

While in Texarkana, Brother Johnson also served as pastor of Landmark Missionary Baptist Church in Texarkana, Arkansas, for seven years and as pastor of Hooks Missionary Baptist Church in Hooks, Texas, for ten years. Prior to Texarkana, he had also pastored several other churches in Arkansas and Texas: Calvary Baptist Church of Dumas, Arkansas; Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church of Rison, Arkansas; Southside Missionary Baptist Church of Star City, Arkansas; Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church of Star City, Arkansas; Rocky Branch Missionary Baptist Church of Naples, Texas.

Brother Johnson graduated from the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1971. He holds honorary Doctor's degrees from Oklahoma Missionary Baptist College, Institute and Seminary, and Texas Baptist Institute. He received a teaching degree from the University of Arkansas at Monticello and has taught in public schools.

Rita Johnson also earned a degree from the university in Monticello. Her major was in Social Studies and English. She has taught public school and has served as a writer for the American Baptist Association.

Upon moving to Texarkana, Rita worked in the Baptist Bookstore for one year while the store was still located downtown on Broad Street. Then, when the store was moved to its current location on State Line Avenue, Rita continued to work in the bookstore for three more years. In 1985 she began working in the Missions Office as secretary to Brother D.S. Madden, Secretary/Treasurer of Missions, where she served for twelve years. In January of 2000, Rita joined the Editorial staff as a copy editor and later as the youth editor, editing teenage youth materials. She worked in this capacity until July of 2003. Rita has faithfully served with Brother Johnson in various capacities over the years; together they have traveled extensively throughout the churches of the American Baptist Association in the United States and in several foreign countries. In July they conducted their third Discovery Mission Tour to Romania.

In his final report to the messengers as Editor in Chief, Brother Johnson stated, "For my wonderful wife, Rita, and myself there are many things left to do in the service of our Lord. While we have been blessed to have a part in reaching millions of people with the message through the publishing office in Texarkana, there are yet millions around the world who are not being reached. God has given us a vision of this overwhelming need. While our people enjoy the very best literature, there are thousands of churches of our fellowship and other churches of like faith who have nothing. It is for these churches and individuals that God has given us a burden. We will begin, as the Lord opens doors, to make a difference for these people. With faith that God will supply our need, we will answer the call to help the churches of Romania, the Philippines, Thailand, Burma, Mongolia and other countries where we may be of assistance. Please pray for us as we enter into an entirely new and very different field of service to the Lord. People need the Lord. Sister Rita and I stand ready to help carry the gospel into all the world of people."

Brother Johnson also noted in his report, "The work of publishing literature for the

beloved churches of the American Baptist Association is a good work. It is providing a very valuable service for English-speaking churches and it is beginning to serve Spanish-speaking churches.... From now until our Lord and Master comes for us, there is much to be done in publishing the Word. The infrastructure is in place to really make a difference in the world. My prayers are with the churches in this great work.”

Romanian children enjoy singing choruses.



Romanian Children enjoy VBS in their own language!



Commenting on their new ministry, Brother Johnson stated: “Rita and I have answered the sure call of God to help missionaries in other countries to provide literature for the children in the language of the children. For the past 10 or 20 years we have seen the churches of the ABA explode in their outreach to countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and India as well as Central and South America. As these mission fields have developed, there is an overwhelming need for materials for churches to use to help children understand the Scriptures. Rita and I have experience in publishing children's literature and we have already been used of the Lord to help missionaries in the Philippines, Romania, Thailand, Burma (Myanmar) and several other countries.”

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Brother Bill and Rita receive gifts of appreciation at a special going away fellowship in Texarkana.

It was in Wichita, Kansas (1980) where Brother Johnson first became an elected official within the American Baptist Association; and it was in Wichita, Kansas (2003) where he and Rita officially ended their service in the offices in Texarkana. However, while they have resigned after a total of twenty-three years of working for the churches of the American Baptist Association in the publications office, they will now continue to serve the churches as missionaries in the area of publications on an international level.