

Missions leader Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler dies

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CINCINNATI, Ohio (BNG)—Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, who promoted Southern Baptist Convention missions 31 years as head of Woman's Missionary Union before helping form the [Cooperative Baptist Fellowship](#) in 1991, died Jan. 2 in Cincinnati.

Crumpler, 84, was executive director of the national [Woman's Missionary Union](#) from 1974 until 1989. She retired at age 59 to become a pastor's wife, marrying Cincinnati pastor Joe Crumpler, who survives.

☒ Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler In 1990, she ran unsuccessfully for first vice president of the SBC alongside Daniel Vestal, the moderate candidate who also lost, setting the stage for the formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship a year later.

Helped lay groundwork for CBF

She was a member of the interim steering committee that laid the groundwork for the new organization, a member of the first CBF Coordinating Council and fourth CBF moderator, serving 1995-1996.

Crumpler remained active in public service until complications from heart bypass surgery in July 2013 put her in a skilled nursing facility.

Crumpler grew up in Florida. She graduated from Florida State University and worked as a high school librarian before enrolling at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to pursue a calling to be a missionary. She wanted to take classes in the School of Theology, but at the time, it was closed to women.

She enrolled in the School of Religious Education, taking all her electives in the theology school. She later remarked it's a shame she didn't take homiletics, "because I have been preaching ever since."

Disqualified from missionary service because of health reasons—high blood pressure—she channeled her energies into Woman's Missionary Union, an auxiliary to the SBC formed in 1888 to inspire women to support missionaries before the SBC allowed women to attend its annual meeting as messengers.

Sole female member of interagency council

As the sole female member of an interagency council composed of SBC agency heads, Crumpler fit in well until the 1980s, when the nation's second-largest faith group behind Roman Catholics became less willing to support women in ministry.

She recalled one state evangelism meeting where she followed a preacher who said the Bible commands women to keep silent in the church, and if they have questions they should ask their husbands. She began her message by saying, "Brother, my Bible says the same thing, but I don't have a husband." After laughter and applause subsided from the congregation, she continued her sermon.

Crumpler served on the boards of several moderate Baptist organizations started after the SBC controversy, including the Baptist Center for Ethics, Baptist Women in Ministry, the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, Baptists Today, Global Women and the CBF Foundation.

Other denominational service

She also was active in the [Baptist World Alliance](#), serving as president of the North American Baptist Fellowship from 1979 to 1981. She also served

on boards of the [Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty](#) and the American Bible Society.

She received numerous honors, including the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Distinguished Service Award in 1987, the E.Y. Mullins Denominational Service Award from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1988 and the Courage Award from the William H. Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society in 2010.

She wrote or contributed to 11 books and numerous articles in Baptist publications.