

IN FOCUS: Texas Baptist women & missions

September 11, 2008

Where would Texas Baptist missions be without the prayers, leadership and generosity of Texas Baptist women? As our churches prepared for the Week of Prayer for Texas Missions, Sept. 14-21, we also mourned the death of one of our finest leaders, Dellanna O'Brien.

Some describe Hebrews 11 as God's Hall of Fame. Our Baptist Hall of Fame would include Dellanna. All of us who crossed her path have been enriched by her strength, grace, wit and, especially, passion for missions. All of these stem from her single-minded commitment to Christ.

I seldom mention her without saying, "Bill and Dellanna." They truly lived a partnership as few others. Our prayers are with Bill and the family during this season of sorrow.

Dellanna had many titles, including executive director of the national WMU and vice president of the Baptist World Alliance. She and Bill were vocational missionaries in Indonesia for nine years. She continued to travel the world even after facing personal physical disabilities. Retirement was never an option. Following the tsunami that killed hundreds of thousands in Indonesia in 2004, she and Bill returned to serve in the land they loved among some of those hardest hit.

She was a product of Texas Baptists—born in Wichita Falls and trained at Hardin-Simmons University—and a favorite daughter loaned to the world as an ambassador of Christ.

Mary Hill Davis was another of our missions leaders, serving as president

of the Texas WMU from 1906 to 1931. The annual week of prayer for state missions began during her tenure and now bears her name. The goal for our Mary Hill Davis Offering is \$5,220,075.

The poor and the unchurched in our state are the primary recipients. Do you realize thousands of Texans do not have clean drinking water? With high levels of fluoride, arsenic and bacteria contaminating the waterways, more than 5,000 people die each day from water-borne disease. The Mary Hill Davis Offering will provide funding for Texas Baptist Men to address this crisis.

More than 11 million Texans are unchurched. Texas Baptists' offering provides funding for church planting, language curriculum materials and mission trips statewide and internationally. Scholarships are provided for African-American and Asian-American youth camps and intercultural ministries.

Most of our BGCT churches are smaller churches, many led by bivocational pastors. This offering supports regional events for these congregations and specialists who will assist in training leadership in these churches.

Two of the four poorest U.S. counties are located along the Texas-Mexico border. The Mary Hill Davis Offering provides stipends, expenses, medicine and medical supplies for border healthcare.

Nothing is more important to Texas Baptists than missions. I thank God for women like Mary Hill Davis and Dellanna O'Brien, who led and inspired us. Let's pray and give generously to the Mary Hill Davis Offering. The need is great, the message is transformational and these two women are worthy of honor.

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