

January 31, 1960

Twin Cities Scene
Of Church Growth

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn.--(BP)--Here in one of the leading grain centers of America, Southern Baptists are planting the seed of the Word of God.

Minneapolis and its neighbor to the east, St. Paul, form the 13th largest metropolitan area of the United States, with population of 1-1/3 million.

Southern Baptists have only one affiliated church in the Twin Cities, which are the gateway to the Pacific northwest for rail and highway traffic. Indeed, it is the only Southern Baptist church in Minnesota, but it is an active one.

The Southtown Baptist Church occupies 10 acres in Bloomington, a suburb 10 miles south of downtown Minneapolis. It has a mission meeting in the Y M C A in St. Paul and another mission downstate in Rochester, home of the famous Mayo Clinic.

St. Paul, though the smaller of the Twin Cities, is state capital. Southtown Church's pastor preaches to the Y M C A group there at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, then hops in his car and hopes for a string of green traffic lights as he hustles 14 miles to his own 11 o'clock service.

Three Southern Baptist editors, in the city for a press convention, attended the first home fellowship in Brooklyn Center eight miles north of downtown Minneapolis. In this suburb will come the third Southern Baptist preaching point in the Twin Cities.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Wasson, formerly of Tulsa, Okla., was scene of the meeting. Editors Joe T. Odle of Jackson, Miss.; Floyd H. North of Richmond, Va., and Theo Sommerkamp of Nashville, brought greetings.

The Wassons and three other couples will probably be the nucleus of Brooklyn Center when it has a mission six months or more from now. Until that time, the group will conduct home fellowship meetings on a week night once a month. Sunday services must await mission status.

Southtown's mission in St. Paul will have its own full-time minister soon, looking forward to becoming an independent church within a few months.

It's fitting that Southern Baptists should have a church in the city named after the greatest missionary known, the apostle Paul. When established it will mean that there are churches the most distant cities of the Mississippi River, at least that part of it which may be navigated by sizeable vessels.

Though St. Paul is 550 miles south of the source of the river, falls and rapids between Minneapolis and St. Paul prohibit movement of ships. New Orleans at the southern end, near the Gulf of Mexico, is 2435 miles away.

Southtown Church and Texas Baptists, which sponsor work in Minnesota and Wisconsin, have purchased a choice, six-acre lot at the intersection of two main thoroughfares in suburban West St. Paul (which is actually due south of the capital). The lot has a two-story, nine-room home which will be used for meetings until the church builds its own auditorium. 12,000 cars pass the corner daily.

Southtown Church also holds another corner lot of four acres next door to Hamline shopping center in Roseville, a north side suburb of St. Paul. This was bought while available at a fair market price and will be used when a mission is organized in that vicinity.

Twin Cities development is following the pattern in major cities in the seven other Great Lakes states. Property is either too costly or unavailable in downtown locations, so it is being secured in growing suburbs encircling the metropolitan area.

Minnesota, known as the "Star of the North," is linked with the "Lone Star" state of Texas. The Baptist General Convention of Texas is fostering the work.

Pastoral missionary Warren Littleford said surveys of the Twin Cities, conducted with aid of student summer missionaries, show that 90 per cent of church members are Lutherans or Roman Catholics, with Lutherans the more numerous. Presbyterians follow in number. About one per cent is Baptist.

With the growth of new missions, several Southtown Church families will be spared back-breaking Sunday commuting. Take the Ralph Tebbenkamps who live in Elk River, where Tebbenkamp is supervisor of a farm where a leading feed manufacturer tests its product on chickens and livestock.

The Tebbenkamps live 30 miles northwest of downtown Minneapolis, or 40 miles from Southtown Church. They are one of the families who will be in the Brooklyn Center mission, which will cut their driving time in half.

The Ed Richarses attend Sunday morning service at the St. Paul Y M C A. But if they wish to attend the evening service, they must drive from White Bear Lake in far northeast St. Paul to Bloomington, through approximately 25 miles of city traffic one way, for the mission has no night service.

Severe winter weather conditions make long commuting difficult.

As pastoral missionary, Littleford serves as pastor of Southtown Church and helps develop work in the Twin Cities. Seeking and securing property for future churches is a major responsibility. He is presently trying to find a good site in Brooklyn Center and next will look for one in the Lake Minnetonka area due west of Minneapolis.

A native Chicagoan, Littleford attended Southern Illinois University in Carbondale and graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, coming to Minnesota in 1956, shortly after seminary days. He enthusiastically talks of the day when Southern Baptists will have six missions or churches "ringing" the Twin Cities (counting present sites). He drives 400-500 miles a week carrying out his many duties.

Southtown Church occupies a beautiful building with a 200-capacity auditorium, nursery facilities, a pastor's study, classroom space, and a small kitchen. Its \$75,000 debt is three-fourths guaranteed by groups of Texas Baptists in this way--- one fourth by Texas convention, and a fourth each by the First Baptist Church of Alice, Tex., and the First Baptist Church of Harlingen, Tex. It has a \$28,000 budget for 1960.

In addition, churches in McKinney, Tex., and Midland, Tex., are contributing for at least one year to monthly payments on the debt.

As evidence that leadership in the area will continue to be outstanding, Littleford said of work in the Twin Cities area, "We don't seek a pastor who can't serve a larger church at greater salary where Baptists are more numerous."

He said also that development of future missions in Minnesota depends on finding Southern Baptist families who have moved to the state. "Baptists in other states can help us a lot by sending the names of these families to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta," he added.

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Commission Becomes
Association Member

(1-31-60)

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn.--(BP)--The Commission, monthly journal of the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board, has become a member publication of Evangelical Press Association.

Editor Floyd H. North of Richmond, Va., represented the magazine at the 1960 association session here, which was attended by two other Southern Baptists--Joe T. Odle of Jackson, Miss., editor of the Baptist Record, and Theo Sommerkamp, Nashville, assistant director of the Baptist Press.

Three other Southern Baptist state papers are members of Evangelical Press Association, but did not have representatives at the Minneapolis meeting. They are the Arkansas Baptist, edited by Erwin L. McDonald of Little Rock,; the Baptist Beacon, edited by J. Kelly Simmons of Phoenix, Ariz., and the Baptist Digest, edited by F. Paul Allison of Wichita, Kans.

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Evangelical Press Association has as members publications of many evangelical denominations as well as some non-denominational religious journals. Its purpose is "to promote the cause of evangelical Christianity and to enhance the influence of Christian journalism" by providing contacts among the editors.

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Hospitals Agency
Elects Its Officers

(1-31-60)

NEW ORLEANS--(BP)--The board of Southern Baptist Hospitals, meeting here, elected a Jacksonville, Fla., pastor as president.

Carl A. Howell, pastor of Murray Hill Baptist Church in Jacksonville, will preside over the board, which directs operation of Southern Baptist Convention hospitals in New Orleans and Jacksonville.

A. W. Merritt, New Orleans attorney, fills the vice-presidency and Louis F. Tadlock, also of New Orleans, the position as secretary.

The board reviewed operation of its two hospitals. T. Sloane Guy, Jr., of New Orleans, is executive secretary of the SBC agency and superintendent of the institutions.

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