

March 25, 1962

Laurel, Miss., Reports
Record In Membership

By the Baptist Press

Laurel, a city in southeast Mississippi, may hold the record for church membership percentage in the nation. A survey conducted by 63 of its churches revealed only 5.5 per cent of residents above nine years of age without church affiliation.

At Cape Canaveral, Fla., America's "gateway to the moon," church membership is not yet in orbit. Figures released from a survey of Cocoa, Melbourne, Eau Gallie and Titusville--cities along the Atlantic coast nearest the base--indicate only 55.2 per cent of the residents to be church members.

The national church membership average is 63 per cent.

Information on both surveys was released in Atlanta by Leonard Irwin, a survey specialist with the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

He said 76.5 per cent of the 17,000 people surveyed in Laurel were members of local churches and 2.6 per cent held non-local membership. The national average is 63 per cent.

Irwin, who is with the department of survey and special studies for the mission board, said the returns surprised church leaders in Laurel. Many of them were preparing for revivals and had expected to turn up more prospects in the survey.

Actually, he said, only 940 people were found without church affiliation. However, the survey did not include the Negro population of 9,984.

Of the children under nine, 91 per cent of them were in Sunday school.

The church membership of Laurel included 56.7 per cent Southern Baptists, 7 per cent other Baptists, 6.5 per cent Roman Catholics, 17.1 per cent Methodists, 5.4 per cent Presbyterians and 2.7 per cent Episcopalians. All other groups numbered only 4.6 per cent.

Figures from the Cape Canaveral area indicate that 23 per cent of the church members have their memberships non-local, or out of town.

These Florida cities are a part of Brevard County, which has a total population of 125,000. However, only 46,000 were counted in this survey.

One of the contributing factors to the low church membership was the exceptionally high percentage (30) of the population under nine years of age and not counted by most church groups in their membership.

Irwin said 65 per cent of these children were in Sunday school.

Baptists and other groups were concentrating their efforts in the area, he said. "This district has the highest number of missions of any Baptist area in Florida; there are 23 missions."

The people of the county were mostly in the 25 to 30 age bracket, with from three to five children, the survey showed. Most of them have recently moved to Florida.

Because of the rapid growth of the population, church facilities are not up to their potential and more than half conduct two worship services each Sunday. Some have as many as three.

One Methodist group holds services in a drive-in theater.

4 Cited For Progress
In Church Development

ATLANTA (BP)--Four Southern Baptist churches have been cited for "outstanding progress" in the areas of church growth, community work and world outreach.

The recognition came from participation by the churches in the church development ministry of the denomination's Home Mission Board here and state mission boards.

One church baptized a number equal to a third of its membership. Another reported three study course awards per member. One doubled its mission gifts and there were numerous projects such as community recreation, blood donations, helping secure industry for the community and work on buildings.

The churches, two in Texas and two in Mississippi, were picked for recognition at Glorieta (N. M.) and Ridgecrest (N. C.) Baptist Assemblies during this year's Home Mission Weeks in August. One of the four will be recognized at Glorieta as the outstanding church in the development ministry.

The selections, made by an evaluation committee of mission leaders, were announced by Lewis Newman of Atlanta. He is associate secretary of the associational missions department of the mission board.

Newman launched the church development ministry for the mission board a year and a half ago. Since then, most of the mission boards of the state Baptist conventions have joined in support of the ministry.

The recognition of the four churches is given according to progress made in relation to church potential as reflected in resident membership. The churches and the categories in which they were recognized are as follows:

Lake Como Baptist Church in Bay Springs, Miss., with John McBride as pastor, was recognized as outstanding among churches with less than 100 resident members.

First Baptist Church in Willis, Tex., with Robert Culver as pastor, was recognized as outstanding among churches with between 100-200 resident members.

First Baptist Church in O'Brien, Tex, with Larry Young as pastor, was recognized as outstanding among churches with between 200-500 resident members.

West Heights Baptist Church in Pontotoc, Miss., with Charles Gentry as pastor, was recognized as outstanding among churches with 500 or more resident members.

The evaluation committee selected the churches by reviewing development made during 1961 as reported in record of progress books which the churches had prepared.

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Returned Missionary
Heads North Greenville

(3-25-62)

TIGERVILLE, S. C. (BP)--Thomas L. Neely was named president of North Greenville (Baptist) Junior College here succeeding Dr. M. C. Donnan, president for the past 33 years.

Neely, who has served as administrative assistant since 1958, will assume the presidency Aug. 16. Donnan will become president emeritus and will continue with the college as director of development.

Trustees were unanimous in electing Neely and in expressing "praise and gratefulness" to Donnan for his leadership.

Neely was born in Spartanburg County, S. C. in 1915. He received his bachelor of arts degree from Wofford College, Spartanburg, and his master of theology degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth in 1941.

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Neely was ordained to the Baptist ministry in 1939 at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Roebuck, S. C., and the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board appointed him missionary to Colombia in 1942.

After studying Spanish in Barranquilla, Colombia, Neely opened the city of Cartagena, Colombia, for Southern Baptist work in 1943. In 1949, he became a missionary to Venezuela. He returned to the States in 1953.

Neely has served as vice-president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Donnan was president of the South Carolina convention in 1960.

The school had a 1960-61 regular enrolment of 480.

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Folks and Facts.....

(3-25-62)

.....A Scottish minister, R. J. Findlay of Glasgow, was to arrive in Arkansas as a return visit to Baptist ministers from the state, who last year journeyed to Scotland on a preaching mission. Findlay is pastor of Denniston Baptist Church in Glasgow. Engagements were lined up for him to speak in several pulpits of Southern Baptist churches in Arkansas.

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BAPTIST FEATURES

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Editors: This is the twentieth in the series on SBC agencies.

Washington Agency
Ears For Convention

By W. Barry Garrett
Baptist Press Staff Writer

"Will the witness please state his name and the organization he represents?" requested Sen. Wayne Morse (D., Ore.). The scene was a hearing before a subcommittee on education of the U. S. Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare in the Senate office building on Capitol Hill in Washington.

"My name is C. Emanuel Carlson," the witness replied. "I am the executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, with offices here in Washington. This office is maintained by six Baptist fellowships in the United States, having 19 million members, plus our share of the children of the Nation."

Carlson's testimony on this occasion was on the subject of federal aid to parochial schools. He was interpreting to Congress Baptist positions on religious liberty and separation of church and state.

The Baptist leader's position was based on authorization of the Southern Baptist Convention as well as other bodies. The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is instructed by the SBC "...to act in the field of public affairs whenever the interests or rights of the cooperating Conventions which constitute the Committee call for conferences or negotiations with the Government of the United States or with any other Governments, or whenever Baptist principles are involved in, or are jeopardized through governmental action."

Other recent communications to government have been on the religion question in the national census, religious liberty problems in civil defense, suggestions for legislation on the Peace Corps, Baptist viewpoints on privileged communications made to clergymen and points for correction in the National Defense Education Act. Such testimonies are always based on responsible positions taken by Baptist conventions and associations.

On another occasion, the galleries in the House of Representatives were jammed. The atmosphere on the floor of the House was tense. Rep. Adam Clayton Powell (D., N.Y.), chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, presented a compromise education proposal.

For months, action on the controversial bills to provide aid to education had been delayed because of the parochial school issue. Powell's measure would be a simple two-year extension of the federally impacted areas bills that had expired earlier in the year and a renewal of the National Defense Education Act for two years.

Passage of the Powell proposal would mean the death of the parochial school issue for the remainder of the year and would probably delay further public school education legislation for two years. A hushed silence came over the floor and gallery as Speaker Pro-tem John W. McCormack (D., Mass.) announced the final vote. Powell's bill carried by a vote of 378 to 32.

There was a mad scramble in the press gallery to get to the telephones. The Baptist Press along with the Associated Press, United Press International and other agencies was on hand.

The Baptist Press called the office of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs where the Washington outlet for the Southern Baptist teletype network is located. The vote in the House of Representatives was announced at 2:36 p. m. and by 2:45 p. m. the information and the interpretation had reached the Baptist communication outlets at more than 20 points the teletype serves.

Thus the information service of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs reports on the actions of Congress, governmental agencies, the Administration, the Supreme Court, Congressmen and non-governmental groups. Wherever there is a Baptist interest news story in Washington, the Baptist Press is there to cover it. (The Joint Committee's associate director is regional editor there for Baptist Press.)

In another setting, a dozen persons from different Baptist fellowships in the United States were gathered around a conference table. One of the questions: Do governmental loans to church-related institutions violate separation of church and state for church institutions to accept such loans?

The debate waxed hot, pro and con. When the discussion ended, the group agreed that direct grants or low-interest loans which increase the capital assets of the church at the expense of the taxpayers are to be rejected. But a stubborn minority insisted that such loans do not violate the church-state principle.

At this conference, there were four sections. They discussed the church-state aspects of the churches' involvement in human need. Although all of the answers were not found, the search for common ground proved to be of great value.

This was the fifth annual Religious Liberty Conference sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. Other conferences discussed the use of public funds by church agencies, the churches and the public schools, the place of religion in education, and the churches and American tax policy.

In addition to the activities already mentioned, the Baptist Joint Committee carries on a public relations program with non-governmental Washington agencies and with many non-Baptist groups. The committee is busy presenting Baptist viewpoints in many places.

On Capitol Hill the debate on the question of federal aid to higher education was in progress. One senator was wavering on the question of whether to support federal grants to church-related colleges.

One morning, within a half-hour period, 30 or more telegrams from various sections of his state landed on his desk expressing opposition to the grant program. The senator's position immediately crystalized accordingly. Many of the citizens of his State had evidently acted on the basis of information furnished by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

To make its program more effective in state as well as national affairs, the Baptist Joint Committee is developing a program of correlation with Baptist state conventions, which may be far-reaching. Within the next few years, strong Baptist public affairs committees in each of the States may become active when questions of religious liberty arises.

The programs of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs may be summed up as: (1) public affairs study and research, (2) church-state public relations, (3) public affairs information and (4) correlation of Baptist influence in the field of church-state relations.

Although the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is one of the Southern Baptist Convention's smaller agencies in budget and personnel, it has a role of great significance in the life of the Convention.

In 1961 and 1962, the SBC Cooperative Program allocated \$60,000 each year to the Convention's Public Affairs Committee. (The Public Affairs Committee elected by the SBC forms the direct organizational link between the SBC and Joint Committee on Public Affairs.)

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Cutlines for picture with Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs feature.

Leaders from various Baptist fellowships wrestle with knotty church-state problems at the Religious Liberty Conference in Washington. Conference is sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. (BP) Photo

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