

November 2, 1963

(Note to Editors: Baptist Press almost never runs a story of 1800 words. In order to give you a state-by-state picture of the race question in Baptist life, it has been necessary to go to this long word limit. - Baptist Press)

**Baptist Press Survey  
Shows Racial Picture**

By the Baptist Press

Are churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention accepting Negroes as members? How many other SBC churches admit Negroes as worshippers but not as members? What about Southern Baptist colleges and other institutions admitting Negroes?

To answer these questions, Baptist Press, news service of the SBC, polled the editors of Baptist state newspapers, which cooperate in the news distribution of Baptist Press. It also collected a file from other sources.

The survey indicated Negroes are being accepted as members of predominantly white churches. Since under Baptist polity, all churches are self-governing, the decision to admit members is made locally by each church.

It also showed other churches were willing to seat Negroes for worship services, but had turned down membership applications. In other instances, Negroes had freely visited white churches but had made no effort to join them.

The number of colleges related to Southern Baptists admitting students without regard to race is slowly growing. The colleges are operated by state Baptist bodies, which elect trustees on whom a decision on interracial admission depends.

The state-by-state response, as received by Baptist Press, is summarized here:

Alabama--Editor reported from Birmingham, "I have not heard of any of our Baptist churches voting to receive Negroes as members.

"During the racial demonstrations in Birmingham, the First Baptist Church...did vote to seat any of the Negroes who might come to church. A few came...and they were seated without incident." The church's pastor, Earl Stallings, was among clergymen from the city who went to the White House to discuss with President Kennedy the city's race tensions.

Negroes visited and were seated at least in two other Alabama churches, according to the editor. They were the Glen Iris Baptist Church, Birmingham, and the First Baptist Church, Athens.

There was no report of any attempting to join the churches they visited. Neither was there any report of action to admit Negroes to Southern Baptist colleges in Alabama.

Alaska--Some churches have Negro members at present. Others have had them as members, but do not at present because the Negroes were military men who have been transferred elsewhere. Three Negro churches are affiliated with the Alaska Baptist Convention.

"To my knowledge, all of our churches would freely admit Negroes to the worship services, whether or not they were members," the editor wrote. The convention has no colleges.

Arizona--The editor was "certain that five churches...have Negroes as members. They are First Southern, Tempe; Trinity, Phoenix; Mission Drive, Phoenix; First Southern, Yuma, and First, Sierra Vista....I know of five other Arizona churches that admit Negroes to their worship services," he continued.

Grand Canyon College at Phoenix has enrolled both American and foreign Negroes.

California--In 1961, at least 10 Negro churches were "cooperating with our associations," the editor there said. Two years later, it was learned many Southern Baptist churches in the state have Negro members.

Several churches have said they'll accept members of any race but have had no Negroes to seek membership. They would be accepted at the state's Baptist college, the editor said.

District of Columbia--Three churches there have accepted Negroes as members--Calvary Baptist Church, First Baptist Church and National Baptist Church. Editor believes all churches in the District would admit Negro worshippers "without difficulty." The convention maintains no college.

Florida--Editor W. G. Stracener of Jacksonville knows of no churches having accepted Negroes as members. About 25 churches have voted to accept Negroes as worshippers "if and when they come," he added. Stetson University at DeLand has several American Negro students.

First Baptist Church of Tallahassee, capital city and college town, has voted "to continue the traditional policy" in the matter of seating Negroes, that is, to refuse to seat them.

Georgia--Mercer University at Macon has admitted four Negroes. Two come from Macon, city in which the Baptist college is located. Sam Jerry Oni of Ghana, another admitted, joined Macon's Vineville Baptist Church by letter from a Ghanaian church with about 70 per cent of the membership voting to accept him.

Several churches in Atlanta have had Negroes to worship. A 67-year-old white Quaker minister, who travels about preaching against segregation, was arrested and found guilty of disturbing religious worship in First Baptist Church, Atlanta. He and three teenagers, two of them Negroes, had attempted to attend services.

He was charged with disturbing worship by "loud talking, shouting and sitting on the floor."

Hawaii--"All of the Southern Baptist churches in Hawaii admit Negroes to their worship services," the editor reported. Four have Negro members.

Illinois--Churches in Chester and Edwardsville have Negro members. One Negro church has a White pastor in northern Illinois, according to the editor. The church affiliates with the district association of Southern Baptist churches.

Negroes who came to an East St. Louis church to kneel in were seated. None attempted to join. They did not return after the Sunday when they were welcomed as visitors without incident.

Indiana--One Negro woman attends occasionally the night services of one Southern Baptist church. No churches have Negro members, to the knowledge of the editor. There are no colleges.

Kansas--First Southern Baptist Church, Topeka, Kan., has a deaf ministry. A deaf Negro woman is a member of the church. A Negro international student is a member at Immanuel Baptist Church, Wichita. University Baptist Church, near the University of Wichita, has decided to accept Negroes if they request membership. It has had Negro students to visit services.

The editor said other churches have Negro members but did not have a complete list of them, and did not feel any church would bar them from worshipping.

The convention operates no college.

Kentucky--Four Kentucky Baptist colleges and a preachers' school have been integrated by trustee action. Not all enrolled Negroes immediately.

Crescent Hill Baptist Church, Louisville, near Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, accepted two families of Negroes as members. One is an American Negro family, the other comes from Nigeria. At least two other Louisville churches, the college area church at Georgetown, and churches in other places have Negro members.

Editor reported slow but steady integration among churches, but added Kentucky's situation "is quite different than that in the states of the deep South."

Louisiana--No Negroes worshipping in White churches; none has joined any church, and no Baptist school has desegregated. Louisiana College (Baptist) lost 126 potential students from a nearby U. S. Air Force Base because it was a segregated college.

Fifty-four Baton Rouge ministers a couple of years ago signed a petition when Baton Rouge schools faced token integration. Their wires were reported tapped and they were harrassed for their moderate race stand. A few Baptists were among the signers of the petition. One Baptist minister has since gone to another denomination but others are still in the city at Baptist churches.

At Plaquemine, where many Negro demonstrators have been jailed, the Negroes attempted to visit a Southern Baptist church.

Maryland--Calvary Baptist Church, Towson, opened its doors to all persons without regard to race but has had no Negroes to join. First Baptist Church, Baltimore, baptized Negro converts from downtown mission. Seventh Baptist Church, Baltimore, conducted interracial services but has no Negro members.

Edgewood, Md., church, near military base, has Negro member. One Baltimore church took down its welcome sign to avoid integration.

The state convention has no college.

Mississippi--No Negroes worship in White churches; none has joined any church, and no Baptist college has desegregated.

Missouri--First Baptist Church, Rolla, and First Baptist Church, Kirksville, have Negro members. Several other churches have welcomed Negroes into their services. All three Missouri Baptist colleges will accept Negro students.

New Mexico--First Baptist Church, Los Alamos; First Baptist Church, Gallup, and First Baptist Church, Las Vegas, have Negro members. Others may also. In addition, some Negro churches cooperate with the district associations of Southern Baptist churches and with state convention.

The convention operates chairs of Bible, but no colleges.

New York--First Baptist Church of Brooklyn is interracial, but is predominantly Negro. All Southern Baptist churches in metropolitan New York City area are open to all persons without regard to race.

Ohio--Two Dayton churches capture the attention here. Huber Heights Baptist Church voted to admit to membership applicants regardless of race. Townview Church's pastor has tried to create constructive community feeling toward Negro family who moved secretly into all-white neighborhood.

Oklahoma--First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, rejected a Negro boy's membership application by vote of 327 to 311. Rejection was said based on motives prompting the 15-year-old to apply. The youth was invited to continue to attend church activities. Negro visitors were seated.

Some churches in the state have Negro members, being especially true in college communities.

Several more churches have said they will receive Negroes as members, according to the convention's director of public relations. None has had any Negro to apply.

Oklahoma Baptist University accepts and has enroled both American and foreign Negro students. Some Negroes play on the basketball team or the track squad.

Oregon--Churches in Richland, Wash., Portland and the Dalles, Ore., have accepted Negro members. Editor believes other churches also have Negro members. He doesn't believe any church in the two states will refuse to seat Negroes at services. There is no college.

South Carolina--Furman University trustees voted to open admission to all qualified applicants. The state convention board asked the college to delay integration while it determined a policy for all convention-operated schools in the state.

Tennessee--First Baptist Church, Nashville, admitted two Nigerian students under watchcare while they went to college in Nashville. It has been visited on occasions by Negroes in the city, and has seated them without incident but refused to allow them to distribute their literature inside the church building.

Convention-operated hospital in Knoxville has begun caring for Negro patients for other than only emergency medical treatment. No colleges accept Negroes. The state convention operates a Negro children's home as well as ones for Whites, but all are segregated.

Texas--A 1963 survey found 747 churches (of 894 replying) will permit Negroes to attend worship services. There are 234 churches allowing Negroes to join.

Three state convention colleges have enrolled Negroes--Hardin-Simmons University at Abilene, the University of Corpus Christi and Wayland Baptist College at Plainview.

Virginia--Twenty-two Negroes were arrested as they sat on church steps after being denied entry into Farmville Baptist Church. Sixteen of them were under 18 years of age.

"A good many Southern Baptist churches are friendly toward Negro visitors," the state association executive secretary said. He knew of none with Negro members. Southern Baptist colleges are segregated. Negroes from other countries attend Baptist retreats for international students, as they do in several other states.

The six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries, located in Texas, Kentucky, Louisiana, California, North Carolina and Missouri will admit Negro students.