

BAPTIST FEATURES

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March 3, 1964

Vermont Church Begins Through Layman's Work

By the Baptist Press

It's laymen like R. L. Anderson of Burlington, Vt., not just the preachers or missionaries, who have brought about the expansion of the Southern Baptist Convention into all 50 states.

Anderson, a native of Thomasville, Ala., had divided his life between Alabama and Florida before moving to Vermont in 1960. He actually approached his move to this far northeastern state as a mission enterprise.

Trips to Vermont on business had impressed him with the lack of Baptist work in the area. He had found only one Baptist church in this city of some 60,000 people. It is also the site of the state university.

When the General Electric Co. asked him to manage its facility in Burlington, he took this as "the leading of the Lord."

The Andersons (they have two teenagers) made their decision to move after a phone call from Florida to the SBC Home Mission Board's pioneer missions secretary, A. B. Cash. Cash assured them they could do mission work in Vermont.

Once established in the city, contact was made again with Cash, who relayed the news to David Perkins, then pastoral missionary in Plattsburgh, N. Y.

Thus was set in motion a chain of events which resulted in the first Southern Baptist church in Vermont, the last of the 50 states to report a church affiliated with the SBC.

In February, 1961 the first fellowship meeting was held in the Anderson home. Perkins conducted services that soon included other Southern Baptists: some were married to Vermont natives, some were Vermonters who became Christians while attending Baptist churches in the South.

A local radio station agreed to broadcast the "Baptist Hour"; summer missionaries came for survey and vacation Bible schools, even to preach at the mission.

Leaving the Anderson home, the meetings were held in the Grange Hall until a five-room house was purchased. Now a site has been bought and plans drawn for a building.

Perkins came as pastor of the mission in January, 1963, and in July the mission became the South Burlington Baptist Church.

"We made the mistake of emphasizing Southern Baptists at first," Anderson said. "Vermont has had little migration from other areas. It is mostly third and fourth generation Vermonters. After you have been here 10 years, they decide maybe you're permanent.

"It takes a period of living here, or proving yourself, showing your interest and concern, and above all, living a Christian witness to reach the people and grow."

The church, organized with 32 members, now has all the usual organizations, like Sunday school, Training Union, Woman's Missionary Union, but Anderson said this caused concern at first.

"We didn't have the Christian education program we had been used to in Southern Baptist churches in Alabama and Florida," he said. "It's brought us to depend more and more upon the Lord.

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"The challenge of this area and the struggle to establish the church has brought us all closer to the Lord. We have depended on Him more, prayed more, and we've been closer to each other than we would have been in a larger congregation," he added.

The church had \$5,000 to pay on its lot, bought with a site loan from the Home Mission Board. From the start 10 per cent has gone to the Cooperative Program.

Anderson says, "It's been one of the marvelous things of God's mercy that our finances have not been large but they have been adequate."

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(Picture being mailed)

Cooperative Program
Runs 10 Per Cent Ahead

(3-3-64)

NASHVILLE (BP)--Cooperative Program receipts for Southern Baptist Convention agencies continue to run nearly 10 per cent higher than for the first two months of 1963.

A report from SBC Treasurer Porter Routh here shows \$3,596,533 received in January and February, 1964 from state Baptist convention offices through the Cooperative Program. This is 9.5 per cent above the \$3,284,377 for the first two months of the previous year.

During February, the amount was \$1,768,375 compared with \$1,828,157 in January and \$1,656,377 the previous February.

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering funds for foreign missions continued, too, to pour in from the states. Nearly \$5-1/4 million in designations during February, 1964 included only about \$30,000 for agencies other than the Foreign Mission Board.

Close to \$7-3/4 million in designations has been forwarded to the Foreign Mission Board in January and February, 1964--nearly all of that Lottie Moon gifts.

Designations for the two months of 1964 total \$7,768,834, compared with \$7,653,226 for the like period of 1963, a gain of 1.51 per cent.

The Foreign Mission Board's funds for February, 1964 included \$5,213,622 through Lottie Moon and other designations and \$888,785 from the Cooperative Program, according to the treasurer's report.

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Cutlines

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(Editors: This picture goes with feature headlined "Vermont Church Begins Through Layman's Work.")

HERE'S WHY SBC NOW IN 50--Laymen have leading roles in Southern Baptists' accelerating pioneer missions thrust in the East, North and West. R. L. Anderson was transferred from Alabama to Burlington, Vt., by his employers. Ultimate result: formation of the South Burlington Baptist Church, first for the Convention in Vermont, and--since Vermont was then the only state without any SBC-affiliated church--the report of Southern Baptists having churches in every state in the U. S. (BP) Photo