

April 4, 1964

38,000 Prove It Can
Happen In Birmingham

By Mrs. William McMurry
For Baptist Press

The wind was high and stinging at 2:20 in the afternoon on Easter as people continued to pour through the gates at Legion Field, Birmingham.

By three o'clock the sunny side was comfortably filled. Across the playing field the topmost bleachers were sparsely occupied, making conspicuous the dark-coated policemen whose bright blue trousers made identification easy wherever these men were stationed.

People were friendly, quiet, relaxed. For weeks there had been rumors such a meeting could not be held in the steel capital of the South, that Negro and white Christians of all denominations could not sit together and worship. But here they were, about 38,000 of them, to prove that it could be done.

How did it happen? Several months prior to the date, a group of concerned laymen conceived the idea of bringing Billy Graham to Birmingham for a one-day crusade on Easter. The idea gathered momentum under the direction of an executive committee set up for this purpose with Arthur P. Cook, Baptist layman, as chairman. Ministers were also on the committee.

These men believed only a man the caliber of Billy Graham could pull together people of good will and earnest convictions across racial and denominational lines. Here was a demonstration of their faith in the Christians of Birmingham and of their faith in God.

On the platform with Graham were the mayor of the city, the president of the Birmingham Ministerial Association, pastor of the First Christian Church (who gave the invocation), and the presidents of the city's three colleges: Howard (Baptist), Miles, and Birmingham Southern.

It was 2:40.

Those at the farther end of the stadium could see none of the movement. With electrifying suddenness surging over the playing field came the thrilling words, "How Great Thou Art." For a second like a stream of thought the melody quivered in the air. Then came the voice of Cliff Barrows giving directions to his 2,100-voice choir.

From that dramatic moment to the benediction there was never any doubt about either the greatness of God or His presence.

Seven hundred and fifty white and Negro ushers moved naturally and efficiently together helping all comers early and late find seats. The audience appeared to be well balanced between middle and upper class--a fact of significance.

The unofficial consensus was that the majority was Negro; however, the Billy Graham team believes the attendance was nearer 50-50.

During the waiting period, Negroes and whites chatted informally with those nearby. One woman who was having her first experience sitting by a Negro said later, "When she put out her hand to shake mine and smiled, I couldn't refuse."

A white usher responded to a friendly greeting from the woman sitting next to him with, "Well, some folks said there wouldn't be many here, and I just told them maybe those who do come will get a good dose of religion."

At the close of the service 4,000 went forward at the invitation. A spokesman for the team said Graham was greatly encouraged by the attendance, spirit and demonstration.

Music and sunlight are great equalizers. "Have we trials and temptations?...Is there trouble anywhere?" The chin of a young mother trembled as she sang these words and tightened her arms about the little dark baby she held in her lap. Two white women furtively brushed away a tear. But the young mother's voice steadied on the next song.

Heads lifted all around as voices blended and soared in the triumphant Easter paean of praise, "He arose a victor from the dark domain, and He lives forever with His saints to reign. Hallelujah, Christ arose!"

In the afternoon sunlight one could not distinguish black from white--just a sea of faces. Light reduces differences and God's light reveals all His children as needy pensioners on His grace.

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A Baptist Press feature.

Quake Destroys
Church In Valdez

(4-4-64)

VALDEZ, Alaska (BP)--The First Baptist church in Alaska's earthquake-ravaged city of Valdez has discovered its building to be a total loss. Valdez, a town of 1200 on the Gulf of Alaska, was one of the hardest hit.

The church was located only two blocks from the totally demolished downtown section and about six blocks from the steamship dock which disappeared when the mighty quake struck.

The foundation of the building shifted, and the entire church structure buckled under. "It looks like a big balloon inside," declared the pastor in a telephone call relaying the news to Baptist headquarters in Anchorage after communication had been restored.

Like many Alaska church buildings, that at Valdez was constructed of "three-sided logs," a popular building material in many parts of the state. A preacher who is also a carpenter, James Rose had himself done much of the work on the building during 1956, after he came to Valdez from Texas.

The building was financed through a church building fund of the church itself, and a loan of \$8000 from the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board. (The church still owes several thousand dollars on the loan.)

A former deputy magistrate, an elderly neighbor lady who is not a Baptist, contributed heavily toward the cost of the logs. Volunteer labor constructed the edifice.

The pastor reported no member of the Valdez church was known to have perished in the earthquake and the giant tidal waves accompanying it.

One family of six, charter members of the church since its organization, lost their entire house, located close to the waterfront. Other members suffered heavy property losses since the historic city was 90 per cent destroyed.

The pastor wept as he told of the desire of his people to replace their meeting place. "We want to build this summer," he said in a wavering voice. "We had planned to construct a parsonage next to the church this summer, aided by a Home Mission Board loan. Now we need to build both buildings."

The people of Valdez will be able to do very little toward financing a new structure. Most of the help will have to come from outside.

There are no jobs left in the city. Incomes have been wiped out. The homes of the people must be replaced before winter comes. Rose estimates replacing the church building and constructing a parsonage will require \$30,000.

The Alaska Baptist Convention, with which the First Church of Valdez cooperates, has set up an emergency aid fund to help this and other stricken churches in the state.

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Baptist Deaf Hold
Glorieta Conference

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--"Liberty and Light" will be theme for the Southern Baptist Conference of the Deaf Aug. 1-5 at Glorieta Baptist Assembly, Glorieta, N. M.

The conference will meet during Home Mission Week at the assembly, holding separate sessions for the deaf during the day and participating through interpreters in the mission program each night.

Clifford Bruffey of Jacksonville, president of the conference, made the announcement. Bruffey serves as a Home Mission Board missionary to the deaf in Jacksonville.

The conference, an annual meeting, is expected to attract 125 deaf people and workers with the deaf. Most will have their expenses paid by their churches.

For the last two years the conference met at New Orleans and Louisville, but before that had met during Home Mission Week at Glorieta or Ridgecrest.

There is a close tie to the mission agency, which employs, in cooperation with states and other groups, more than 20 missionaries to the deaf.

Preaching each noon at Glorieta to the deaf conference will be George B. Joslin of Dallas, missionary to the deaf in Texas. Leading in daily Bible study will be Joe Johnson of Little Rock, interpreter for the First Baptist Church there.

Other program personalities include Loyd Corder and Courts Redford of Atlanta, home mission executives.

Officers of the conference are: president, Bruffey; vice-president, Robert Boltz of New Orleans, pastor to the deaf for First Baptist Church; secretary, Louis Cannon of New Orleans, deaf worker of First Baptist Church; and treasurer, Samuel Hinson of Atlanta, deaf worker.

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1965 Budget Promotion
Materials Now On Hand

(4-4-64)

NASHVILLE (BP)--Budget promotion materials for 1965 are available, the Stewardship Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention announced here.

These new materials are produced under the theme for the year, "In Loving Obedience . . . We give."

Prepublication sales of them have exceeded last year's by almost 20 per cent.

The 1965 budget materials will be available through March, 1965. This will allow churches to conduct their stewardship campaigns in the fall or winter. By ordering as early as possible, churches will avoid any delay in shipment because of stock shortages.

The Forward Program of Christian Stewardship and its companion for churches of less than 300 members, Growth in Christian Stewardship, feature a new punched, loose-leaf design for easier use.

The commission said the new materials provide for expanded use of the Sunday school and Training Union, and eliminate most week-night meetings.

Orders for stewardship materials are filled by S. B. C. Stewardship Services, 127 Ninth Ave., No., Nashville 37203.

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1964 Convention
Nursery Care Planned

ATLANTIC CITY (BP)--Provisions are being made for care of children, nursery through Primary ages, at the 1964 Southern Baptist Convention here.

Nursery children should be brought to the Ambassador Hotel (Room 115) and Beginner and Primary children to Convention Hall (Room 15). The hours will be 9 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., and 2 until 4 p.m. from Monday through Saturday, May 18-23.

The cost will be \$1 per day plus \$1 for insurance, payable only once. Baby sitters are available at all hotels for evenings at \$1 per hour.

The child care program is jointly sponsored by the Southern and American Baptist Conventions. Since facilities are limited, parents must pre-register their children by writing John D. Raymond, Box 567, Willingboro, N. J., by May 1.