

FROM REGIONAL OFFICE

R. T. McCartney, regional editor
103 Baptist Building, Dallas 1, Texas
Telephone: Office --- Riverside 1-1996

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Oklahoma Baptist Group
Opens to Negro Churches

TULSA, Okla. (BP)--The Tulsa Baptist Association has opened its membership to any Negro Baptist congregation wishing to join, the association's superintendent of missions said here.

The association thus became the first county-wide Baptist group in the state to take such action.

"We didn't do it for publicity or to be a 'first'," said Leo M. Perry, superintendent of missions.

Perry explained that the association's executive board took the action allowing Negro church membership in the association with a re-interpretation of an article in the association's constitution.

"Some of us felt it was the only thing to do," Perry said.

The constitution article dealing with membership stated that the association is made up "of messengers duly elected by churches in full sympathy and cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma."

"Actually our action simply re-affirmed this position, spelling out perhaps in a little more detail that this was true without regard to race or color," said Stanley Cover, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Owasso, a Tulsa suburb, and chairman of the committee dealing with the matter.

"We have no desire to put any Negro congregation on the spot," said Perry. "We are not trying to pull them out of their own conventions. We merely want them to know that they are welcome to enter our association as any other church of like faith and order would be, upon the basis of petition and messengers," Perry said.

Next meeting of the association will be held in October, and new members to the association will be voted on during that session.

The association's executive board, which is empowered to act between annual associational meetings took the action clearing the way for Negro membership. The board is composed of pastor, staff and an elected lay member from each congregation.

A Negro Baptist leader, F. D. Moon of Oklahoma City, cited the move a step in the right direction towards better race relations, Christian brotherhood, and fellowship.

Moon, executive secretary for the Oklahoma Missionary Baptist State Convention, said, "Those responsible for this advance are to be commended. I am certain that those of us belonging to National Baptist churches will reciprocate fully in meeting our responsibilities for Christian brotherhood."

J. T. Roberts, associate in the department of missions for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, also commented that the move was a giant stride toward cooperation of all Baptists in Oklahoma. Roberts said he believed the action might be an example for other Baptist associations in the state to follow.

Spiritual Awakening Said
Spreading In Australia

By Lloyd Collins
Missouri Baptist Publicity Director

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Fresh winds of spiritual awakening are fanning revival fires throughout the Australian commonwealth as a result of the Missouri-Australian Baptist crusade in 400 Australian Baptist churches.

First phase of the crusade ended with nearly 3,000 "spiritual decisions" in revivals at 127 Baptist church crusades, said Alan C. Prior, Australian director of the crusade, co-sponsored by Australian Baptists and the Missouri Baptist Convention here.

Total attendance in the first week of revivals reached the 149,100 mark, Prior reported. There are two more one-week phases involving about 270 other Baptist churches.

About 100 Missouri Baptist pastors and singers and 60 other ministers and musicians from 18 states are in Australia to assist Baptists there in the first and only national evangelistic crusade ever held in that continent.

"Every report from the churches is exciting and fantastic," wrote Vernon Yearby, associate in the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board Division of Evangelism, Dallas.

There were 90 decisions at Gynea (New South Wales). At Mt. Izar where there is no church, 18 persons were saved, average attendance was 240, and they will start new Baptist mission work there, Yearby said. "If I sound excited, I am," he said.

Many churches reported they had doubled their membership during the first week of the crusade.

The Hillcrest Baptist Church of Adelaide, South Australia, entered the crusade with 33 church members. During the first week of the crusade 34 people came on profession of faith, and 32 of the 34 came during the final Sunday service.

In Port Macquarie, New South Wales, a small Baptist church celebrated its second anniversary as a constituted church by opening its first building. During the week, the 15-member church doubled its membership, and attendance each night ranged from 50 to 110 persons.

At Cobar, Australia, a town in the isolated western district of New South Wales, a small Baptist fellowship too small to be called an organized church experienced a revival with 23 conversions to Christianity, and 41 total decisions.

One crusade participant said it is "fantastic" how far people in Australia travel for a single service. Sometimes they come 40, 60, even 80 miles to attend. Even torrents of rain have not affected attendance much, a Missouri student leader said.

In Queensland, Australia, Roman Catholics gave their time on a 30-minute Sunday night television program to the Baptists when they learned that the crusade was to be launched the next day. Various denominations take turns in producing the program, "Christianity Presents," and it was the Roman Catholics' turn the night before the crusade was launched.

In South Australia at Morphett Vale, a former Roman Catholic priest who had left the priesthood and had not been inside a church for 15 years made a profession of faith during the final crusade service.

In West Australia, five Australian Aborigines were among the 42 persons who responded to the invitations to accept Christianity. The church had only 45 members when the crusade began.

At Haberfield Church in Sidney, Australia, a 73-year-old man for whom his wife and friends had prayed for 35 years was the first to respond to the invitation. There were 60 decisions in the meeting.

At Katanning, West Australia, there were 90 decisions. At Attadale, a suburb of Perth in West Australia, there were 80 decisions.

One Australian pastor said that the crusades had in the first week pushed the Australian Baptist churches ten years ahead.

Said W. Ross Edwards of Kansas City, Mo., the Missouri chairman of the crusade, "The Lord is blessing beyond our fondest dreams. The reports are simply amazing."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: The third and last phase of the crusade closed May 10. Communications between Australia and the United States are comparatively slow, but a final report is forthcoming soon as possible. Most of the crusade participants will return by May 15.

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Houston Baptist College
Inaugurates 1st President

5-14-64

HOUSTON (BP)--William H. Hinton was inaugurated as the first president of a new Baptist institution, Houston Baptist College, during a week-long schedule of activities here.

Hinton, who assumed the school's presidency July 1, 1962, was presented a gavel symbolizing the authority of his office by the school's board of trustees president Robert H. Ray.

During the inaugural address, a former governor of Texas, Allan Shivers, praised the institution for the good it can do in preserving the spiritual heritage of the American system of democracy.

"This nation today is not the God-fearing nation it has been for most of its 188 years," the former Texas governor told the inaugural convocation. "Ours is a 'Christian' nation that stands in danger of forgetting its spiritual heritage," he said.

Speaking on "The Challenge of Change," former governor Shivers said that Houston Baptist College as a Christ-centered college stressing the liberal arts and sciences could help meet the challenges facing the nation and the world.

In addition to the inauguration convocation, the Baptist school held dedication services for the \$285,000 Atwood Theology Building, with Robert E. Naylor, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, delivering the principal address.

The week-long activities also featured a lecture on "Art In Our Culture;" a college drama presentation of scenes from Shakespearean plays; an inauguration musical by the college choir; an awards day honoring first-year student achievements; and an inaugural luncheon following the convocation.

Before coming to Houston Baptist College here, Hinton was president of Texarkana College, Texarkana, Tex.; and North East Mississippi Junior College, Booneville, Miss.

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Newsman, Photographer
Named Associate Editor

5-14-64

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (BP)--A veteran reporter and news photographer, Robert E. Mathews, 30, has been named associate editor of the Baptist Messenger, Oklahoma Baptists' state newsmagazine.

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Mathews has served as reporter-news photographer for KWTW, an Oklahoma City television station since 1957. He was chief photographer at the time of his appointment to the Baptist state paper staff.

The newsman was winner of the United Press International Broadcasters of Oklahoma award for the best television news story of 1962, and an award for the best television documentary of 1963.

His coverage of James Meredith's enrolment at the University of Mississippi won Mathews a national Sigma Delta Chi award for "distinguished service in the field of television reporting," and he and another KWTW staffer were named the top television news team in the nation.

A Baptist deacon, Mathews is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma. He was for four years a reporter and church-page editor for two Oklahoma daily newspapers before going into television news.

Mathews succeeds Leland Webb who accepted a position as production editor of the Commission magazine, published monthly by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Richmond, Va.

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Hardin-Simmons Drops
Three Athletic Jobs

5-14-64

ABILENE, Tex. (BP)--Three positions in the athletic program at Hardin-Simmons University (Baptist) here are being eliminated and contracts for those offices with staff members now holding the posts will not be renewed, university officials have stated.

The offices being dropped are those of athletic director, athletic publicity director, and athletic trainer.

Currently filling the jobs are E. W. (Bill) Ledbetter, the athletic director; Richard K. (Dick) Collins, publicity director; and Joe Brba, trainer.

Floyd Huggins, former head football coach and now track coach, stated that he was also resigning to enter another field of work. Another track coach will be employed to fill the vacancy, officials said.

Hardin-Simmons President James H. Landes and Executive Vice President George L. Graham said the three jobs are being eliminated because of "economy measures deemed necessary by the trustee finance committee and the school's board of trustees."

Landes said that the school would "provide the strongest sports program of which we are capable in the areas of basketball, track, tennis and golf." Intercollegiate football had been dropped at Hardin-Simmons nearly a year earlier.

Graham, who will serve as coordinator of the total athletic program, said that the new athletic staff will include a basketball coach (Lou Henson), and a track coach, plus two student assistants.

The Baptist school will offer 15 scholarships for basketball players, and 10 scholarships in other sports.

Huggins, the resigned track coach, said he had resigned about a month ago but made no announcement to avoid disrupting the track program. "Football has been my main interest, and since it was eliminated I decided to try something else for a change rather than remain as track coach," he said. He will enter the insurance business in Kansas City, Mo., he said.

The three other athletic department staff members did not announce immediate decisions on their future positions.

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Baptist Hits Apathy In Race Relations

WASHINGTON (BP)--Christians need a "spirit of confession and repentance" for their part in the racial strife of the land, a Baptist leader said here.

Speaking at one of the worship services of the church assembly on civil rights, William M. Dyal, of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, said, "Ours is too much a religion of forensics" and that "words come too glibly, deeds too cautiously."

Dyal, a former missionary in Latin America, said his life is tied up with too many other cultures and races "ever again to think that I am an island." He said church members have been abandoned to a Gospel stripped of its social implications. Baptists, he said, have lived by the slogan, "every Baptist a non-boat rocker."

The Baptist leader struck out at the silence of church members when some in their midst participate in "hate groups" while they attack members and ministers who speak for "decency in human relations."

Christians are guilty of rationalizing these inconsistencies, Dyal said. "We tend to accommodate the evil rather than fighting it. We are guilty of shrugging off the evil as the inevitable."

Such rationalization is the result of "brainwashing techniques" of society, he charged. He indicated that this is the philosophy that "Christian faith is a ticket to eternity, unrelated to life," that "ethics is a matter of convenience, applicable perhaps to personal piety, but foreign to social justice."

To treat a man whose skin is another color as an object rather than a person is sin, Dyal said. To treat a human creature as sub-human challenges the wisdom and care of God, he continued.

Stressing that love is more than a word of neighborly sentiment, Dyal said, "Christ-produced love is involved concern for the well-being of our neighbor. Here is the true ground of the white Christian's participation in the Negro's cause for rights...Justice is love operating in human relations and in the structures of society."

Referring specifically to the civil rights bill now under debate in the U. S. Senate, Dyal said, "The key issue for Christians...is the moral background of the bill; discrimination has deprived a large segment of our citizens of their privileges and responsibilities of citizenship."

The church assembly on civil rights is sponsored by the Commission on Religion and Race of the National Council of Churches. It began with a special interchurch convocation on April 28 and is to continue until the civil rights bill is passed by the senate. Protestant and orthodox ministers and lay leaders from across the country are speaking on the religious and moral implications of the civil rights struggle.

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Kentucky Aids Alaska

MIDDLETOWN, Ky. (BP)--A gift of \$1,000 has been sent by the Executive Board of the Kentucky Baptist Convention to assist Baptist churches in Alaska in their recovery from damage caused by the recent earthquake.

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Pastor Still Active
At 84 Years Of Age

WIDENER, Ark. (BP)--Sixty years in the Southern Baptist ministry, during which time he has served as pastor of 82 churches and has Baptized more than 9,000 persons was commemorated by I. R. Hammons and his friends at a special service in the Burnt Cane Baptist Church here.

Hammons, a native of Hardeman County, Tennessee, who will be 84 years old June 16, recently began his fourth year as pastor of the Burnt Cane Church.

Recalling that he felt that he could not possibly become a preacher when as a young man he felt God calling him to the ministry, Hammons said that he told his wife he was going into the fields to pray.

"I told the Lord, 'You know I could not preach, and that if I entered the ministry no church would call me.' But God seemed to say, 'You leave that to me.' Then I said, 'Lord, somebody has to be the least of all your preachers. Let me be that man.' And it seems that is the one thing I have achieved," he said with a smile.

"Not yet a full graduate of the second grade "in public school, Hammons was ordained to the Gospel ministry in May, 1904 by the Hebron Baptist Church, Bolivar, Tenn.

In his first pastorate, Hickory Valley, in Tennessee, the boy preacher received more than 100 members by Baptism and many others on transfer of membership from other churches.

One fall, fourteen churches tried to call him as pastor.

According to Erwin L. McDonald, editor of the Arkansas Baptist newsmagazine, the large number of pastorates held by the veteran preacher--82--is accounted for by the fact that many churches he served in the early years were quarter-time, having worship services only one Sunday out of each month.

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Alabama Group Upholds
U. S. First Amendment

5-14-64

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--The Alabama Baptist Commission on Christian Life and Public Affairs voiced opposition to the proposed Becker Amendment to the United States Constitution, calling it a "threat to religious liberty."

The commission, headed by John H. Jeffers of Auburn, Ala., issued a statement which read:

"This commission affirms its confidence in the first amendment to the national constitution to safeguard religious freedom adequately for all citizens of our beloved country.

"We reject the erroneous idea that recent decisions of the Supreme Court forbid Bible reading and prayer in the public schools. We believe that the court is technically correct in saying that the state through its agencies cannot promote or establish the reading of the Bible or prayer in the public school.

"We firmly believe that the proposed Becker Amendment poses a threat to religious liberty."

Members of the commission also affirmed a statement earlier made by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D. C., which said: "If government units at any level are given powers to promote or support religion, this means that they also gain the powers to neglect, to propose, and to change it."

The Alabama Baptist group strongly urged Baptist people in Alabama to "inform themselves on the Supreme Court rulings on Bible reading and prayer and

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on the content of this proposed (Becker) amendment, and to study the excellent analysis of it made by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

"Let us not be a party to uninformed emotional reaction to decisions of the Supreme Court which seems to be widespread among our people. Let us continue to strengthen the religious instruction given our children in our homes and churches while urging voluntary religious activities in the public school."

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Florida Baptist Board
Opposes Amendment Change

5-14-64

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--A resolution opposing any change in the wording or meaning of the first amendment to the constitution of the United States was adopted here by the state board of missions of the Florida Baptist State Convention.

The action came during the third week of hearings before the United States Senate Judiciary committee on the Becker Amendment, a bill before congress to "allow and permit" Bible reading and prayer in public schools.

Copies of the resolution passed by the Florida Baptist group were sent to members of the judiciary committee and to Florida congressman, urging them to vote against the Becker amendment.

Said the resolution:

"The first amendment of the constitution of the United States has served our nation and our churches well throughout our national history.

"It has been the bullwork for preserving our religious freedom, and we are opposed to any change in its wording or meaning.

"We are opposed to government sponsorship of religion, and we respectfully request members of Congress to leave religion to the homes and churches of the nation."

The Becker amendment, sponsored by Rep. Frank Becker (R., N. Y.), a Roman Catholic, is aimed at "permitting" Bible reading and prayer in public schools. The Baptist group, however, contended that the Supreme Court ruling did not rule out prayer and Bible reading, it only ruled against "required" or "government-regulated" prayer in schools.

In other action, the Florida Baptist board approved appointment of four new employees--two new field secretaries and two Woman's Missionary Union workers.

Elected as Girl's Auxiliary Director for the Florida Woman's Missionary Union Auxiliary was Miss Ruth Bagwell, director of religious activities at Eglin Air Force Base near Pensacola, Fla.; and named Sunbeam Director for the W. M. U. was Miss Elizabeth Painter, associate in the Florida Baptist Training Union department.

Elected field secretaries for the Florida Baptist State Convention were Ellis B. Turner, pastor of First Baptist Church, Monticello, Fla.; and James R. Thompson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Auburndale, Fla.

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