

# BAPTIST FEATURES

PRODUCED BY BAPTIST PRESS  
NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION  
460 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, *Director*  
Theo Sommerkamp, *Assistant Director*

August 20, 1965

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This feature, reprinted from the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, is offered especially for the non-Baptist papers on the Baptist Press mailing list.)

## Inn of the Fisherman

By Grace Hatfield  
Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine  
Reprinted by Baptist Press

A little folk singing, some poetry reading, hot coffee and a seashell full of peanuts if you wish, all in a dimly-lighted atmosphere with a seaside motif--what could be more relaxing?

One can find such an atmosphere at "The Inn of the Fisherman," a coffeehouse operated by the Baptist Student Union at the BSU center at 323 S. Elm, Little Rock.

A brainchild of Tom Logue, state BSU secretary and Kathy Layman, summer missionary from Springdale, Ark., the coffeehouse has been in operation every Friday and Saturday night since mid-June.

The philosophy or idea behind such a Christian coffeehouse, as compared with those of a more commercial nature, is to give college students a chance to communicate with students of other races and religions. There is no hymn singing, preaching, or even testimonials, but the atmosphere is a very subtle approach to any kind of gospel.

Entertainers are those singers and readers who just enjoy coming and drop in to offer their services. No talent has ever been actually lined up except during the first weekend of operation.

Summer missionaries that work in various Little Rock churches as well as a few "regulars" work as waiters and greet guests.

The Inn of the Fisherman, which takes its name from the ancient practice of many diverse religious groups using a fish to symbolize Christianity, is one of the few Baptists-operated coffeehouses in the Southern Baptist Convention, but other denominations have them. Many of these coffeehouses are criticized as avoiding evangelism rather than actually accomplishing anything.

"The 'evangelism' comes through communications, friendship and a sharing of beliefs and views," answers Miss Layman. "We're not trying to preach but to communicate with people from all walks of life."

Religion is discussed only if the guest indicates interest. The only direct stimulation is the lone tract with a small gospel message, written in the idiom of contemporary Americans, which is placed on each table.

The coffeehouse allows freedom of expression in several different ways: through the performing arts, simple conversation, and even in art display. Already lining the walls are various paintings contributed by Mrs. D. K. Lindsey, a local artist, and visitors to the coffeehouse are urged to display their own works.

So far, the coffeehouse has had crowds as large as 75 and never a crowd smaller than 20-25. While the large crowds are pleasing, those most interested in the effect of the project report better communication and response to entertainers among smaller groups.

Who comes? Guests are mainly college students home for the summer, medical school students, and out-of-town students working in the city. Many Baptist young people attend, but, satisfyingly, many students of other faiths attend also. One of the regular performers is a member of the Presbyterian Church.

Both Logue and Miss Layman feel that the coffeehouse has been successful and hope to continue it throughout the winter months.

"This is definitely doing something," Miss Layman emphasized. "We're broadening friendships as well as accomplishing the communication ideal."

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Falls Creek Assembly  
Draws 50,000 A Year

By Joan Harvison  
For Baptist Press

To single out one Baptist encampment for a special story is almost like separating a star from a galaxy.

If nothing else, however, sheer size alone would make Falls Creek Baptist Assembly near Davis, Okla., distinctive among Southern Baptist Convention state assemblies.

Located in the heart of the Arbuckle Mountains, the Oklahoma Baptist-owned and operated assembly is believed to be the largest annual religious encampment in the world.

During the three week-long summer assemblies which begin in mid-July each year, over 20,000 teenagers and adults from all over the state attend assemblies at Falls Creek. If officials were to waive the "Oklahoma only" rule, it would be almost impossible to accommodate the crowds.

Counting activities at other times of the year, more than 50,000 persons probably camp at Falls Creek annually.

Expected to draw even greater numbers on a year-round basis is the new \$60,000 B. B. McKinney Chapel, dedicated at the general assemblies this year. The chapel is named for the famous hymn writer and SBC music secretary who found inspiration for many of his compositions at Falls Creek during the twenty-five years in which he served as the assembly's music director.

The air-conditioned chapel will house rehearsal facilities for a 500-voice choir and orchestra. Such facilities are needed during summer assemblies. Throughout the remainder of the year, the chapel will be used for workshops, retreats, and other types of meetings.

It is estimated that nearly a million persons have attended Falls Creek since it opened in 1917. Available records date back to 1957. In eight years alone, 1,746 persons have made professions of faith and 4,439 have made commitments to vocational Christian service at Falls Creek.

Attendance is large also at some other state Baptist assemblies, but do not top Falls Creek's.

For example, Windermere Baptist Assembly owned by Missouri Baptists, registered 12,004 persons during a nine-month period in 1964. Mississippi Baptist-owned Gulfshore Assembly registered 7,388 during 1964. Eagle Eyrie Baptist Assembly, owned by Virginia Baptists, had an annual attendance of slightly over 10,000.

Other state Baptist assemblies may not match Falls Creek's numbers because they have a different type of emphasis. The program at Falls Creek has majored on massive evangelistic outreach; other state encampments have sought more to be a training ground for specific educational organizations.

The fact that Oklahoma Baptists have probably been in the business longer than most--if not all--of the other 21 statewide assemblies owned by Baptist conventions helps to account for its response.

Falls Creek began operating 43 years before the Gulfshore Assembly was founded. It had a 33-year headstart also on Windermere and a little over a 40-year lead on Virginia's Eagle Eyrie.

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During its half-century lifetime, the Oklahoma assembly has grown to its present size from a rather modest beginning of 273 campers who traveled over the crude mountain road in wagons for that first summer encampment.

Sam W. Scantlan, Oklahoma City, missions secretary for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and business manager for Falls Creek, points out that an amazing thing about the attendance is the number who eat in the main cafeteria.

"One of the most unique features of the encampment is that among the vast numbers who attend during the three weeks of general assemblies each summer, not more than 100 persons will probably eat in the cafeteria each week," Scantlan says. "These will be mainly staff and personnel," he adds.

The reason that so few eat in the cafeteria is because every church provides meals for its own group. At the beginning of each assembly, the convoy of trucks and cars entering the patrolled gates at the camp usually carries with it grocery supplies for a week along with cooks to prepare the meals.

Church groups and individual campers also rely on the grocery store and ice dock operated by the convention on the assembly grounds for a full selection of food and first-aid items.

Another unusual feature of the encampment is that individual churches own 193 of the 250 cabins nestled in valleys and along hillsides of the 190-acre site.

Individual ownership of cabins is the only way, according to Scantlan. "We could not possibly handle the crowds at Falls Creek by any other method."

There are about 200 different architectural styles--to use the phrase loosely--in one setting. A split-level rock cabin, a free form sort of thing, sits next to a crack-erbox type of frame building. A neat row of modern motel-type units contrasts sharply with a rustic private cabin blending into the wooded setting at the top of a steep hill in the distance.

The McKinney Chapel mildly shocks the observer at first. It seems a little out of character with the curved, sweeping lines of its stylized roof. The form is made even more conspicuous by its enormous size and its proximity to the tabernacle.

Another peculiar aspect of Falls Creek is that during the three general assemblies each summer children under 13 years of age come only if their parents are sponsors or camp personnel. More and more, Falls Creek is becoming a youth assembly.

Carnival-red posters, aimed at teenagers, picture an elephant-eared rhinoceros and issue a nonsensical appeal: "Come on to Falls Creek?...Bring your Bible, your hiking clothes, toothbrush, maybe even a raincoat. But please don't bring your Rhino!"

Through the years, Falls Creek has maintained the qualities of an old-fashioned camp meeting. The open pavilion tabernacle, which seats 5,000, provides the setting for two daily preaching services. Capacity crowds jam the tabernacle during these services to hear some of the "name" preachers among Southern Baptists. Services are broadcast daily over two Oklahoma radio stations.

Finally, if Falls Creek had no other claim to fame, its historical role in church music would alone carve a permanent niche.

It is said that D. B. McKinney set Falls Creek to singing. He did this primarily by writing songs spontaneously just for the audiences at Falls Creek. Often he would go back to his room at night following a service and compose a gospel song which he would introduce in the services the next morning.

They were simple songs that people could sing with complete abandonment, a characteristic of Falls Creek singing unparalleled anywhere.

"Falls Creek" is, in fact, the name of a hymn tune given to the song, "Wherever He Leads I'll Go," written by McKinney. The composer introduced it at the assembly in 1936.

What is that "extra something" of Falls Creek and the other summer assemblies? Probably that Falls Creek, like the others, is not a "place." It's an "experience," a bond of Christian fellowship felt between the people who go there.

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**NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION**  
**WATCH FOR THE (BP) CREDIT LINE**

CUTLINES

August 20, 1965

Baptist Press Photo

SETS RECORD--Mrs. Ruth Nelson, who retired July 31, holds the record for employee tenure with the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee--33 years. As bookkeeper in Nashville, she countersigned distribution checks to SBC agencies amounting to \$413,841,538 during her employment. Of this, \$252,135,645 was in Cooperative Program receipts. Mrs. Nelson also attended every annual session of the SBC from 1933 through 1965. (BP) Photo

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(Cutline tells story)

CUTLINES

August 20, 1965

Baptist Press Photo

COFFEEHOUSE--"Inn of the Fisherman" is a coffeehouse operated at the Baptist Student Center in Little Rock, Ark. Purpose of the coffeehouse is to provide a setting for students to talk to each other about their beliefs. Entertainment is furnished by singers and readers who drop in to offer their talents. (BP) Photo courtesy Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

(This picture accompanies feature story on the Inn, mailed separately.)

FALLS CREEK CHAPEL--Sweeping lines of the roof of the new B. B. McKinney Chapel at Falls Creek Baptist Assembly in Oklahoma depict the motion of the conductor's baton. Vertical lines suggest man's ascent to heaven, the architect says. Horizontal lines point out man's relationship to his fellowman. The form of a cross dominates the building's facade. Air conditioned and built for year-round use, chapel will seat 600. (BP) Photo

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(Accompanies feature story by Joan Harvison)

*Yellow paper*