



BAPTIST PRESS
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December 28, 1965

President Visits Mother's
Baptist Church in Texas

JOHNSON CITY, Tex. (BP)---President Lyndon B. Johnson worshipped the day after Christmas at the Baptist church here where his mother was a long-time member.

It was the first time since becoming president that Johnson had attended services at the First Baptist Church of Johnson City.

He listened intently as the church's pastor paid tribute to the faithfulness of Mrs. Rebecca Baines Johnson, the president's mother, who for many years was a member of the church.

The pastor, H. L. McLerran, then preached his prepared sermon on the gift that Jesus Christ came to give on that Christmas day nearly 2,000 years earlier---the gift of a more abundant life.

Earlier during the week, the combined choirs of the First Baptist Church, the First Christian Church, and the local Methodist church, sang carols to the president and his family at his boyhood home here.

McLerran said that Johnson's personal attorney, A. W. Morrison who is a member of the First Baptist Church of Johnson City, called the night before the Sunday morning service saying that the president planned to worship there the following day.

McLerran said that the president was recognized as a guest, along with many other distinguished visitors at the church. The 200-seat auditorium was packed, he said.

The pastor pointed out Johnson's Baptist heritage in recognizing the president as a visitor.

Johnson's great-great grandfather, George Washington Baines Sr., was a pioneer Baptist preacher in Texas and was once president of Baylor University, a Baptist school in Waco, Texas. He was also one of the earliest secretaries of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Johnson spent about 15 minutes after the service talking and visiting with friends outside the church. He told the pastor that he appreciated what was said about the faithfulness of his mother.

McLerran said that Johnson remarked that his mother would have been present that day if she were living and well enough to attend. She has been dead for several years.

The first lady, who attended the services with the president, told the pastor she especially enjoyed the wonderful Gospel hymns sung during the worship service.

Most of the church members stayed following the church service to see the president and shake his hand, McLerran said.

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Kentucky Church Holds
Daily Prayer for Peace

12-28-65

HAZARD, Ky. (BP)---The First Baptist Church here is conducting a daily fifteen-minute "prayer for peace" period during the noon-hour to allow members and businessmen to pray for an end to the war in Vietnam.

The prayer period calls "for divine intervention and a peaceful solution of the war in Vietnam," said the pastor of the Hazard church, Thomas H. Harding.

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Harding said he hoped other Baptist churches throughout the nation would hold similar noon-time prayer services for peace.

In a letter to the pastor, the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Wayne Dehoney of Jackson, Tenn., commended the church for its prayer for peace program.

The 1,500-member church is located in Eastern Kentucky.

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Pastor's Wife, Children
Killed in Car Accident

12-28-65

BOISE CITY, Okla. (BP)---The wife of a Baptist pastor from Colorado and their two small children were killed in a tragic car-truck crash near here two days before Christmas.

Dead in the crash were Mrs. Nicki Slaughter, 22, her two-year-old daughter Melissa, 2, and stepson, Scott, 5.

She was the wife of Larry Slaughter, pastor of the Olivet Baptist Church (Spanish) in La Junta, Col., and a native of Hereford, Tex.

A third Slaughter child, nine-year-old Charles, was injured in the accident and taken to a hospital in Hereford, Tex., with fractures of both legs.

The crash occurred at about 1:00 a. m. on rain-slick Highway 287 near here.

Mrs. Slaughter and the three children were riding in a car driven by a family friend, Floyd Earnest Temple, 16, of Las Animas, Col. Neither Temple nor the driver of the truck were injured.

Temple and the Slaughters had left Las Animas, about 160 miles north of Boise City, after attending a church affair and stopping by the Temple home for a snack. Temple's father is a Baptist pastor in Las Animas.

Mrs. Slaughter was planning to join her husband in Hereford, Tex. He had left three days earlier to attend the burial of his grandmother on the day of the Slaughter's fourth wedding anniversary.

Mrs. Slaughter also intended to visit her home in Rockdale, Tex., where her father is seriously ill.

It was the second time Slaughter had lost his wife in an automobile accident. His first wife was killed in a crash several years earlier. He had two children by his first marriage and one in his second.

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Knoxville Church Burns
In Christmas Eve Fire

12-28-65

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (BP)---An arsonist set fire to the main sanctuary of the Broadway Baptist Church here, causing a Christmas Eve blaze that completely destroyed the auditorium.

The pastor, Lewis E. Rhodes, estimated damages at about \$500,000. He expects insurance to cover most of the loss.

Flames leaped over 100 feet into the air during the blaze, which went out of control before firemen arrived. It took nearly five hours to extinguish the fire.

A week following the fire, officers were searching for a 14-year-old youth with a known record of arson who was seen at the church during the fire. The pastor said officers suspect others might have been involved.

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"Whoever did this must have been sick," Rhodes said. "We're fairly certain it was not someone who was trying to get back at the church, he added.

Rhodes said that the church has a wonderful spirit and is moving forward to rebuild as soon as possible.

"We've lost a church building, but not a church," he said. "Sacrifice will be required, but our people will pay the price."

He said numerous churches and individuals have indicated a desire to help, including a Catholic priest from Memphis who stopped by with a small offering.

A Jewish Rabbi in Knoxville offered the use of their temple as a temporary place for the Broadway church to hold worship services, he added.

The congregation decided to meet, however, in a large, partially enclosed area under the church's Pollard Building used as parking space.

On Christmas day following the fire the previous day, electrical heating was installed in the temporary worship site, and the walls were sealed up. About 900 members of the church gathered the following Sunday to worship.

Rhodes said that the church hopes to begin construction on a new sanctuary in several months after an insurance settlement, appointment of a building committee, and approval of architects plans.

The fire apparently started near the pulpit in the older sanctuary, according to Knoxville Fire Inspector Glenn Underwood.

Underwood said the arsonist apparently tried to start the fire in a newer, fire-proof educational building. Failing, the arsonist probably went to the older sanctuary.

The fire was discovered by two policemen who were driving by the church in mid-afternoon on Christmas eve.

One fireman suffered minor injuries while battling the blaze. He was treated and released by a Knoxville hospital shortly afterwards.