

**BAPTIST PRESS**

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December 19, 1969

**Church Fires Pastor After
Shotgun Blast Rips Home**

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--On Saturday night, a shotgun blast sent buckshot ripping through the living room window of the home of Baptist pastor J. Wesley Shipp here, while his daughter was entertaining white and Negro youths at a party.

The next morning, the deacons at Ridgecrest Baptist Church fired Shipp as past r.

"They told me that I was a disruptive influence in the community, that my views on racial matters would hurt the church," Shipp said.

Shipp's views on racial matters are, he said "simply that black is as good as white. I believe that," he stated. "I've always believed that, and no one's going to change my mind."

Shipp said that the shotgun blast that pelted his living room would have killed someone if it had happened ten second earlier. About eight or ten persons, most of them students at Wake Forest High School, were in the den popping popcorn, and several had just left the living room.

The youth, including several Negroes and liberal-minded students who have vocally opposed the Vietnam war, had been invited to the pastor's home by his 16-year-old daughter, Karen.

Shipp has decided to stay in Wake Forest, where he is currently studying at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

Through the ordeal, he has received a lot of support from his fellow students and faculty members at the seminary.

The faculty, in meeting just a few days after the shooting, adopted a resolution deploring the "act of cowardly terrorism."

The faculty members urged the people of Wake Forest to "create the kind of community in which freedom of thought and association of persons will be upheld, and the sanctity of their homes respected."

Though Shipp has decided to stick it out in Wake Forest, he has moved from the Ridgecrest church parsonage to a house in the city of Wake Forest.

The church is located in a rural community, described by one news reporter as "a hard-scrabble community of simple brick farmhouses, rundown country stores and rolling red-clay landscape just off Highway 98 northwest of Wake Forest.

Shipp said the deacons gave him an opportunity to resign, but "I refused because I want it on my record that this is the reason I've been asked to leave the church,"

"I'm no hero," he continued. "I'm scared and I'd probably be smart to get on out of this area. But I want to expose this attitude of hate and bigotry that these so-called Christian people are filled with."

Shipp said that he had preached on the race question "once or twice" since coming to Ridgecrest church about eight months ago from a church near Richmond. He is a native Virginian and a graduate of the University of Richmond.

"I never tried to cram my views down the congregation's throat, but my views have been fairly well known in the community," Shipp added.

Shipp said he thought that "those shots were aimed pure and simple at the fact that this (party) was a social gathering where whites and blacks were together."

Other people in the community, who told reporters they agreed with Shipp on very little else, said they agreed with him on that.

An elderly farmer told a Raleigh newsman, "I don't know any of the details, but I hear he had colored people in his house. That's just asking for trouble."

A deacon at the church told the same reporter he was "real sorry" about the shooting, but plead with the newsman not to use his name because "it could be my house tonight if someone heard me say that."

"I don't think Wesley (Shipp) should have had those colored people in there, but I think it's awful someone would do this," the unidentified deacon said.

"We begged him before the party not to have any mixin' but he wouldn't listen," the deacon continued. "Now he's paying for it."

Shipp believes the entire church, not just himself, is paying for the incident.

"There's a lot of hatred within a mile radius of this house," he said. "But mostly there's fear. The man who shot at me and my family has this entire community in his grip."

The Wake County Sheriff's Department had turned up no clues four days after the shooting, and North Carolina Governor Rob Scott has offered a \$2,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person (s) who fired the shot.

Sheriff's deputies said they believed the 18 buckshot pellets which ripped into the pastor's home came from a twin blast from a double barrel shotgun.

The shot struck the living room window and hit the back wall, leaving a shot pattern of 3½ feet about chest high. Seven pellets ripped through the living room wall and struck the fireplace on the back side of the den, near a spot where Shipp and the youth were standing.

Shipp shouted "hit the floor" when the blast ripped the house, and the children fell flat on the floor and stayed there until told it was safe. Shipp went outside to investigate, but could see no one.

About 10 seconds before the shots pelted the house, John Steely, a 16-year-old student at Wake Forest High School recently suspended for distributing an anti-war newspaper at the school, had walked past the front window.

Officials and experts estimated that the shot was fired from a distance of about 50 to 75 feet.

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Bill Halbert Joins Board's
Church Administration Staff

12/19/69

NASHVILLE (BP)--Bill Halbert will join the church administration department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board effective January 1, 1970.

Halbert comes to the board from Hoffmantown Baptist Church, Albuquerque, N.M., where he was minister of education. He will serve as a consultant with the board.

A native of Arkansas, he earned his bachelor of arts degree in speech from Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Ark. Halbert also holds a master of religious education degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

He has served as minister of education at First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Ark., and Bethlehem Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.

Halbert has served as president of the Arkansas and New Mexico Baptist Religious Education Associations.

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