

# (BP)---FEATURES

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

produced by Baptist Press

460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
Telephone (615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

July 13, 1970

Miami's Changing Face Affects  
Southern Baptist Methods

By Bob Wilcox  
Religion Editor, Miami News

MIAMI (BP)--Southern Baptists in Miami, members of South Florida's largest Protestant group with 72 churches and 60,000 members in Dade County, face making basic alterations in their methods of reaching people because of the area's changing population and racial and cultural complexion.

Like Christians in many metropolitan areas in the United States, they must deal with a complex situation.

At last count, the population of Dade County had reached 1.25 million persons and construction of multi-family buildings was booming.

"We're having trouble reaching people in high-rise apartments," said J. Ray Dobbins, former director of the Miami Baptist Association and newly appointed director of field missions for the Florida Baptist Convention, Jacksonville.

"The tenants are protected from visitation by security officers," he explained.

Dobbins said he thinks the population is not spreading out as much as it is going up.

"The need is not to build more churches but to determine how to get to the people."

He said television may be one answer and that a Southern Baptist church in Miami is going on the air next fall.

"It's one way to get through the apartment walls," he said.

He also cited possible "use of reading rooms, book reviews and high caliber music as ways to attract people."

Dobbins said Southern Baptist services have been changing because of the population.

"People are coming here from all over, New England as well as Georgia. They're not used to the bombastic, folk-hymning type of service with the preacher pounding the pulpit. They feel left out," he continued.

"We need smaller types of meetings, geared to specific groups, where different people can get together."

He pointed to Southern Baptist success with language ministries in Miami as an example of a more specialized approach.

For more than 10 years now Miami has had a steady influx of Cuban refugees.

"When I came here 13 years ago there were not more than five or six Spanish congregations," the Arkansas native said. "Now we have 28 and some are bigger than the English congregations."

-more-

Dobbins said Sunday School attendance declined in Miami's Southern Baptist churches during his years in the area.

"We're just not getting the enrollments we used to. The automobile and the airplane are making it so easy for people to leave on Friday and come back Sunday night."

He said more "personal witnessing" would be the only answer. "We've got to get the gospel outside the church."

Speaking of Southern Baptist churches in the core of Miami, he said many "ran away" when they saw their neighborhoods changing racially and economically.

"Several simply closed their doors and went elsewhere," he said. "A few others which stayed went outside their communities to minister" and looked for the same kind of people they had always had, he added.

Dobbins said that within the past year, a Southern Baptist church in Miami denied membership to a Negro.

"I've seen a lot of attitudes change over the years I've been in Miami," he continued, "but our racial record isn't what it should be, and it'll take another generation before it is."

However, he pointed out that Seventy-ninth Street Baptist Church, near one of Miami's famous causeways, is a major exception. "That church has about 35 per cent Negro membership," he said, and that places it among the most integrated churches of any denomination in the area.

-30-

Oklahoma Churchmen Sing  
To Vietnam-Bound Soldiers

7/13/70

By Henry Chennault

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (BP)--The Singing Churchmen of Oklahoma, enroute to the Baptist World Congress in Tokyo, gave an impromptu concert before several hundred U.S. Army troops headed for Vietnam in the Anchorage Airport terminal.

The choir, composed of Oklahoma Baptist ministers of music, took advantage of a six-hour delay to "practice" the music they plan to sing at the international Baptist convention.

As the melodious notes of the gospel music began to fill one long corridor in the terminal, several people stopped to listen.

At first only one or two servicemen stopped; then four or five, gathered--a Negro corporal from Georgia, a white PFC from Virginia, a Latin American sergeant from Texas. Soon there was an informal crowd.

Some of the soldiers kept time with the music by patting their feet; others leaned against a wall; some simply sat on the carpeted floor. Fatigues, combat boots, olive green garb and all colors of skin made up the audience.

Most noticeable perhaps was a young Negro rifleman kneeling in an attitude of prayer, as the words of The Singing Churchmen's music floated through the corridor.

"What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear," they sang. "...one world, one Lord, one witness;...Have faith in God; ...Amen, Amen, Amen...."

Then the voice on the public address system momentarily drowned out the singing: "Last call for Flying Tigers Airline, Charter Flight

-more-

Number 283, to Camran Bay. All Aboard, please."

The Churchmen sang on: "Go on your way rejoicing," and the young men slowly and sadly walked away.

-30-

Henry Chennault is Secretary, Brotherhood Department, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

Missionaries Seek  
Missing Daughter

7/13/70

LARKSPUR, Colo. (BP)--Janelyn McTyre, 15-year-old daughter of furloughing Southern Baptist missionaries, disappeared from the Ponderosa campground east of Estes Park, Colo., where her family was staying during and after the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Denver.

The girl's parents, Mr. and Mrs. John H. McTyre, last saw their daughter at 8:15 a.m., June 18. At first reluctant to publicize her disappearance for fear she had left willfully, they now believe their best chance of finding her lies in informing as many people as possible.

Janelyn is 5 feet 6 and weighs 112 pounds. She has long, light brown hair, hazel eyes, fair complexion and a thin face. A crescent-shaped scar marks her right thumb print.

She suffers from hyperinsulinism, a condition which can cause depression or confusion without proper diet and medication. She is fluent in Spanish, as well as English.

The McTyres, missionaries to Chile since 1957, came to the states on furlough last October. Although they make their furlough home in Tampa, Fla., where Janelyn attended Chamberlain High School last year, the family is remaining in the area where Janelyn disappeared to be available to the authorities who are searching for the girl.

McTyre personally visited a large colony of hippies at Boulder, Colo., searching for his daughter.

Now at the Ponderosa Southern Baptist Camp, Larkspur, Colo., the McTyres can be telephoned through Camp Manager Joe Cherry (Area Code 303, 481-2482) or through Miss Betty Lynn Cadle of the Colorado Baptist General Convention (303-771-2489).

-30-

Photo mailed to state Baptist papers July 10.



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
Telephone (615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

July 13, 1970

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Walker I. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Billy Keith, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lynn M. Davis, Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203, Telephone (615) 254-1631  
**RICHMOND** Jesse C. Fletcher, Acting Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (703) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

Birmingham Church Debates  
Negro Membership Applications

By Wallace Henley  
For the Baptist Press

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Deacons at First Baptist Church here have voted by a narrow margin to recommend full membership for a Negro woman and her 11-year-old daughter, upholding a previous disputed congregational vote in favor of the two.

But, even with the endorsement of the deacons, the membership bid by Mrs. Winifred Bryant and her daughter, Miss Twila Forture, remains uncertain.

According to bylaws of the church, their acceptance now hinges on a two-thirds vote of the congregation.

Mrs. Bryant and her daughter, who live in an inner city neighborhood near the church, presented themselves for membership on June 28. Twila, who had been involved in a tutoring program conducted by the church, came on profession of faith for baptism.

For about a year, First Baptist Church has utilized a membership candidacy practice.

Persons who present themselves are taken under the church's "watchcare" without being voted on. They are interviewed by the pastor and a membership committee, then presented for congregational vote.

Candidates are voted on en masse the first Sunday of the month following the one in which they joined, if they agree to support the ministries of the church and indicate a genuine Christian experience.

Mrs. Bryant and Twila were recommended by the pastor, Herbert Gilmore, and the membership committee, and were present, along with four white candidates, to be voted on July 5.

Gilmore, who moderated the voting session at the close of the worship service, ruled that a majority had voted to receive all the candidates, including the two Negroes.

At that point, a mild verbal ruckus occurred in the normally staid congregation, with opponents to the Negroes' membership charging an improper handling of the affair.

They cited the church bylaws which say a unanimous vote is "desirable" and also establish procedure for protest to a disputed vote.

W. Earl McKenney, a deacon who insists his reasons for opposition were not racial, indicated he would attend a July 6 deacons' meeting to voice that objection.

A number of church members crowded forward at the close of the debate to embrace the weeping mother and daughter.

After a 3 1/2 hour session at the deacons' meeting, objections to membership were ruled invalid and unscriptural. Content of the debate and actual vote count were not released, although the vote was reportedly close.

-more-

The congregation, at the pastor's suggestion, was to begin discussion of the membership of Mrs. Bryant and Twila, July 29, and continue during as many Wednesday night prayer meeting sessions as needed.

Gilmore left the States on a previously scheduled trip to the Baptist World Congress in Tokyo and a subsequent world tour after the July 6 deacons meeting.

Although the pastor has firmly positioned himself in favor of admitting the Negroes, he decided to go ahead with the trip, according to one church member, partly to help the congregation understand the decision is its own and that he is not seeking to dictate the outcome.

The congregation is sharply polarized over the matter, and Gilmore said he thought the discussion period would "give time to talk, pray and study the Bible, and then do it some more."

In fact, it was the polarization that many of the opponents expressed concern over. Observers feel the split vote heavily illustrates a generation gap, and some debaters argued that families were divided over the matter.

Others cited the possibility of an exodus of white members from First Baptist if the Negroes are accepted.

Gilmore reminded the members in a sermon on July 5, before the original congregational vote, and at the deacons' meeting, that the church voted two years ago to remain in the inner city and institute programs for the people living in that area.

It was mainly on that basis, he said, that he came to the church.

One of the ministries begun was the tutoring program for school children. Twila was one of the pupils in that program, and through it she was won to Christ.

"We told these people we loved them through this ministry," Gilmore said, "then they dropped their defenses. To reject them would be a slap in the face to them," he said.

Gilmore emphasized that it seems inconsistent to send missionaries to minister to people overseas, then reject the same kind of people when they live in the church's neighborhood.

"These people are a natural fruit of our ministry," Gilmore said, emphasizing that no one is "sought because of race anymore than they should be rejected because of race."

In the sermon on July 5, Gilmore said that "if this church ultimately says it will be a segregated church, the sign of death will be on its door. But if we can be caught up in the grace of God, then this church can mark out a new day for Birmingham, the South and the nation. ...We are at a dead end street."

If Mrs. Bryant and Twila are admitted, they will be the first Negro members in the 98-year history of the downtown church.

Ironically, however, in 1963, when Birmingham was writhing in racial turmoil and other white churches were turning Negro worshippers away, First Baptist made news by seating Negroes in accordance with a commitment made by the church 10 years earlier.

There is also a special note of irony in the current congregational action.

Charles Worthington, a white Baptist minister and his wife and son, had wanted to join the church, they said, because of its commitment to minister to all people.

They originally presented themselves in May. But when the first Sunday in June arrived and the Worthingtons were to be voted on, Mrs. Worthington was ill. Her husband came ahead and was admitted to church membership.

Mrs. Worthington and her son, David, were among the four white candidates voted on July 5 with Mrs. Bryant and Twila.

Her husband, who directs Birmingham's Crisis Intervention Center, a suicide-prevention and counseling referral agency, was to baptize his son that night.

Now, the memberships of Mrs. Worthington and David are in limbo with Mrs. Bryant's and Twila's.

But, said Mrs. Worthington, she "was proud" to stand with the Negroes, even though it means a split in church membership for her family at least for the time being.

-30-

Wallace Henley, religion editor for the Birmingham News, is a Southern Baptist.

#### Dallas Church Choir Schedules Concert For Japanese Prime Minister Sato

DALLAS (BP)--A concert for Prime Minister Sato of Japan and two engagements at Expo '70 near Osaka, Japan, highlight a three-week tour of the Orient by the chapel choir of First Baptist Church here.

The choir, made up of 175 teenagers, will tour Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore and Hawaii, appearing in churches, schools, concert halls, military installations and city halls during July and August.

TV and radio appearances are set for all stops on the itinerary. In Japan, the choir will tape a 30-minute concert for NHK television which will be beamed into 23 countries.

Crusade concerts and youth evangelistic services are scheduled for Tokyo, Hong Kong and Bangkok. The Dallas teenagers will hold joint gatherings with local young people.

W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church and immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, will preach at several of the evangelistic concerts.

Each choir member will be supplied with cards printed in four languages with his or her personal Christian testimony to present to young people they meet on the trip, according to Lee Roy Till, chapel choir director and minister of music at First Baptist Church.

-30-

#### Retired Baptist Leader, T. W. Medearis, Dies in California

PASADENA, Calif. (BP)--T. W. Medearis, 81, who held numerous Southern Baptist positions during more than 60 years as an ordained minister, died of a heart attack at his home here, July 8.

From 1942-54 he was general superintendent of the Missouri Baptist General Association, now the Missouri Baptist Convention.

Previously he had held pastorates in the Missouri towns of Lamar, Fayette, and Bolivar and in the Oklahoma towns of Bristow and Miami. He also headed the department of Bible of Southwest Baptist College, Bolivar, for a period and served as vice president of the Oklahoma Baptist Convention.

After retiring from the Missouri convention, Medearis became pastor of Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church and president of California Baptist College, both in Riverside, Calif.

-more-

The Missouri convention experienced significant growth during his tenure as chief executive officer.

The state Baptist offices were moved from Kansas City to Jefferson City in 1949 under his leadership and a new Missouri Baptist Building was erected.

During that period the Missouri Baptist Press was established, the convention assumed ownership of the Missouri state Baptist paper, the Missouri Baptist Foundation was organized and a number of student centers were constructed adjacent to state school campuses.

He is survived by his wife, the former Mara E. Miller of Sarcoxie, Mo., and three children, Mrs. August Boto of Dallas, Mrs. Robert Merryman of St. Louis and Miller Medearis of Pasadena. Mrs. Medearis lives at 409 N. Oakland in Pasadena.

-30-

Grass Named to Student  
Work Post in Atlanta

ATLANTA (BP)--Larry Robert Grass has been named the first full-time Baptist campus minister to students at Georgia State University here.

The North Carolina native was employed by the department of student work of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

-30-

Audiovisual Consultant  
Named by Broadman Films

NASHVILLE (BP)--J. S. Johnson, former superintendent of missions of two Baptist associations in Mississippi, has joined the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board as audiovisual production consultant for the Broadman Films department.

A native Tennessean, Johnson holds the bachelor of arts degree from Mississippi College, Clinton, and the bachelor of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He had served as superintendent of missions for the George County (Miss.) Baptist Association and the Jasper County (Miss.) Baptist Association. Earlier he served as pastor for churches in Alabama and Mississippi.

-30-



**BAPTIST PRESS**

460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

DAVIS C. WOOLLEY, HO  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
127 NINTH AVE. N.  
NASHVILLE, TENN. 37203

**RECEIVED**  
JUL 15 1970

HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SBC