



BAPTIST PRESS
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South Carolina Pastor Fired;
Race, Authority Reasons Cited

DUE WEST, S. C. (BP)--The pastor of Due West Baptist Church here was fired one week after the church's deacons dismissed services because a black student sought to attend, and the pastor held a service instead at a nearby college.

Depending upon whose opinion is sought, the reasons for the pastor's dismissal vary from his attitude on race relations to his attitude toward constituted church authority, according to a report in the South Carolina Baptist Courier.

Don Stevenson, pastor of the church since 1968, was dismissed by a vote of 47 to 36, effective immediately, with salary continuing through Nov. 25.

Ironically, during the same business conference in which the pastor was dismissed, the church voted to admit people to worship services and all church activities without regard to race.

Due West Baptist Church is located less than a block from Erskine College, a Reformed Presbyterian school with about 800 students.

Stevenson was fired one week after a tension-filled Sunday when deacons hastily cancelled the morning worship service because a black student from the school was present.

When the pastor made the announcement, at the deacons' request, that the service had been cancelled, he added that he would conduct a worship service "in a few minutes" on the steps of Belk Hall, the Erskine College administration building.

Stevenson then walked with the black student and about 15 other members, to the Belk Hall entrance for a brief service.

The black student was identified as Cornelia Wright, a sophomore from McCormick, S. C. She is a Methodist.

Earlier, in September, the church had authorized Stevenson to invite college students to a fellowship meal at the church. Because of a six-year policy excluding blacks from all church functions and services, Stevenson pointed out to the deacons that some black students were expected to attend the fellowship meal.

The deacons decided to let the church decide whether to allow blacks to attend the meal, and also whether to agree to a request from the college's Baptist Student Union, an integrated organization, that they be allowed to meet in a room at the church.

During the business session, the proposal concerning BSU meetings, which was amended to include opening the church fellowship (membership) to blacks, was defeated by a three to one margin. Another motion to include blacks in the invitation to the church supper planned for that night was also defeated.

Stevenson notified the black students that they could not attend the church supper, but invited them instead to a meal at his home. Eight black students and three white students accepted his invitation. About 40 were present at the church, where the pastor appeared briefly.

Action of the church was deplored in resolutions adopted by the faculty of Erskine College, the Student Christian Association, and the entire student body at chapel services.

In an interview with the Baptist Courier after the church had voted to fire the pastor, the chairman of deacons, Don Crum, said that racial attitudes were partly to blame, but that other factors were responsible also.

"The church has not been growing as it should or making significant accomplishments," Crum said. "For the past two years there has been a lack of harmony and cooperation between the pastor and much of the church membership."

Stevenson, who teaches two classes in religion at Erskine College, said he does not wish to go into teaching. "I prefer another pastorate, wherever I can be useful," he said.

Even though the church has voted to receive blacks in worship services and other church activities, Crum said that he had received no indication that any blacks planned to attend.

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Operation Talk Back
Gets 60,000 Responses

11/8/71

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 60,000 questionnaires have been returned from Operation Talk Back, an effort to determine readership opinion toward periodicals and publications of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board here.

This apparently is the heaviest response to any effort made by the board to determine the viewpoints and reactions of Southern Baptists, according to Martin Bradley, secretary of the research services department for the board.

Questionnaires were placed in the April-May-June 1971 issues of 78 periodicals produced by the Sunday School Board, Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union, agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention

The questionnaires dealt with the specific periodicals in which they appeared, plus general questions about various related programs and concepts.

Information from Operation Talk Back is now being tabulated and analyzed, Bradley said. Final results are tentatively scheduled to be released in January, 1972.

Information from the questionnaires will be used in decisions of the leadership of the agencies involved.

"When 60,000 persons give us the privilege of listening to their viewpoint, the least we can do is respond in every valid way possible," said Allen Comish, director of the Sunday School Board's Church Services and Materials Division.

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Pennsylvania-South Jersey
Baptists Hold First Meeting

PITTSBURG (BP)--Meeting for its first annual session as a new state convention, the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey adopted a 50-50 plan of work for 1972-73, setting goals to increase their mission efforts by 50 per cent.

Joseph M. Waltz, executive secretary of the convention, described the "50-50 plan" as a combination of three Southern Baptist Convention programs projected for the 1970's--Witness Involvement Now (WIN), Extend Now, and People to People.

Goals under the proposal for the new Pennsylvania-South Jersey Convention are (1) to increase the number of church-type missions, Sunday Schools and Bible classes by 50 per cent during 1972 and 1973; (2) to increase Sunday School enrollment by 50 per cent; (3) to train at least 50 per cent of church members in lay evangelism schools; and (4) to train at least 50 per cent of the church workers in worker improvement clinics.

Organized one year ago, the new convention currently is comprised of 88 churches and missions with 8,567 members. Twelve new churches, and 1,276 members were added during the year.

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In other actions, the convention adopted a budget of \$154,300, an increase of about \$14,600 over last year. Goal for contributions from the churches was set at \$105,000, with 21 per cent going to Southern Baptist Convention mission causes through the Cooperative Program.

Re-elected president of the convention was a layman, C. E. Price of McMurry, Pa., general manager of the Industry Services Division, Westinghouse Electric.

Next year the convention, which includes Southern Baptist churches in Pennsylvania and South of Trenton in New Jersey, will meet in Philadelphia, Nov. 3-4.

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I N S E R T

On the Baptist Press story mailed 11-5-71, headlined "Indiana Baptists Delete Limitation on Membership," please insert the following after graph one:

To become effective, the proposed constitutional changes must be approved by two-thirds vote of the 1972 convention which will meet Nov. 15-17, in Clarksville, Ind.

--Baptist Press