



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

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June 19, 1972

**Wood Sets New Goals for Baptist Joint Committee**

WASHINGTON (BP)--James E. Wood Jr., professor of history of religion at Baylor University, Waco, Tex., has been named executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs here.

In accepting the position, Wood, 49, pledged to develop a new image and a broader role for the Baptist agency in the nation's capital.

"While there are no doubt many who regard the role of the Joint Committee as a mere lobby for the protection of various Baptist interests and institutions, I sincerely hope that this image will be significantly changed in the years ahead," Wood wrote in his letter of acceptance.

The new executive explained his desire that the future of the Baptist Joint Committee "be understood in terms of a concrete commitment of Baptists to religious liberty and the role of the church in public affairs based on the sanctity of human rights in a free society.

"May no one fail to understand," Wood declared, "that our commitment is first to rights, not interests, and to persons, not to institutions, as applied to all men and not just a few."

Wood, who is chairman of Baylor's J. M. Dawson Studies in Church and State in addition to teaching history of religion at the Baptist school, will begin his new duties Sept. 1, according to Warren R. Magnuson, general secretary of the Baptist General Conference and chairman of the Baptist Joint Committee.

Wood succeeds C. Emanuel Carlson who retired in 1971 after 17 years as executive director. Carlson now lives in Dundee, Fla.

John W. Baker, director of research services for the Baptist Joint Committee, has served as acting executive director since Carlson's retirement.

Magnuson reported that Wood was elected "both unanimously and enthusiastically" at a special meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee during the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Philadelphia on June 7. Announcement of his election was made after Wood gave his formal acceptance.

"The Baptist Joint Committee feels," Magnuson said, "that the new executive director brings to this office the background of experience and breadth of understanding in the field of public affairs that will continue the significant and growing influence which the committee experienced under its past leadership."

The Baptist Joint Committee is a denominational agency maintained here by nine national Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada.

The committee is authorized by its sponsoring conventions "to act in the field of public affairs." This mandate covers the general area of church-state relations, religious freedom and separation of church and state.

Further, the Baptist Joint Committee is instructed to inform Baptists of governmental activity affecting "true relations between church and state and the right application of Christianity to the life of the nation."

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In announcing the new executive director, Magnuson said that the "representatives of the Baptist fellowships across the United States and Canada are deeply concerned and committed to the role of the Baptist Joint Committee . . . we look to it for guidance to both government and church agencies in their mutual relationships and responsibilities in ministering to the human needs of our society."

Since 1955, Wood has been on the faculty of Baylor University. The J. M. Dawson Studies in Church and State, which he heads, is named for the first executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee. Dawson served as head of the agency from 1946-1953.

Before going to the Baylor faculty, Wood served as professor of religion and literature at Seinan Gakuin University in Japan from 1951 to 1955. At Baylor he has been chairman of the faculty-student exchange program between Baylor University and Seinan Gakuin University.

Among other responsibilities, Wood was the first director of the Baylor University Honors Program for superior students, founder and sponsor of World Emphasis Week, president of the Baylor Chapter of the American Association of University Professors and chairman of the school's annual Conference on Church and State.

Wood has been editor of Journal of Church and State from its founding in 1959. Since 1965 he has served as chairman of the graduate degree program in church-state studies.

The new Baptist Joint Committee executive has lectured on more than a dozen college and seminary campuses on subjects relating to the history of religion and church and state.

A member of the Commission on Religious Liberty and Human Rights of the Baptist World Alliance, Wood has participated in many denominational and interfaith conferences on behalf of religious liberty. His interest in religious liberty has been expressed also through conferences of the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Evangelicals in Social Action Peace Witness seminar.

Wood is a sponsor of "Christians Concerned for Israel: People, Land, State," which in turn is sponsored by the Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council of Churches in collaboration with the secretariat for Catholic-Jewish relations.

Wood's concern for civil and religious liberties has been expressed through many organizations including the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom, the National Committee for Restoration of Blue Lake Lands to Taos Indians, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Texas Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

He has been a prolific contributor of articles to scholarly journals and denominational publications. He has been an author, contributor or editor of more than 10 books.

A native of Portsmouth, Va., Wood is a graduate of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn.; Columbia University, New York; and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville. He has earned master of arts, master and doctor of theology degrees, plus two bachelor's degrees. He has also done graduate study at Yale University and the Naganuma School of Japanese Studies in Tokyo.

The nine Baptist conventions sponsoring the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs are the American Baptist Convention, Baptist Federation of Canada, Baptist General Conference, National Baptist Convention of America, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., Progressive National Baptist Convention, North American Baptist General Conference, Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, and Southern Baptist Convention.

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BP PHOTO mailed to state Baptist editors

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James Merritt, Retired  
Georgia Executive, Dies

6/19/72

GAINESVILLE, GA. (BP)--James White Merritt, retired executive secretary-treasurer of the Georgia Baptist Convention, died (June 16) at a Gainesville hospital at the age of 85.

Merritt had been in critical condition for about two weeks following congestive heart failure. He suffered a first heart attack two years ago.

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Funeral services were held Sunday afternoon at First Baptist Church, Gainesville, where Merritt had been a member for more than 75 years.

Pastor D. Perry Ginn officiated, assisted by Searcy S. Garrison, Merritt's successor as executive secretary-treasurer of the convention.

Merritt had led the Georgia convention as executive secretary from 1930 to 1955 when he retired to live in Gainesville. He had been a banker in Gainesville before entering denominational work in 1920 as a field worker for the state Baptist Sunday School department.

He was later business manager for the Christian Index, the state Baptist paper for Georgia, for five years before becoming executive secretary in 1930.

When he accepted the position in 1930, the convention was \$500,000 in debt. He led the convention through the great depression, and when he retired in 1955, the convention was on solid financial footing.

During his administration, the convention started four state mission departments--evangelism, church music, Brotherhood and promotion. The Georgia Baptist Foundation was also created.

The current Baptist building in downtown Atlanta was purchased (in 1943) and Truett-McConnell Junior College at Cleveland was launched (in 1946).

He also pioneered in starting "regional conferences" for associational and local church workers, a forerunner of promotional meetings across the Southern Baptist Convention.

When Merritt passed the executive secretary's mantle on to Garrison in 1955, the convention elected Merritt as its president. He succeeded Garrison, then pastor of Bull Street Baptist Church, Savannah, Ga.

Well known nationally, Merritt was recording secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1954-65. He was also chairman of the SBC promotional committee, and president of the SBC Executive Secretary's organization.

Though not an ordained minister, he held several interim pastorates in the Gainesville area after he retired.

Mrs. Merritt, who is still recovering from a broken hip sustained last year, is the former Zillah Johnson, daughter of a Methodist minister.

Other survivors include one son, James W. Merritt Jr., of Miami; one daughter, Mrs. Ronald Rainwater, whose husband is a Methodist minister in Goldsboro, N.C.; and four grandchildren.

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Baptist College Completes  
\$3 Million City Bond Pact

6/19/72

DALLAS (BP)--Dallas Baptist College has completed an arrangement with the city of Dallas resulting in more than \$3 million for the school to consolidate pressing debts on a long-term, payout basis.

The college, in effect, sold its five student dorms to a newly-formed higher education authority under state law and will lease them back for 20 years.

The dorms will revert to the college at the end of that time after more than \$3 million in tax-free municipal bonds, issued by the corporation, mature.

The action was taken under the Texas Higher Education Authority Act with permission of the Dallas City Council and the Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The city formed the Dallas Higher Education Authority which, in turn, set up a Higher Education Facilities Corporation to issue the municipal bonds.

The bonds were bought by Henderson, Few & Co., an Atlanta-based underwriting firm, which presented a \$3 million-plus check to Dallas Baptist College. The Atlanta firm will sell the bonds.

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The college will continue to maintain the dorms and is liable for the payments, said Ralph Phelps, financial affairs vice president. The city has no financial obligation and no jurisdiction beyond appointment of the Higher Education Authority's Board of Directors.

The state law is being used for the second time in Texas. About a year ago, Howard Payne College, Brownwood, another Texas Baptist school, set up a similar \$1 million dorm lease-back arrangement with the Brownwood Higher Education Facilities Corporation.

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Mrs. George Martin, Former  
SBC WMU President, Dies

6/19/72

NORFOLK, Va. (BP)--Mrs. George R. Martin, former president of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and of the Women's Department of the Baptist World Alliance, died here June 15.

Mrs. Martin had been in declining health for more than a year and had recently suffered a heart attack.

Funeral services were held Saturday, June 17, at the Freemason Street Baptist Church, Norfolk, where Mrs. Martin was a member.

Services were conducted by William L. Lumpkin, pastor of the church, assisted by Miss Alma Hunt, executive secretary of SBC Woman's Missionary Union and by Miss Carrie Vaughan, executive secretary of Virginia WMU.

Mrs. Martin, 78, was a native of Hampton, Va. In her younger years she served on the board of managers of the Settlement House for Foreigners and for five years was superintendent of the Portsmouth Associational WMU.

She served as president of WMU of Virginia 1926-31 and 1934-46, a total of 17 years. She served from 1929 to 1933 as the first convention-wide WMU stewardship chairman.

Mrs. Martin was elected president of WMU, SBC, in 1945 by the WMU Executive Committee, acting in a year when war prevented a WMU annual meeting from being held. She was re-elected president annually until 1956.

During her tenure the number of WMU organizations grew from 41,227 to 79,101. Membership grew from 739,360 to 1,345,153. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions quadrupled and the Annie Armstrong Home Missions Offering more than doubled.

Mrs. Martin was instrumental in the development of a professional staff for the WMU headquarters and led in the purchase of the present WMU building in Birmingham, Ala.

In recognition of her leadership of WMU, the chapel at International Baptist Theological Seminary, Ruschlikon, Switzerland, was named in her honor in 1959.

After retirement from the WMU presidency she devoted full efforts to the Women's Department of the Baptist World Alliance.

She began BWA work in 1947 when she presided over a special meeting for women during the Baptist World Congress in Copenhagen. She was elected to the BWA Executive Committee in that year.

In 1948 Mrs. Martin participated in the organizational meeting of the European Baptist Women's Union and was appointed chairman of a reorganized BWA Women's Committee. During the Baptist World Congress in Cleveland in 1950 she led the structuring of the Women's Department and served as its head through the 1960 congress in Rio de Janeiro.

She traveled throughout the world helping to plant continental Baptist Women's Unions in North America, Latin America, Africa and Asia. She continued to serve on the BWA Executive Committee through 1965.

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SBC Home Mission Board  
Fills Missionary Slots

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board appointed eight career missionaries and promoted a missionary associate to full missionary status.

But the total of missionary personnel under appointment by the board remained at the figure of 2,220.

"For the most part, the appointments are filling vacancies from death or resignation," said Cecil Etheredge, secretary of the board's department of missionary personnel.

"The basic need is for financial resources for all those qualified to go. We can't get new positions into focus until funds become a reality," Etheredge observed.

"Our primary emphases will always be for people to minister to people, but we cannot send more people until we have the funds to budget," he said.

Three couples are among the new career missionaries; Charles and Glenda Tilton, appointed to Rochester, N.Y.; C. T. and Sylvia Cunningham, to Pratt, Kans.; and Roy and Faye Godwin to Philadelphia, Pa.

New appointees also include Nancy Mattox to Atlanta, and Maria Whittaker who will join her husband, language missionary Fermin Whittaker, in Pico Rivera, Calif.

James P. Pittman, director of the Fillmore Baptist Center in San Francisco, was promoted from missionary associate to career missionary. He will continue as director of the Fillmore Center.

Pittman, a Holmes County, Fla., native, is a graduate of Mississippi College, Clinton, Miss., and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif. He was appointed associate missionary by the board's department of Christian social ministries in 1969. Previously, he served as a US-2 missionary in Eugene, Ore. He also was pastor of Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Florala, Ala., and a public school teacher in Ponce de Leon, Fla.

Also a Christian social ministries appointee, Miss Mattox was assigned temporarily to the Clark-Howell-Techwood Baptist Center in Atlanta for training. Although a native of Atlanta, she grew up in Troy, N.C. She is a graduate of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. While in Seminary, she worked as a student social worker for the Kentucky Baptist Board of Child Care, Middletown, Ky.

Mrs. Whittaker will work with her husband, language missionary Fermin Augustin Whittaker, in Pico Rivera, Calif. The couple were married in July 1971. A Monterrey, Mexico, native, she and her husband serve in the Primera Iglesia Bautista del Sur in Pico Rivera.

Natives of Baileyboro, Tex., the Cunninghams were appointed by the department of church extension as pastoral missionaries to the First Southern Baptist Church in Pratt, Kan.

A former pastor of the First Baptist Church, Hart, Tex., he is a graduate of Wayland Baptist College, Plainview, Tex., and Golden Gate Seminary. Mrs. Cunningham is also a graduate of Wayland College and has studied further at Sacramento State College, Sacramento, Calif., and the UCLA Extension in San Diego, Calif.

An Elizabeth, La., native, Tilton is pastor-director of Rochester Baptist Church in Rochester, N.Y., under appointment of the church extension department. Former pastor of Gibsland, La., First Baptist Church, he is a graduate of Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, La., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth. A Grenada, Miss., native, Mrs. Tilton is a graduate of Mississippi College, Clinton, Miss., and attended Southwestern Seminary.

Godwin is serving as pastor-director of the Frankford Avenue Baptist Church in Philadelphia. A graduate of Stetson University, DeLand, Fla., he received the bachelor of divinity, masters and doctors degrees from Southern Seminary. A native of Pensacola, Fla., he is a former pastor of Harrods Creek Baptist Church, Crestwood, Ky., and former instructor at Stetson University. A Palmetto, Ga., native, Mrs. Godwin is a graduate of Truett-McConnell College, Cleveland, Ga.

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Kentucky Baptist Leader Dies  
At Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly

6/19/72

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--G. R. Pendergraph, church administration consultant for the Kentucky Baptist Convention, died here June 16 of a heart attack while in Ridgecrest to attend conferences at the Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly.

Funeral services were to be held Monday, June 19, at Crescent Hills Baptist Church, Louisville.

Pendergraph died at about 3:00 a.m., Friday. He was at Ridgecrest to attend sessions of the Bible Conference and Church Administration Conference.

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