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July 26, 1972

**Church Withdraws Ordination  
From Baptist Woman Minister**

COLUMBIA, S. C. (BP)--In the wake of news reports that she was three months pregnant at the time of her marriage, the Kathwood Baptist Church has withdrawn the ordination of Mrs. Shirley Carter Lee.

Mrs. Lee made national headlines last October when she became the second woman in Southern Baptist history to be ordained to the gospel ministry. Again in May, she made national news when she announced plans to marry W. Pringle Lee, a former Catholic priest.

A feature story in the Charlotte Observer, distributed nationally by the Associated Press, disclosed in mid-July that Mrs. Lee is expecting a child in November.

Within a week, Kathwood Baptist Church, which ordained Mrs. Lee to the ministry as a chaplain at the women's state prison here, voted to revoke her ordination.

Two days later, Mrs. Lee resigned her position as a chaplain at the Herbison Correctional Institute for Women here. She said she could no longer continue to function as a chaplain without ordination.

In a special called Sunday night business session following a lengthy deacons meeting, the church voted 56-39 to accept the request of Mrs. Lee to be relieved of her ordination. Mrs. Lee pointed out that she made the request at the suggestions of the deacons and the pastor.

In her letter, read to the church by her husband, Mrs. Lee stated that her request was also made "after prayerful consideration involving myself and my husband, and because I find I can no longer function in an atmosphere of censure and non-acceptance that does not involve concern for myself and my ministry to the inmates of the department of corrections."

C. Bernard Wingate, chairman of the deacons at the church, explained that the deacons had suggested that Mrs. Lee request that her ordination be withdrawn in the light of "conduct unbecoming that of a minister of the gospel," and in order to save her further embarrassment and criticism, and because of mutual concern for the ministry of the Kathwood Baptist Church.

Pastor of the church, P. Edward Rickenbaker, said that he did not know Mrs. Lee was pregnant at the time of the marriage, nor did he know about the views the couple held concerning pre-marital relations.

Rickenbaker said that the church had supported her in seeking ordination to the ministry, despite considerable controversy and publicity, but that her recent public statements and conduct were considered unbecoming to a minister of the gospel. "We have therefore reluctantly felt it necessary to reconsider the wisdom of her ordination and have accepted her request to be relieved of that ordination."

In an interview, Mrs. Lee said that the real issue was not their actions, but that three factors were involved: (1) that the church was not ready to accept her as one of the first ordained Baptist women ministers; (2) that she was married to an ex-Catholic priest, and (3) that the church could not accept "an act of responsible love by two people outside of wedlock."

"We felt that we had committed ourselves to one another completely, and that we were married in the sight of God," she said. "We could find no where in the Bible that marriage begins only with the wedding ceremony."

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She added that she and her husband did not feel they had done anything wrong in the sight of God, but only in the sight of society. "My personal loyalty is not to society, for it may be that something is wrong here with society's standards. I do not feel I have failed my God, myself or my husband," she said.

She called the action of the church "hasty" and "grossly unfair," saying that the church was enforcing a double standard for men and women ministers.

Mrs. Lee said she knew of several men who as Baptist pastors were caught in the act of adultery, but were only asked to leave the church. But when a woman minister commits a responsible act of love before the actual wedding ceremony, then her ordination is revoked, she argued. The reason is not the act, but that she is a woman, she concluded.

Rickenbaker said the church took the action reluctantly. Ordination is an endorsement that continues with every action of the minister, and though the church stood by her and supported her in her ordination and marriage and entire ministry, we cannot endorse this action.

One of the deacons said he did not want the action to reflect on women being ordained to the ministry, saying he favored that. Both Rickenbaker and the deacons agreed they would be willing to ordain another woman to the ministry.

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Wingate President Smith  
Injured in Car-Train Crash

7/26/72

WINGATE, N. C. (BP)--Budd E. Smith, president of Wingate College, was critically injured here when a freight train plowed into his car, tossing it 90 feet and throwing Smith an additional 25 feet.

Four days after the wreck, Smith was listed in "satisfactory" condition at Charlotte Memorial Hospital, Charlotte, N. C.

He was suffering from possible fractured ribs, numerous cuts and bruises, and multiple contusions.

Witnesses said signal lights were flashing at the railroad crossing on North Main Street here when Smith's car headed to the crossing at about 10 miles per hour. The Seaboard Coast Line freight train, traveling at about 45 miles per hour, sounded its whistle and tried to stop, but crashed into the car broadside.

Witnesses said Smith's air conditioner was still running after the crash. Railroad officials theorized he could not hear the train with the windows up and air conditioner on, and that he did not see the flashing signal lights.

Smith, knocked unconscious by the blow, was taken to the Charlotte hospital where his condition was first listed as "critical." Three days later, he regained semi-consciousness and was listed in "satisfactory" condition.

Smith had been working in his office at the Baptist junior college here until noon Saturday, and was on his way home when the accident occurred. His wife was in a Charlotte hospital at the time, undergoing surgery three days before Smith's accident.

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