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August 8, 1972

**Young Christians Jailed,
 Persecuted, For Beliefs**

By Mike Creswell

LEXINGTON, S. C. (BP)--Front page headlines in the Columbia, S. C. Record shocked thousands recently with the news: "Christians in Lexington Jailed for their Beliefs."

The story went on to describe a meeting of about 30 young Christians, members of Springdale Baptist Church in Springdale, who were holding a worship service in the nearby town of Lexington, S. C.

"Suddenly, they heard cars outside," the story continued. "They looked and saw a line of police cars with blue lights blazing on and off in the gathering darkness." Soon the porch was "filled with badges and uniforms and guns of law officers."

Lexington County Sheriff Carroll Day was quoted as telling the 30 Baptist youth: "Everybody stand up, line up and march out of here in single file. You are going to jail!"

"You were warned about such gatherings," the sheriff continued. "Don't ask questions. We're charging you with being Christians. I have a warrant from the governor for the arrest of every one of you."

The story added that the 30 youth were marched to waiting police cars, taken to the county jail, and locked up in the hot, close cells "with massive gray steel doors that smacked shut with clanging finality."

Two front page photographs accompanied the story.

This was indeed, what happened. Almost...

The surprised young people were tossed in jail, but it was not for real. It happened as part of the Vacation Bible School program for young people at Springdale Baptist Church.

All week, it had been an unusual Bible school. No Bibles had been brought, for they had been "burned." No hymnals were used; they had been "confiscated." All scripture and all songs came from memory.

It was an attempt to recreate an Underground Church--an illegal church in a society in which the law forbids Christians to worship as they please.

To get across the idea, the "persecuted" members of the Underground Church moved their meeting place each night.

Monday night, the young people met at the church for an orientation, but Tuesday night they gathered beside the grease pits of a West Columbia garage. Wednesday night, they sat huddled in a barn loft in Springdale.

On Thursday night, they met for a dramatic session in the garage of a Springdale home. Detective Bruce Hernigan of the West Columbia Police Department broke into the garage, and interrogated the youth to determine if there were enough evidence to "convict" them as Christians.

And on Friday night, the group was "arrested" by the sheriff as they met for worship in Springdale.

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"We were attempting to show our youth that worship is actually a privilege and that in our society we don't realize that," said Mrs. Doris Giles, chairman of the church's youth council.

"In our country we have so many problems getting people to worship it is not something that really challenges them," she added. "We want our young people to have an idea of how many people who don't have the privilege of worship really appreciate it."

"We also want to show some of the persecution that early Christians had to face, and some of the persecution present-day Christians behind the Iron Curtain may still have to face," she said. "We wanted them to study how they represent Christ, and how they can be better witnesses to the life and teachings of Christ."

Edwin R. Quattlebaum, pastor of the 450-member church, also praised the program, and said he definitely plans for similar programs in the future.

About two years ago, First Baptist Church of Pensacola, Fla., used a similar approach in their Vacation Bible School for teenagers. Later in the year, the church was named by Guidepost magazine as "Church of the Year" because of its outstanding ministry to youth.

The Vacation Bible School at Springdale Baptist Church was carried out in cooperation with law enforcement authorities. Unknown to the youth, their parents had signed consent forms for them to be "arrested."

The young people didn't stay long in jail that Friday night, only 15 minutes or so until their parents had been notified and could come and get them.

Some of the young people sang hymns as they waited in jail. Here and there, tears had sprouted on youthful faces behind bars for the first time.

When they walked to waiting parents outside, many looked back at the bars and bricks and walls of the jail.

And you could almost see them thinking...

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National Hospital Group
Picks Baptist as Chairman

8/8/72

NASHVILLE (BP)--Gene Kidd, president of the Baptist Hospital here, has been chosen as chairman-elect of the American College of Hospital Administrators.

He will become chairman of the 10,000 member nation wide professional society in August, 1973, and serve for one year in that capacity.

He was elected to the post by the organization's Council of Regents meeting in Chicago. Kidd has been a member of the organization's board of governors for several years, representing Tennessee and nine other southeastern states.

Another Baptist hospital administrator, Frank Groner of Memorial Baptist Hospital in Memphis, was president of the American College of Hospital Administrators from 1957-58.

Kidd, 51, became administrator of the Nashville Baptist Hospital, an institution of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, in 1954. In 1966, he was named executive director, and in 1970 he was elevated to president of the hospital. He is a native of Petersburg, Va.

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