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---FEATURES

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An Open Letter

Theology Graduate Asks: Can
Southern Baptists Use Women?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Linda Jordan of West Columbia, S. C., a recent theology graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, feels called to the ministry. But she says she has encountered "strong reaction" to her requests for ordination, and her attempts to find a place of service as a campus minister. In a spirit of seeking God's will within the Christian community, she writes this open letter to all Southern Baptists.

I have chosen to write this letter to you, my dear family in the faith, for two reasons. First, I am convinced that we as the Christian Church have too long neglected our letter writing. Perhaps this stems from our lack of understanding of what real community means. It is interesting to me that approximately two-thirds of the New Testament consists of letters.

Yet there is another reason. Letters are personal, and that is exactly what this letter is--personal. It is natural for me to want to write to you my many thoughts. You are my family--you have birthed and nourished me all the years of my life. You knew me before I knew you or could call you by name. It is you who have loved and encouraged me all these days, and it is to you I must bare my soul.

Read this letter as you would any letter from a member of your family. You may be proud; you may be regretful; but you have had a hand in the making of a person, and I am a young woman who is the product of your years of local ministry.

You are the intimate part of my first recollections outside of my immediate family. It was you who taught me that Jesus loves me. It was you who affirmed that there is no limit to God's working in a life. It was you who taught me that in Christ we are all of equal worth and significance. You never hollered the Pauline phrase to me then that women are to be quiet in church. You were much too busy proclaiming the Christian vision and the authentic witness of one's faith experience. Your invitation was always the same--"Whosoever will may come."

You encouraged me continually in my pilgrimage, always stressing that I open my life to total commitment--wherever that leads. Well, it led me to the seminary and into the field of theology.

Now I must ask you candidly: Do you really believe the gospel you preached to me? You speak of my desire for ordination to the ministry as if it were an unnatural step for me to take, and I have yet to find a church that will ordain me. You used to encourage me to be open to the Holy Spirit's working in my life. Now it seems that the Holy Spirit is wrong, or at least couldn't lead me into a pastoral situation. Have I read you wrong all these 26 years? Have you been playing some kind of game with me, your child? Are daughter's offerings not acceptable except where you deem them so? Are you saying my call just can't be valid?

You preached to me that I should never limit the Holy Spirit. Does that apply only to me and not to you? Are you facing me at the completion of my ministerial training, of which you have been the very corner stone, and telling me I wasn't suppose to take you seriously? Can it be that you are not ready to see the fruits of your labor?

Why are you suddenly afraid of me? Instead of launching into the pilgrimage with me, you launch an attack on me as if I were your enemy. Are you really interested in discovering God's good truth for us all or are you really concerned to defend your opinion?

Many of you mourn the fact that my generation has "left the church." Are we leaving because we didn't believe the gospel you preach or are we having to leave precisely because we do believe the gospel you preach. Further, are we being forced to leave because you won't give us a place to stand? Our seriousness seems to be a threat. You think we might "turn the world upside down."

If God can use a woman to minister to our children and our youth, to educate the family, to minister in music, can God not use a woman to speak his words of proclamation or to administer pastoral care? Are we doubting women, or God? If we're doubting women's abilities,

then we should promptly remove them all from all forms of functional ministry because they are surely shaping lives. If we are doubting God, then surely we should close down the church.

Where then can we stand? Shall we preach another gospel? For if we continue to proclaim the Good News of Christ, there will be other Lindas who will ask for a place to stand. Or shall we deal with our prejudices? Notice I said we because this surely includes me as well as you. I need you to help me grow as well as you need me to support the family.

Could it be that we fear the unknown? We build false cases and imagine extreme circumstances when we are afraid to take the risk of faith. I may fail you; you may fail me; but we'll never find out by looking at each other. We can only discover truth by looking together to our Brother, our Father, and our Guide.

Please look with me. You believed in me; now I believe in you, and so my letter comes to your door as my offering of love and faith and hope for your serious reflection, suggestions, and prayerful concern. Here I stand. What will you do with me?

My never-ending love,

Linda Jordan

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Old Timey Brush Arbor
Draws Fourth of County

8/16/72

By Robert O'Brien

FRANKLIN TEX. (BP)--The "old timey" brush arbor revival, a supposed relic of the rural past, is alive and well near here.

The brush arbor get-together ended a six day stand this summer about six miles west of the county seat of Robertson County in Southeast Texas.

It drew about one-fourth of the county's 14,389 residents into the Persimmon-brush-covered enclosure of freshly hewn oak poles.

Some local folks will vow that it brought drenching rain--unheard of this time of year--which skirted the actual arbor site but perked up cow pastures for miles around.

The arbor meeting, conceived by Bland Watson, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, Franklin, was sponsored by 15 Robertson County Baptist churches, ranging in size from 19 resident members to 577. James Hester of the Texas Baptist Evangelism Division assisted in coordination.

About 35 men worked three days to cut the poles, haul the brush and build the arbor for the Robertson County Encounter Crusade.

The results surprised even the most optimistic organizers. Total attendance reached 3,325 or 1,2/5 more than the total resident membership of the sponsoring churches and about 23 percent of the county's population.

And then there was that rain, which drenched the surrounding countryside but touched the arbor site only one night out of six.

"The black clouds parted like the Red Sea," marvels Bland. "We could see them headed toward us each night. But we prayed about it, and the clouds split and circled us--about a half mile away on all sides."

The sight from the past was too much for tourists headed down nearby U. S. Highway 79. Cars slowed to a crawl. Necks craned.. Some stopped to join the old timey services.

The 13-year-old daughter of travelers from California walked down the arbor's aisle to profess faith in Jesus Christ. So did two teenagers from Houston. So did the fellow who drove the tractor that hauled the Persimmon brush. Converts ranged in age from eight to 71.

The folks in Robertson County are still buzzing over that brush arbor meeting.

"Fact is," says Watson, "seven people, including Baptists and Church of Christ members, have offered us their pastures to use next July. They hope to get some rain out of it."

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**Storm-Damaged Private
Schools Get Federal Aid**

WASHINGTON (BP)--For the first time in the nation's history, private church-related schools will be eligible for federal grants to help restore facilities and equipment damaged in a national disaster.

At the urging of President Richard M. Nixon, Congress has amended an emergency relief bill to include aid for private institutions suffering great losses during the hurricane and tropical storm Agnes which devastated parts of several eastern states in June.

Originally 41 private schools--elementary, secondary and higher education institutions--in Pennsylvania and New York applied for help to repair damages estimated at \$19 million.

The Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) reports now that five additional schools have been added to this list, one in Virginia and four in West Virginia. Private schools damaged in the South Dakota floods are eligible, but none has asked for relief, according to federal agency.

President Nixon told Congress, in asking for the special provision to aid private schools that the need was "extreme and urgent." Many of these institutions, the President declared, have been damaged so extensively that they would be unable to rebuild facilities to reopen "without extraordinary assistance."

In asking Congress to approve the President's request, a conference committee from the Senate and House declared that certain facts "compel" enactment of the special measure.

The conferees cited three reasons for the special aid: (1) nonprofit private educational institutions are not provided disaster relief benefits comparable to those provided to public educational institutions; (2) nonprofit private educational institutions have a "secular educational mission"; and (3) students attending nonprofit private educational institutions that have been damaged or destroyed will have to be provided for in public institutions if the former institutions are not restored.

The new legislation prohibits the use of funds to pay any part of the cost of facilities or equipment used primarily for sectarian purposes. Also, no grants can be used to restore or rebuild facilities or equipment used primarily for worship or used in a department of religion or a divinity school.

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Baptist, Jewish, Catholic Men
Featured on TV Dialogue

8/16/72

ATLANTA (BP)--M. Thomas Starkes, secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of interfaith witness, will appear on a CBS television news special filmed for airing on Sunday, August 27, at 10:00 a.m. EST.

The program is entitled "Evangelism-One Way or Many?"

Starkes will be on a panel which also includes Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, inter-religious affairs director for the American Jewish Committee; Father Joseph Fitzpatrick, chairman of the department of sociology and anthropology at Fordham University, in New York City; and Elwyn Smith, editor of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies and professor of religion at Temple University in Philadelphia.

The 30 minute program revolves around three key questions: Does the Christian have the right and privilege of proselytizing Jews? What is the possibility of the future of proposed evangelistic thrusts in America including Explo 72 and Key 73? What theological strengths and weaknesses are in these?

According to Starkes, the program deals intelligently with the questions, as best as possible in the time allotted. Responses included such statements as "True evangelism always respects the human being rather than exploit or manipulate him," and "No single group ought to be singled out for evangelism."

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