

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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October 18, 1972

**Alabama Churches, Race Progress
Impress British Baptist Group**

LONDON (BP)--More than 150 Baptists from Great Britain returned here from an exchange visit with Baptists in Alabama (USA), saying they were impressed with many things with church life in Alabama, and with the progress made in the area of race relations.

Response of the British Baptist group was reported in a full-page article in the Baptist Times, publication of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, written by David Beer, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Gravesend, Kent.

The 162 British people, mostly from churches in the Midlands, were guests for two weeks this summer in the homes of members of First Baptist Church, Decatur, Ala., following a brief tour of New York City and Washington, D.C.

They were repaying a visit made two years ago to England by the youth choir of First Baptist Church, Decatur, when 164 members of the Alabama church visited for two weeks in the homes of about ten churches in the Coventry area.

Beer, then pastor of Meredith Road Baptist Church, Coventry, was a classmate of Wilson Henderson, minister of music for the Decatur church, at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville. W.K. Stephenson is pastor of the host church in Decatur. In addition to visiting New York City and Washington, D.C., the British group visited the Space Center in Huntsville, Ala., toured Opryland in Nashville, Tenn., and received red-carpet welcomes and personal visits with the mayors of Decatur and Birmingham. Five of the group also visited briefly with Alabama Gov. George Wallace at his hospital bedside, along with Mrs. Wallace and their daughter, Peggy.

The welcome they received in Alabama, complete with motorcycle escorts throughout Birmingham and Montgomery, was in stark contrast to the reception their motorcade received in the Harlem section of New York City.

"It was probably the first time that British Baptists had water bombs and flour bombs thrown at their coaches--but this happened as we toured through black sections of Harlem," the article reported.

Beer also indicated that the group was impressed with the progress Alabama has made in the area of race relations during the past 10 years.

Citing a report in the New York Times, the article noted that blacks are participating in city politics in Birmingham, that most of the city's political leaders are now considered racially progressive, that the city now has a black judge, and that the youth of Alabama are less concerned about racial differences than their elders and have elected a black student as student body president at University of Alabama.

The group from England included a black girl from Jamaica, Miss Norma Salmon, who spoke to the 1,000 member First Baptist Church of Decatur as well as two other congregations in the city.

"When I got to New York, my cousins tried to persuade me to stay with them," Miss Salmon was quoted as saying. "They asked, 'Why on earth would you want to go to Alabama?'"

"No matter what kind of history...every place has a history...we must look to the future," she continued. She commended the Alabama church for the exchange visits, saying she would speak well for Alabama and "do my best to tell people of this wonderful work you are doing."

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On the two Sunday mornings they were in Alabama, the British group divided into 10 teams to lead morning services in 10 churches in the Decatur area. They also gave testimonies and greetings and answered questions in Sunday School sessions in most of the churches.

A choir was organized from among the British group, and the services led by the British Baptists at the churches resulted in five of the young Englishmen committing their lives to Christ, along with several Americans, Beer reported.

In his article in the Baptist Times, Beer said the group was impressed with many things in Alabama church life--especially the music ministry with its involvement of all ages and aid in worship and evangelism, and well-equipped church buildings, the involvement of all ages in Sunday School and Bible study, nursery care, weekday activities, and fellowship meals.

"All this and much more is possible through the good giving of church members," Beer observed. "They preach and practice stewardship and tithing and many of the British group felt that our own churches could greatly increase their giving, and therefore make more effective the ministry of Baptist churches in Britain.

"The group was significant because it was made up, not only of ministers, but also of deacons, church members, Sunday School teachers and others who help to run our churches," Beer noted. "Here was a group of British people who had seen for themselves what can be done in modern church life with imaginative vision, hard work and dedication to Christ.

"We do not want carbon copies of American churches," Beer added, "but please let us use some ideas from another country which could easily be adapted and made to work in this country."

Both Beer and Stephenson said that similar exchange visits are planned for the future, with the possibility of a group from Decatur going to England in 1974, and another visit by the British Baptists to Alabama some other year.

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Committee Named to Study SBC Retirement Benefits

10/18/72

DALLAS (BP)--Ten persons have been named to a committee to recommend a way of increasing retirement benefits paid by the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board based here.

Donald E. Bowles, Dallas, chairman of Annuity Board trustees, said the committee appointments follow instructions given to the Annuity Board by the 1972 session of the convention.

John S. Rasco, Odessa, Tex., pastor, and another member of the Annuity Board's trustees, was named as chairman.

Harvey T. Whaley, a retired minister living in Charleston, S.C., who presented the motion that led to convention action, will also serve on the committee.

In line with Whaley's motion, the committee includes representatives of trustees of the Annuity Board, SBC Executive Committee, Baptist state conventions, annuitants drawing benefits from the board, and staff members of the Annuity Board.

Other members of the committee include: Ira D. Hudgins of Franklin, Va., and Rex Phillips of Spokane, Wash., (Annuity Board trustees); Norvell G. Jones of St. Louis and Steward B. Simms of Greer, S.C., (Executive Committee members); Ralph Bacon of Dallas (an annuitant); W. Douglas Hudgins of Jackson, Miss. (Mississippi Baptist Convention executive secretary); and Baynard F. Vox and Mrs. Bernelle Harrison of Dallas (Annuity Board staff).

Bowles said the committee will have a report for presentation to the 1973 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Portland, Ore.

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South Carolina Association Refuses to Re-admit Church

10/18/72

GREENWOOD, N.C. (BP)--Abbeville Baptist Association, which two year ago voted to withdraw fellowship from First Baptist Church of Greenwood because of its policies on Baptism.

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refused here to reinstate the church.

A motion at the annual association meeting here to "suspend all rules and reinstate First Baptist Church of Greenwood to full fellowship in the association" was defeated by a vote of 34 to 129.

In 1970, the association by a slim margin voted to exclude the church because the church accepts members by transfer of letter from churches of other denominations, even though they have not been baptized by immersion. The 1970 vote was 154-76, barely surpassing the necessary two-thirds margin.

Although the Greenwood church is not affiliated with the Abbeville Association, it continues to contribute through the Cooperative Program to state and SBC causes, and to send messengers to the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Last year, the state convention rejected a motion which would have denied seats to the Greenwood church's messengers, but the convention will face the matter again in November of this year.

A constitutional amendment, introduced last year to be voted on this year, would limit seating of messengers only to those churches which require "baptism by immersion of professed believers in Jesus Christ."

At the time the amendment was introduced, several Baptist observers noted that it was apparently aimed at barring the Greenwood church, and any others which do not require immersion of all members.

Policy of the Greenwood church requires immersion of all who seek membership on profession of faith. The church explains the Baptist view of baptism and recommends immersion of members coming from other denominations who have been baptized by some other method, but immersion is optional at the discretion of the new member.

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Albert Tibbs, Former Furman,
Seminary Professor, Dies

10/18/72

GREENVILLE, S.C. (BP)--Albert Elias Tibbs, 71, dean emeritus at Furman University here, died at his home here.

A former president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, Tibbs had taught at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Tulane University before joining the Furman faculty. He was a former president of the Southwestern Religious Education Association.

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Thompson Named Church
Study Course Coordinator

10/18/72

NASHVILLE (BP)--J. William Thompson, editor of "Adult Leadership" in the Sunday School department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, has been named church study course coordinator.

According to Charles Livingstone, church program organization group leader, Thompson will be responsible for coordinating course content and promotion plans for the church study course.

A native of Mississippi, Thompson is a graduate of Delta State College, Cleveland, Miss. He earned the doctor of philosophy degree from George Peabody College, Nashville, and also has done graduate study at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Harvard University.

Prior to joining the board in 1963, Thompson was a professor of music at Belmont College in Nashville for five years. Previously, he served on the School of Church Music faculty at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He also taught choral and instrumental music in public schools in Mississippi and Tennessee.

He has served as minister of music in two Tennessee churches: First Baptist, Clarksville; and Nashville's Dalewood Baptist Church.

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