



BAPTIST PRESS
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November 2, 1972

Madame Chiang Kai-Shek
Thanks Irwin for Witness

TAIPEI, Taiwan (BP)--Madame Chiang Kai-Shek thanked former astronaut James B. Irwin for his Christian Witness to the youth of her country when Irwin called on her at her residence here.

Irwin's wife and daughter were with him during the 25-minute visit with Madame Chiang, wife of Taiwan's President.

She told Irwin that in this age, with its many problems and much knowledge, it is very helpful to have a person who has achieved much in a scientific field to share his faith in God and in Jesus Christ.

Prior to the interview, Irwin had addressed thousands of students at several colleges and universities of this island nation, officially called the Republic of China.

His major public appearance was at the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall here, which was packed by 3,600 people who came to hear the lunar explorer testify of his faith in Christ and call his listeners to make their own Christian commitment.

More than 100 persons responded publicly to Irwin's invitation, reported Joseph B. Underwood, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff member traveling with him.

Underwood and Southern Baptist missionary Bynum Akins also were with Irwin when he was received by Madame Chiang.

Madame Chiang asked Irwin's wife, Mary, about her anxiety when her husband went to the moon on the Apollo 15 flight in July, 1971. Mrs. Irwin replied that she had "just turned it over to the Lord and had assurance that Jim was going to return."

Underwood reported that Madame Chiang responded: "Now that's wonderful. We were talking in our prayer meeting last week about burdens and worries, and someone observed that if we go to the Lord in prayer, (we can) lay our burdens at the foot of the cross and then pick them up again on our way out."

When Irwin and his daughter, Joy, admitted to some anxiety, Madame Chiang is reported to have said, "Now I like that. That's human."

Underwood personally thanked Madame Chiang "for her life as a Christian and offered the gratitude "of the Christians of America for her remarkable Christian Testimony."

She asked Underwood to tell American Christians of her appreciation for their prayers, adding "we have problems and difficulties so great that only God can solve them. Please keep praying for us."

Underwood said that the weekly prayer group to which Madame Chiang had referred was meeting as he, Irwin and the others were leaving.

From Taiwan, the Irwins and Underwood went to Hong Kong where they participated in "rallies" at Queens College and the Kowloon Baptist Church.

The contacts with heads of state and the public rallies "give such a boost to the morale of Baptists, and increase their vision concerning the potential, that these actions alone justify

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the trip," said Underwood in a memo to Baker J. Cauthen, executive secretary of the Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Underwood reported he also is having conferences concerning the World Mission of Reconciliation through Jesus Christ, a Baptist World Alliance project which he is coordinating. "We have been able to give a good emphasis to that in many of these mass meetings and on other occasions," he said.

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Black Congregation Claims Fastest Growth in Miami

11/2/72

MIAMI (BP)--The fastest growing church in the Miami Baptist Association is strictly in the minority.

It is the only black congregation among the 74 churches and 13 missions affiliated with the association.

Glendale Baptist Church in the Richmond Heights section of Miami reported a membership growth of more than 75 per cent during the past year.

The church recorded 154 baptisms and 67 additions by transfer from other congregations bringing total membership to 519.

In recognition of the leadership of the church's pastor, Joseph Coats, the association elected Coats as vice moderator. He is the first black ever to serve as an officer of the Miami Baptist Association. The church was admitted as a member three years ago.

Coats said that the church is bursting at the seams. The Sunday School is so crowded that two classes meet in the church bus, three meet in the yard and one convenes in the corridor of the Sunday School Building.

About 80 per cent of the members are under 40 years of age, and about 150 of the members are teenagers, Coats said. He observed that this is particularly encouraging since so many other churches are losing many young people, especially young men.

When asked the secret of his success, Coats replied: "Doing what the Lord tells you to do in the way he tells you to do it, and not worrying about the fruit."

There has been plenty of fruit in the church led by a pastor who worked for 16 years in the imported grocery business. Coats was president of a Bible class when he felt called to preach in 1964. Since then, he has been getting his theological training through seminary extension courses.

His enthusiasm has apparently rubbed off onto his congregation. They have set a goal of 1,000 members by January, 1973.

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