



BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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January 4, 1973

Church Uses Funeral For 14 to Show Faith

AUSTIN, Tex. (BP)--Woodlawn Baptist Church here practiced the faith it preaches as it conducted funeral services for victims of the tragic bus-truck collision which occurred during the Christmas holidays.

Fourteen of the dead lay in a single row of caskets at the front of Austin's Municipal auditorium for a simple, brief, but hope-filled Saturday afternoon service, led by the church's pastor, James Abington.

"Praise God" were the first words of the choir number at the funeral, attended by almost 5,000 persons, including former President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson.

"God is good, and heaven is richer," Abington said in his funeral message. "They (the victims) deserve royal dignity, but they prefer beautiful simplicity."

Most of the 19 who died in the collision, 500 miles from home, were young people 13 to 20 years of age.

But the dead numbered Beverly Hicks, 34, wife of the church's minister of education, as well as their daughter, Robin, 13. It included the driver of the bus, Jerry Estes, 41, and his wife.

The Estes formerly belonged to Woodlawn Church but had recently moved to San Antonio to work. They had promised to help drive and chaperon the more than 60 young people taking part in a four day ski-and-worship retreat near Santa Fe., N.M., during the holiday week between Christmas and New Year's Day.

They were buried at separate services in San Antonio. Three other victims were buried at separate services in Austin.

Outside the auditorium, flags flew at half-mast. A number of businesses in Austin closed for an hour in memory of the dead.

The hope that pervaded the Saturday afternoon funeral carried over into the Sunday morning worship service, according to Larry Jerden, assistant editor of the Baptist Standard, who attended the funeral and Sunday service.

The 500-seat auditorium filled quickly for the first of two morning preaching services held by the 2200-member congregation.

The auditorium showed evidence of "the contrasting signs of holiday and tragedy once again standing beside each other," Jerden reported. "Funeral flowers stood in front of Christmas candles and a globe from the Lottie Moon offering emphasis, while holiday poinsettias and funeral roses lined the platform."

The church bus parked near the auditorium reminded people again of the tragedy. It was carrying about half the group to the retreat and had passed safely over the bridge only seconds before the second, chartered bus collided with the truck.

The church bulletin announced cancellation of most church meetings during the first of the new year, although the midweek prayer service would be conducted.

It also reported a youth memorial fund had been established to aid those involved in the tragedy.

There were tears as a choir member sang Sunday morning, but they were "set against a smile of joy and hope," Jerden added. Abington preached on the reality of heaven.

In the morning's two services, 37 joined the church, including 17 by personal commitment of faith in Christ.

The 400 families of Woodlawn Church include blue-collar workers, young executives, and military personnel, the Dallas Morning News reported in a special feature by Marilyn Schwartz. Most know each other on a first-name basis and live within a five-mile radius of one another.

There were tragedies even within the tragedy.

Mrs. Betsy Pinkerton, an elderly woman, had five grandchildren in the wrecked bus. Three were killed, and one was injured.

Tom Sullivan suffered head injuries in the wreck and remains in critical condition in a hospital in Lubbock, Tex. His father, Maj. F.J. Sullivan, has been a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for five years.

The cattle truck jackknifed as it met the bus on a 20-foot wide bridge on U.S. 60 east of Fort Sumner, N.M. The bus plowed into the side of the truck. The truck apparently brushed a guard rail in the darkness as it attempted to give clearance to the bus, causing it to jackknife.

As the investigation of the accident continued, it appeared neither the bus driver, who died, nor the trucker, who survives, was guilty of a traffic infraction. The cause was being attributed to the narrow bridge, only one of tens of thousands of hazardous bridges that can be found throughout the United States.

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Ernest Standerfer Joins Stewardship Commission

1/4/73

Ernest D. Standerfer has joined the staff of the Stewardship Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention as the new Assistant Director of Stewardship Development effective Jan. 1, the commission announced.

Standerfer will serve as editor of stewardship materials. He will also serve as coordinator for the channeling of articles and curriculum in convention publications relating to Stewardship Commission assigned program emphases, said E. Stanley Williamson, director of stewardship development.

The addition of Standerfer to the Stewardship Commission staff will make it possible to more adequately meet the increasing requests from many states in the convention for assistance in their stewardship development programs, Williamson said.

Standerfer is a graduate of Southern Illinois University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Before joining the Stewardship Commission he served as pastor of the first Baptist Church of Carterville, Ill. He has also served on the board of directors of the Illinois Baptist State association and the state's constitutional committee.

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93rd Congress Faces
Hectic Two Years

WASHINGTON (BP)--The 93rd Congress of the United States could be a hectic and turbulent two years, if indications on the opening day, January 3, mean anything.

On the opening day alone in the House of Representatives more than 222 bills were tossed in the hopper by eager congressmen. In addition, there were 28 resolutions the first day.

The Senate did not receive proposed bills the opening day but reserved the second day for that offensive against national problems.

Among the church-state issues that will be on the agenda of the 93rd congress will be tax credits for aid to parochial schools, proposals for a public school prayer amendment to the U.S. Constitution and tax reform proposals affecting churches and their institutions.

Other church-related legislation will include national health services, pension plans and their protection, education, both elementary-secondary and higher, welfare reform, and the struggle for peace in the world.

As an indication of the extent of the concerns of the Congress, the 92nd Congress which ended last November had before it a total of 25,354 measures of various sorts.

Each congress is divided into two one-year sessions. When a Congress ends, all of the legislation before it automatically dies and must be reintroduced in the next Congress if further action is to be taken.

In the House of Representatives, when Republican leader Gerald Ford (R., Mich.) introduced Rep. Carl Albert (D., Okla.) as the new Speaker of the House, he said with tongue in cheek, "I would like to congratulate our distinguished speaker and to assure him that I will support him--one thousand per cent."

On the Senate side of the Congress, the following brief exchange between Democrat Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield (D., Mont.) and Republican Minority Leader, Hugh Scott (R. Pa.) took place on the opening day.

Mr. Scott. "I take it that no bills may be introduced today, but I would assume that tomorrow bills may be introduced and resolutions submitted, and that speeches will be made tomorrow for Senators to enjoy, but none today. Is that correct?"

Mr. Mansfield. "That is correct. The regular workaday day will begin tomorrow. Today is a day of swearing in and the usual resolutions which will be presented shortly; but beginning tomorrow, what the distinguished Republican leader has said is correct."

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