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May 14, 1973

**Missionaries Write Letter
To Israeli Prime Minister**

HAIFA, Israel (BP)--The Baptist Convention in Israel (organization of Southern Baptist missionaries) has responded to calls for antimissionary legislation in Israel with an open letter to the country's prime minister, Golda Meir.

The letter reinforces a joint statement made by Christian leaders in Israel in 1963 following similar disturbances regarding religion. It also responds to groups who have called for another such statement from the Christian community.

The 1963 joint statement opposes the use of unethical proselytizing practices such as exploiting "the economic situation of an Israeli citizen--his poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing or desire to emigrate--in order to induce conversion."

The latest letter to Mrs. Meir states that Southern Baptist missionaries are opposed to antimissionary legislation because "it would work neither to the best interests of the State of Israel, nor to the Christian minorities.

"Such legislation, however mild," it continues, "would provide those unsympathetic to the state with grist for their mills to grind out anti-semitic propaganda by their distorted use of such legislation."

The missionaries say that antimissionary legislation could be construed as a negation of the United Nations declaration of human rights which guarantees religious freedom to all faiths. Israel signed that document and also affirmed the freedom in its declaration of Independence.

The letter states further that the missionaries endorse the long-term commitment of Christians living in Israel who share their faith in day-by-day ministries among the Jewish people.

However, the missionaries say they are opposed to the practices of some who come to Israel for a short time and "in an offensive manner--oftentimes both degrading and insulting to the Jewish faith--attempt to press their religion in an argumentative manner on Jewish individuals."

Some observers have blamed such groups as "Jews for Jesus" for stirring this kind of sensitivity and spawning prevailing religious tensions.

In response to the activities of these groups, other radicals have perpetrated violence against Christian individuals and institutions.

None of the targets thus far have been Southern Baptist related. One missionary surmised that it draws bigger headlines to attack well-known institutions and individuals than to attempt to strike back at the smaller, less organized ones.

Southern Baptist missionaries in Israel, concludes the letter to Mrs. Meir, appreciate the right to express their faith freely and to maintain churches, schools, hospitals, book-shops, theological training centers and other Christian institutions and ministries without interference.

The missionaries adopted the letter as a group during their annual business meeting near here.

North Carolina Church
Ordains Woman Minister

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--Miss Sue Fitzgerald, director of Christian education at Mars Hill Baptist Church, Mars Hill, N.C., has been ordained to the gospel ministry, according to a report in the Biblical Recorder, Baptist state newspaper published here.

She is believed to be the first woman in North Carolina, and the sixth woman in the Southern Baptist Convention to be ordained to the ministry.

Miss Fitzgerald, a native of Gretna, Va., is a graduate of Meredith College and Andover Newton Theological Seminary. She was recently honored as "Citizen of the Year" in Mars Hill.

In an interpretative report published by the Biblical Recorder, Associate Editor Tody Druin predicted that since there are "many other highly qualified women on church staffs across the state, it is probably only a matter of time before others follow suit."

The article pointed out that there has been in recent months a trend in the SBC toward ordination of women to the ministry, and that the question has been gaining prominence in writing and discussion in religious circles.

Ordination of women as deacons has drawn headlines in many states in recent months, the article noted, but numerous North Carolina churches have women deacons, including one church, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, which has a woman chairman of deacons. A recent speech at a Baptist historical society meeting said women have been ordained as deacons since as early as 1770.

Druin quoted Sara Frances Anders, a Baptist woman on the faculty of Louisiana College who spoke at a recent Christian Life Commission seminar in Charlotte, as reporting that there are now some 7,000 women ministers in the United States, most of them Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists and other more liberal Protestant denominations.

"Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Southern Baptists may be the last to capitulate" to the trend of ordaining women to the ministry, Miss Anders said.

Miss Anders said she could not believe that men of her own faith were so insecure that they fear the loss of their own leadership positions if women are ordained or elected to significant places. But she noted that two churches in her college town had refused to discuss the matter in conference.

Most of the women ordained by other denominations serve in positions concerned with children, music, or in rundown parishes with meager salaries, or as missionaries, Miss Anders noted.

An editorial in Christianity Today pointed out that since the late 1800's, the majority of missionaries have been women, the Biblical Recorder report said. About 30 per cent of all missionaries are women, and almost all the men missionaries are married, the Christianity Today editorial said.

"Some denominations are beginning to recognize the inconsistency of allowing women to preach to foreign tribes while denying them the right to preach to peers," the editorial stated.

The prohibition of women as deacons or elders, the editorial contended, is usually based on the Apostle Paul's injunction that women be silent in the church.

"There are those, however, who feel that Paul's command related to a specific situation and does not wholly apply today; they point out that Philip's daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:9), as was Anna (Luke 2:36), and that these women could not have fulfilled their offices had they been silent in church," the Christianity Today editorial said. It closed with another quotation from Paul's letter to Galatians, "There is neither male nor female: for we are all one in Christ Jesus."

Wallace Denton, associate professor of family life at Purdue University and a Baptist deacon who responded to Miss Anders' paper at the Charlotte seminar, pointed out that many

women find refuge in women's missionary organizations where they can run their own show without men interfering when they are denied significant church-wide leadership positions.

But that may be changing, according to the North Carolina Baptist Woman's Missionary Union executive secretary, Sara Ann Hobbs, in a newsletter to all North Carolina Baptist pastors.

She pointed out that there are 450,000 to 500,000 women who are resident members of Baptist churches in North Carolina, and that the churches in the state have many more women members than men.

The answer to ordination in the church, then, seems to await only the will of the women, involved, Druin observed in the Biblical Recorder article. When they want it badly enough, they have the votes to get it in a Baptist democracy."

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Scholarship Fund Created For Conference Staffers

5/14/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--A new scholarship fund for summer staffers at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Centers has been created through a special gift from an anonymous donor.

The T.L. Holcomb Scholarship for summer staffers will be made annually, beginning this summer, to the staffer at each conference center, who in the opinion of a selection committee, makes the most significant contribution to the purposes and objectives of the center.

The fund, donated to the conference center division by a person wishing to remain anonymous, was placed with the Southern Baptist Foundation. Proceeds from this fund will provide a \$50 scholarship annually to a staffer from each conference center.

The scholarship was named in honor of the late T.L. Holcomb, who served as executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Sunday School Board from 1935-53. On the day following his retirement, he became executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Foundation, an agency of the SBC which receives and administers gifts, trusts and bequests benefiting Southern Baptist causes. Holcomb died Sept. 19, 1972, at the age of 89 in Dallas.

Bob M. Boyd, director of the Conference Center Division for the Baptist Sunday School Board here which operates the two conference centers, expressed hope that the scholarship "will motivate staffers to the highest quality of service, and assist a deserving student with education as well as perpetuate the memory of T.L. Holcomb.

"I am very excited over the new scholarship," Boyd said. "We have the finest young people in our denomination serving on our staffs. This will encourage other young people to serve with us, and give recognition to the fine work that is being done. I deeply appreciate the generosity of the anonymous donor."

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Nominations for SBC Annual Sermon Preacher Requested

5/14/73

ATLANTA (BP)--Nominations for persons to preach the annual convention sermon at the 1974 Southern Baptist Convention session in Dallas are being accepted by the SBC Committee on Order of Business, the committee's chairman said here.

Russell H. Dilday, chairman of the committee and pastor of Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church here, said the committee would give serious consideration to every name submitted before asking its recommendations to the convention in Portland, June 12-14.

Dilday asked that suggestions be sent to the committee in care of the chairman by writing to him at 2715 Peachtree Road N.E., Atlanta, Ga. 30305.

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