

December 28, 1973

Baptist Churches Begin
In the 'Craziest' Places

need returned

By Tim Nicholas
For Baptist Press

Southern Baptist home missionary LaVern Inzer got a surprise when he went to an abandoned mine site to pick up a supposed tool shed he planned to convert into a temporary sanctuary for the Reese-Antelope Valley Baptist Chapel.

On one door of the 12' x 12' frame building was a sign saying "Men," and on the other door was the word, "Women."

Inzer said he was "determined to have the wash house building, because we needed it for the Lord's work."

"We lifted it on the flatbed truck after knocking loose the fixtures and carried it 100 miles back to the valley."

The Reese-Antelope congregation had its record attendance of 44 one Sunday when they were still meeting in the wash house, Inzer recalled, "even though we have our own building now." There are only 15 families living in the valley, he added.

Before they obtained the wash house, the chapel members met in a line shack formerly used by cowboys for overnight stopovers during cattle drives. When the ranch was sold, the congregation had to find another meeting place. The wash house was a temporary answer, on another site. A mobile chapel later became their place of worship.

Seldom do Southern Baptist churches begin in their own well-furnished, steeped buildings. They need time to grow. New congregations often meet in homes, rented facilities, barns, club houses, hotels and buildings of other denominations.

Lakeview Baptist Church in Vermilion, Ohio, meets for worship in what once was a beef slaughterhouse. Refuting the argument that churches in temporary facilities portray a negative image to the community, the church was awarded a major building loan from a local firm and is nearing completion of their third unit on the same property.

"This church has been accepted by the community, or they wouldn't have gotten the loan," said F.J. Redford, head of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of church extension.

"Only on rare occasions will, or can, a church group buy its own property and build when they first get together," said Robert H. Kilgore, head of the Home Mission Board's church loans department. Otherwise, he said, the congregation would have to spend its time and money worrying about the building(s).

Gateway Baptist Church, in the Greater Pittsburgh (Pa.) Association, found a way to increase their mission outreach in the community without owning property.

The Baptists were renting facilities from a Seventh Day Adventist church and used the money that would have gone for building maintenance to create a neighborhood center and staff a Christian book store.

Otha Winningham, superintendent of missions for Keystone Baptist Association in Pennsylvania, said three churches in the association are using Seventh Day Adventist facilities, and the Baptist groups "are among the fastest growing churches in our association. The Adventist churches are attractive; their sanctuary structure is much like Baptist churches, and they have baptistries."

Candlestick Baptist Church, the only Southern Baptist congregation in Danbury, Conn., found a place to meet on Sundays--in a school building--after they ran out of educational space at the local Jewish synagogue.

Frederick W. "Bill" Kunst, the church's pastor and a Southern Baptist home missionary, said the church moved into the new facility the same week the school opened.

The church has a recreational program in the school cafeteria--a combination gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria--which is also used for fellowship suppers, Kunst said.

The Danbury church began in homes, outgrew them, moved to a Masonic Lodge, then to the synagogue and school. Now with an average attendance of 200 at worship services, the church has property and is planning to build, Kunst said. The church has 15 home Bible "fellowships," among other mission projects.

Southern Baptists have begun churches in some strange places. First Southern Baptist Church in Huntington Beach, Calif., met in a barn and then in a night club, before moving into their own facilities.

Calvary Baptist Church in Caribou, Maine, previously met in Odd Fellows and Knights of Columbus halls.

Another congregation, Eastern Heights Baptist Church in Jeffersonville, Ind., adapted a chickenhouse for their sanctuary. Parkside Providence (R.I.) Baptist Church met for years in a hotel.

Sharon Woods Baptist Church in Plattsburgh, N.Y., met in a theater, moved to an Air Force chapel, and are presently renting space in a Roman Catholic facility, operated by the Christian Brothers of Instruction.

Ernest A. Cruse, pastor of the Baptist group, said the Catholic brothers "even ran their buses for us during Vacation Bible School."

Many believe that having their own church building will result in higher attendance, Redford noted. "There's a logical time to build a building, but it doesn't come as soon as some would think," he added.

"We can document again and again where a church had 150 attending in a schoolhouse, and after they had built a church building, attendance fell to 100--or the building produced no growth at all," Redford said.

In contrast, the Home Mission Board sponsored a "home Bible fellowship" in Richville, N.Y., a town of 250 people where six of seven church buildings weren't even in use, he continued.

"In two months we had 42 people for baptism," Redford said. "We need to convince people they can do as well in someone else's building."

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BP PHOTO mailed to state Baptist paper editors.

East Germans Broadcast
Baptist-Produced Film

12/28/73

FORT WORTH (BP)--"Home," the award-winning ecology film produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, has been accepted for broadcasting in East Germany--the first time that a Radio-TV Commission produced film has ever been shown in an eastern bloc country.

The film won acclaim at the Leipzig Film Festival in East Germany and was seen there by representatives of East German Television.

"Home" was produced by John Stevens for distribution in the Radio-TV Commission's "Human Dimension" television series. It has won numerous awards in film festivals, including a first place in the American Film Festival in New York.

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"I think the Communists were interested in "Home" because they're just as concerned with ecology and the using up of the earth's resources as are the Americans," observed Truett Myers, director of the Commission's radio and television programming.

"The film has been shown in Europe," he continued. "It was seen in England on BBC in late 1972, was translated into Dutch and shown in Holland that same year, and has also been seen in West Germany."

In "Home," the ecological crisis is expressed through scenes of modern pollution presented in contrast with an Indian chief's heartfelt love for his natural environment. He reminds the viewer that "whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth."

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BWA Sunday

12/28/73

World Baptists Urged
to Special Prayer, Feb. 3

WASHINGTON, D. C. (BP)--Robert S. Denny, Baptist World Alliance general secretary, has called on Baptists around the world to "pray for fellow believers in difficult circumstances, during BWA Sunday, Feb. 3, 1974. Theme for this year's observance is "Reconciliation: God's Gift--Our Task."

Denny suggested that "sermons on that day should call attention to the oneness of our people in Jesus Christ." He said services may be more meaningful if persons of other nationalities were invited as special guests.

Twenty-eight million baptized believers in 95 Baptist conventions and unions in 75 countries cooperate in the work of the Alliance "to show the essential oneness of Baptist people in the Lord Jesus Christ," Denny said.

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Georgia Honors Former
Southern Baptist Pastor

12/28/73

ATLANTA (BP)--Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter honored a former Southern Baptist pastor recently by officially proclaiming Dr. DuPree Jordan Jr. Day throughout the state.

Gov. Carter, also a Southern Baptist, urged "all our citizens to join together in recognition of the contributions of Dr. Jordan to his fellow men and women, and wish him continued success."

Jordan has been active in business, educational, religious and civic activities in Georgia.

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'This Service Station
Open Every Sunday'

12/28/73

RICHLAND, Wash. (BP)--Richland Baptist Church here took note of the gasoline shortage and the Sunday closing of increasing numbers of service stations and came up with a unique reminder for passing motorists.

Cecil Sims, the pastor, posted a sign to remind residents that the church is open for Sunday business, according to an Associated Press report.

Sims' message to persons passing the church is simply--"This Service Station Open Every Sunday."

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Texas Pastor Preaches
While Church Burns

12/28/73

PAMPA, Tex. (BP)--Claude Cone, pastor of First Baptist Church here, preached as a pre-Christmas fire destroyed parts of his church's sanctuary and educational building on Sunday, Dec. 23, 1973.

The church is the twelfth Texas Baptist church to be damaged by fire in 1973.

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Cone stayed at the church from the time the fire was reported about 5 p.m. until time for the regular Sunday night broadcast over a local radio station.

"We have regular Sunday morning and night broadcasts from the sanctuary," he explained. Cone noted the sermon he had prepared for delivery was preached instead at the radio station studios, when the fire was at its worst.

"We felt it should be a great time to preach the Gospel. . .that maybe somebody would be listening who would really be touched by the Holy Spirit and go ahead and trust Christ," he explained.

"The sermon was from Hebrews 2. . .about Christ coming into the world to defeat Satan, destroy sin and deliver sinners--the meaning of Christmas. . .," Cone said.

The broadcast lasted only 45 minutes as compared to the regular hour-long service.

Despite the fire, the church program is going forward, he said. The following Wednesday night service brought out 300 participants.

"I know some of our greatest days are just ahead," the pastor said. The 1,300-member congregation is "ready to go. . .ready to do whatever is needed," he added.

"We don't plan to curtail any of our mission activity. We plan to increase our giving next year," the pastor added.

The church sponsors pioneer mission work in New York, North Dakota and Nebraska, as well as Southern Baptist Cooperative Program (unified budget) and state missions endeavor.

Cone estimated damage will exceed \$1 million, but said insurance will cover only \$500,000. The church recently re-evaluated its insurance program and decided to upgrade it to meet higher replacement costs when premiums are due in April.

"I guess that won't do any good now," Cone said.

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Mishap Claimed 19

12/28/73

Church United in Tragedy
Splits One Year Later

By Dan Martin

AUSTIN, Tex. (BP)--A year ago Dec. 26 tragedy struck Woodlawn Baptist Church here.

Nineteen of its members died when a church bus collided with a cattle truck on a narrow one-lane New Mexico bridge. Fifteen more were injured.

In the hour of tragedy, the church members clung together for support.

Now, a year later, the church has split.

James Abington was pastor of Woodlawn on that grim Tuesday. Now, he is pastor of Bannock Burn Baptist Church, the congregation which formed out of Woodlawn.

"It's hard to separate anything that has happened from the tragedy," he said. "This has had an effect on everything that has happened."

The breach in fellowship erupted into the open early in May when Abington resigned. The church rejected his resignation and asked him to reconsider.

"After praying, I determined in a few days the proper thing for me to do was step down," he explained. The difficulty, he said, was in regard to "leadership."

"I would hesitate to say the seed of the difficulty was the tragedy," he explained, "but I would say that under the influence of the tragedy many things were said and done which never would have been said or done in calmer situations."

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"I was just as shocked as I could be (over the split) but it looked like suddenly things mushroomed into a problem. . . more of a problem than could be dealt with," he added.

The pastor commented that Woodlawn had planned on beginning a second church in the rapidly expanding residential section.

"I think this (my resignation) precipitated a group of people who wanted to start a new church to go ahead. We have planned it. We had a location in mind and we were moving in that direction," he added.

Bannock Burn now has 550 members, most of whom came from Woodlawn, which had 1,900 resident members at the time of the split.

"We haven't counted noses to find out who came from Woodlawn," Abington said. "I feel there is a definite need for two churches. It is unfortunate it had to come about this way. It would have been much better if it had come about in a more gracious spirit.

"But I think the Lord is going to use both situations, now that it is done," he said. Abington noted that five of the families "immediately connected with those who died" joined the congregation while seven stayed in Woodlawn.

"I think the end result is there will be two real fine churches with good spirit. We have a good relation, a good spirit already. But it would have been better if. . .," he paused.

Woodlawn's new pastor--Jack Burton--was out of town for the holiday, but was quoted as saying the breakup was related to theological differences.

"I don't believe the bus accident was a contributing factor," he was quoted as saying.

The tragedy which struck Woodlawn Baptist Church a year ago Dec. 26 is still around in the life of those involved and in the life of the two churches.