

January 29, 1974

**Chaplain Loses Heart
To 'City of Glitter'**

By Larry Jerden

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptist minister Jim Reid loves every dancer, stagehand, dealer, bartender, prostitute, cocktail waitress, bellman, busboy, spotlight operator and maitre d' in this "city of glitter."

The people who work the Las Vegas "strip" are taken for granted by tourists, ignored by other residents, and are too often condemned by Christians, Reid asserts.

To Reid, a Southern Baptist home missionary, the people on the "strip" are his congregation.

If by congregation, "you mean a building," Reid said, "then we don't have a church. But if you mean a communion of believers, then we have one."

Most of Reid's congregation attend Sunday evening services at a hotel, and some attend Bible classes during the week.

Reid was a pastor in Henderson, Nev., about 14 miles from Las Vegas, when he "felt the Lord's call" to the strip. It was one of those calls that men often try to rationalize away, or set limitations and conditions upon, but it would not go away, he said.

Reid said he realized thousands of people worked long, odd hours on the glittering strip and that no one cared enough to minister to them in Jesus' name.

Convinced that Jesus would minister to these people if He were here, Reid resigned his church and walked onto the strip.

Reid said he had no "special gift" for entry to the backstage world of the strip. He just dressed a little flamboyantly (for attention), wore a name tag (for identification), and began by introducing himself: "Hi, I'm Jim Reid, your friendly strip chaplain."

Four years later, "the chaplain," 44, balding and the father of six, is at home on the strip where almost everyone knows him by name. His ministry there includes five prayer therapy groups, three Bible study groups, two worship services, a television show, and a newspaper column.

Reid said that for ministry in Las Vegas, he had to have three things "nailed down" or he would not be effective.

"First, I know who I am. Second, I know who God is. Third, I have a secure relationship with my wife. Nothing anyone can do or say can challenge me on these three points," he explained.

A visit to one of the chaplain's prayer groups, held in a home, is refreshing and exhilarating. Some 20 people attend--including the man from the atomic testing grounds, the stage hand, the visiting pastor, the dancers, the shopkeeper.

A visitor quickly senses that their often newly-found faith in Jesus Christ is the most important thing in their lives. They shake hands and embrace when meeting. There are songs, hand-clapping and joy. The Bible is opened and studied eagerly.

Reid pulls no punches, hitting the difficult-to-interpret scriptures along with the easy ones. He encourages questions. After the Bible study comes prayer.

The "strip chaplain" is often challenged about the Las Vegas lifestyle--the "sinfulness" of the city.

One evening a young Mormon man, noticing the cross hanging from Reid's neck and his name tag, challenged Reid.

"You're a minister," he said. "What do you say to these people about all this nudity and gambling?"

"My job is to tell them about Jesus," Reid replied quietly. "The Holy Spirit will convict them of what kind of life they should lead. That's His job. I'm not the Holy Spirit. My job is to proclaim the gospel."

The Las Vegas lifestyle and the escapist mood of the thousands who flock there influences Reid's approach. "The people on the strip don't care about heaven or hell," he said. "They care about life right now. So I tell them of the peace there is in this life, 'right now,' in Jesus."

Reid's most rewarding work is one-to-one counseling. He has an office near the strip and another in his back yard in Henderson, but much of the counseling is done "on location," in a dressing room or hallway.

He deals with marriage problems among show people and would-be suicides in a city with a suicide rate seven times the national average. Reid is known as a person who cares. Among show people "sincere caring" is very important, he noted.

The "strip chaplain" said he feels strongly about the dangers of overextending himself. "There are about 50,000 people on the strip on a given night," he explained. "There are so many subcultures--the dealers, the gays, the cocktail waitresses. I try to hit 'em all..."

One of Reid's yet unrealized dreams is a gospel night club that would serve coffee, tea and soft drinks. "I know some professional entertainers who would entertain for us, and we could use volunteer Christian waiters and waitresses," he said.

"There would be no charge for anything, and our waiters would be trained in counseling. I am convinced we would win more people by accident there than with many 'planned' efforts."

Reid said the club would be geared to visitors, but he feels it would also aid his ministry to strip employees.

His ministry already includes a newspaper column read weekly by thousands of visitors and a television show he didn't even request. He mentioned his need for one to a stagehand one night, and three days later a station offered him a show.

Walk "behind the scenes" with Reid for a night or two and you realize that almost everyone in Las Vegas knows "the chaplain."

Many visitors will remember the "city of glitter" more for its lavish stage productions, gambling casinos, big-name entertainment and dancers.

But the few who look behind the scenes will discover a group of radiant Christians who "praise the Lord" for sending them their own "friendly strip chaplain."

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BP PHOTO mailed to state Baptist paper editors.

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CORRECTION

In the last graph, line 1 of Baptist Press feature mailed Jan. 24, 1974, headlined, "'Meals on Wheels' Feed Hungry in Winston-Salem," change the line to read North Carolina-- (instead of South Carolina). Thanks. --Baptist Press



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Woman Ordained, Approved For Chaplaincy Training

FORT WORTH (BP)--Jeanette Zachry is not the first Southern Baptist woman to be ordained to the ministry, but her ordination by Broadway Baptist Church here has given her claim to several "firsts."

Miss Zachry, 24, has received approval from the denomination through the Chaplains Commission at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and from the U.S. Air Force to train as a chaplain. Although she is the ninth woman in the Southern Baptist Convention to be ordained, she is the first to be approved for chaplaincy training and expects endorsement after she graduates from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1976.

She is the first woman student at Southwestern Seminary, the world's largest accredited seminary, to receive ordination, a spokesman said, and is believed to be the first woman to be ordained by a church affiliated with the two-million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Miss Zachry, a graduate of Louisiana College in Pineville, has worked in the New Orleans Sellers Baptist Home and Adoption Center, conducted a resort ministry in Wyoming and served as a youth director in a church in Minden, La. She presently serves as a housemother and chaplain to youngsters, aged 6-18, at the Lena Pope Home, Fort Worth.

The Air Force swore in its first woman chaplain of any denomination last September--First Lt. Lorraine Kay Potter, an American Baptist. Her mother, Mrs. Frances M. Fallon, is also an ordained Baptist minister.

Lillian Wells Galphin of Vance, S. C., ordained shortly before Miss Zachry, by Corinth Baptist Church in Vance, is believed to be the eighth woman ordained by an SBC-affiliated church. She is a graduate of Winthrop College, Rock Hill, S. C., and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N. C.

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Thousands Make Decisions During Nigerian Crusades

1/29/74

OGBOMOSHO, Nigeria (BP)--A U.S. layman prayed, "Thank you, God, for showing me that the soul of a black man in the bush is just as valuable as mine."

A 19-year-old high school student witnessed to two friends immediately after his own conversion. Both of them accepted Christ.

An 80-year-old man, clothed only in a loin cloth, accepted Christ after hearing the testimony of a layman and missionary, although people had said, "Everyone in the village might one day become a Christian except that old man."

Vignettes such as these have highlighted reports by Nigerian Baptists during evangelistic campaigns currently in progress.

In preparation for the 1973-74 crusade, the country was divided into 17 regions and in each a special evangelistic series was planned. One week was dedicated to the training of church members in personal witnessing. The second week involved a central crusade, such as the one in Ogbomosho, which drew 8 to 12 thousand people for six successive nights and resulted in more than 1,800 decisions for Christ. The third week involved simultaneous campaigns in all of the churches of the district or region.

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Despite a power failure on the first night of the Ogbomosho crusade, over 10,000 people listened to a sermon by Joseph B. Underwood, consultant in evangelism and church development for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, and a performance by Metropolitan Opera vocalist Irene Jordan, who sang spirituals and hymns and gave her testimony. Several hundred made professions of faith.

A visit during the week by three Americans to five different schools in the area resulted in 170 decisions. The Americans were Underwood; Weldon Marcum, pastor of First Baptist Church, Miami, Okla.; and J. C. Bunn, pastor of Sequoyah Hills Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla.

During the central evangelistic campaign, the king of the district in and around Ogbomosho invited the U.S. visitors and Nigerian Baptist leaders to visit his palace. Nigerian leaders presented Bibles to the king and his chiefs, and the king thanked the Baptists for the hospital, the Baptist theological seminary and the missionaries.

"We so much appreciate your missionaries," he said. "It is our hope that they will never leave Nigeria--not even for a moment."

Even though Ilorin, Nigeria, is a Muslim center, more than 1,000 decisions were recorded during the evangelistic campaign there which attracted more than 4,000 people. Robert L. Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pompano Beach, Fla., and Bob Rosser, minister of music of the First Baptist Church of Ozark, Ala., assisted a Nigerian evangelist in the campaign.

One evening, more than 400 Muslims stood on the fringes of the crowd and took notes on the sermon. Results included 470 first-time professions of faith, including 28 by Muslims. Two hundred eighty-three people came for rededication.

An earlier crusade in Ibadan reported over 3,000 decisions to follow Christ.

Final plans are underway for six more regional campaigns in Nigeria during 1974, involving between 25 and 30 pastors, laymen and musicians from the United States and hundreds of Nigerian workers.