

April 17, 1974

**Brooklyn Church Faces
Community's Problems**

By Tim Nicholas

BROOKLYN, N.Y. (BP)--If a tenant in a certain apartment building in Brooklyn, New York, has a complaint about the noise downstairs on Sunday mornings, the landlord will probably encourage him to take part in the action.

The landlord is Atonement Baptist Church and the "action" is worship--preaching and singing--conducted there every Sunday morning.

Atonement Baptist Church occupies the lower floor of the apartment building. It is the landlord for 37 tenants who live in the red brick structure in a West Indian section of the city.

The church is the embodiment of pastor Rodolph Morgan's concept of ministry. "I felt we must approach ministry from the standpoint of the needs of the people," says the 37-year-old former Southern Baptist missionary to Panama.

"To be effective in the inner city we must create a situation that faces community problems such as housing and unemployment," he says.

Morgan believes that Atonement Church may hold a key to inner city churches becoming self-sustaining. "The old custom of acquiring a church-type building strangles the people. Their time and money is spent struggling with the mortgage.

"This building helps people get a place to live while the rent helps pay the utilities and mortgage," says Morgan. "The rent money stays in the community."

Morgan was interviewed a few weeks before Atonement Church would be forced to leave rented facilities. Amid the rubble of what had been seven small stores was the future sanctuary on the ground floor of the church's new home. Morgan, with mortar drying on his hands, sat in the dust in his work clothes to propound his philosophy of practicality.

"For black people to have an effective ministry as a group, they must have their own economics and self-control," he said.

"Because if someone else pays the pastor's salary and the church debt is paid from outside, the benefactors may have a different system of priorities."

Morgan is gaining personal identity with the community. In the few months that Atonement has managed the property, he has moved the 37 apartments into full occupancy and placed 17 families there.

Only a few are church members, but the others "know where the help came from," Morgan said.

"Our church community is becoming more stable as time passes. Last year seven families bought homes in the neighborhood."

Atonement church began as a Bible study in Morgan's home in Brooklyn four years ago and grew into an active membership of about 100 persons who needed permanent facilities. They had been meeting in a rented dance hall before moving to the apartment building.

"Now if we need the use of a kitchen, one of our members lives upstairs and has opened her apartment for our use," said Morgan. "If our Sunday School overflows, we have several members upstairs in whose apartments we can meet."

Morgan worked from scratch tearing out walls and refurbishing the ground into a church facility.

"I had never even seen a blueprint before," he said, "but I've made myself learn."

Fortunately, Morgan had some previous experience in business management. After his missionary experience in Panama, he worked as assistant manager for business services for the National Council of Churches and was business manager for the American Bible Society.

As rent collector, Morgan is only a box number. "That makes me personally seem less alien," he said. When one family of eight was crowded into a single apartment, Morgan himself knocked a door between two apartments and gave the family a double space.

For now the money for the operation comes from several sources. Morgan's salary is paid in part by the church, the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association, and by a Baptist Home Mission Board subsidy.

Morgan is secretary of the organization that pulled together the initial monies for the building. Total Operations for Neighborhood Environment, Inc., (TONE) is an activist group of Baptists who want to solve some of the problems of the inner city housing.

Atonement is the second try for TONE. The first building bought by TONE is now in the hands of another group of Christians better able to handle financial operations of a large (53 units) apartment building, and well-versed in dealing with government agencies.

But the money for Atonement's building didn't come totally from TONE. It came from such churches as Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, Tex., and from interested persons such as R. Cal Guy, professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary at Fort Worth, Tex. Guy always manages to call him on the phone with good news every time Morgan is ready to give up, the Brooklyn minister said.

Finances have been tight. "In the past two years we haven't given a cent to missions--because we haven't had anything to give. Once we get settled in the building, we'll be able to give as our people would like to give," said Morgan.

He believes that after initial investments are paid off, an inner-city church should have the opportunity to become self-sustaining, but said that in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), "there's a reluctance to take new mission ideas seriously.

"I want to hear somebody in the SBC say "We're serious about getting inner-city churches to be self-supporting."

At the present a French-speaking Haitian congregation is having simultaneous services along with the English-speaking congregation of mostly West Indians of Atonement Church.

"I usually bring the message and the French pastor interprets," Morgan said, but he expects the group of about 300 Haitians will have to move to another time period or another building because "it's inconvenient for both congregations.

"One week the Holy Spirit was really in charge, but because of the translation, I had to slow down and stretch my vocabulary," Morgan lamented.

For the near future Morgan envisions a form of day-care for children of working parents. "We must have a service-type of relationship with the community because we are a part of that community," he said.

"Here we have a chance to pull the community together and for the entire church to participate in the evangelism process--this is the essence of the community church."

Motorcycling 'Sheep'
Have Lord as Shepherd

By Larry Jerden
for Baptist Press

Motorcycle Speed Week, which attracts some 200,000 motorcycle enthusiasts to Daytona Beach, Fla., each March, has become "the" place for bikers from across the country to gather.

Cycles, in all their myriad brands and states of customization, literally flood the streets of the Florida resort town, from the middle-aged motorcycle clubs, with slightly-overweight husbands on BMWs and Harleys and their wives in side-cars or on the back; to the "outlaw" clubs with leather jackets, cut-off jean jackets, Nazi emblems, and a look of contempt for the world.

Racing at the Daytona 200 is the official "raison d'etre" for the week, but many bikers simply to experience one week in the year when motorcycles outnumber cars in a given location.

Into this world of people and machines, of "long-hairs" and balding heads, a different motorcycle club appeared this year. They appear to be a cross between the "long-hairs" and the "straight" clubs, and they are, as would be expected, committed cycle enthusiasts. As many do not expect, they are also committed Christians.

Their club name is "The Sheep," because "the" Lord is our Shepherd." They came to Daytona, not because of their love of motorcycles, but because of their love for people. As one of them said as he looked at the thousands at the Daytona Speedway on race day, "Man, you looking for a mission field? Look around you!"

The Sheep's response to the field around them was to witness of Jesus Christ to their fellow motorcycle enthusiasts when they could, and distribute evangelistic literature when they couldn't find the opportunity to verbally tell about Jesus.

Any passer-by could see from their emblems and decorated fuel tanks that their "bag" was Jesus.

Bill Beaver, the 29-year-old leader of The Sheep, explained the club's aims.

"We are a new club," he said, "just organized since December. Daytona was our first real organized effort at witnessing through bikes, but we feel that the rapport we have with other bikers will let us develop further similar efforts."

Beaver became a Christian in 1964 through the sports program of First Baptist Church, Pompano Beach, Fla. He is employed in landscape design. The only evidences of his earlier life of "grass" and "booze" are his long hair, beard, and 750 Honda. He uses all three in Christian witness.

"I've kept my long hair and beard because I can get in with the dopers," he said. They'll rap with me, and there have been some conversions. And of course, the club is just one way we use our bikes for witness."

Beaver said the idea for the Christian motorcycle club came when he saw a need. "I saw plenty of people on bikes on Sunday," he said, "and I realized that was their life. So I just started using my bike in individual witnessing.

"We started going visiting on our bikes, and going to church on our bikes, and people would see them. We'd start rapping about bikes and end up rapping about Jesus."

It seemed only natural for some of the "cycle" riders to form a club. The Sheep started meeting once a month, but found that wasn't enough and went to twice a month. They now meet every Saturday night.

Meetings consist of a lot of "food, fun, and fellowship," but the purpose is serious--how to better use their interest in motorcycles to "serve Jesus Christ."

"We have two aims as a club," Beaver said. "One is to spread Jesus, the other is to be public servants. We have found a real need in the second area around here and feel Christians have a responsibility to meet it."

He explained, "people just don't seem to help other people in need," particularly on the road. So the club intends to take a first aid course and establish contacts with the police to be of assistance at accident scenes.

On numerous occasions, club members have stopped to help others with car or cycle trouble, invariably with a witness opportunity presenting itself before the contact was lost.

The club members pay dues but operate on faith. Their attempt at Daytona to evangelize a race crowd is just one example of it. Another came on the trip back from the race weekend.

One club member's bike, a BMW, developed engine trouble on the way home. The girls started praying, "Lord, please send someone who can fix a BMW."

It may have seemed lonely on the highway that night with a malfunctioning motorcycle, and it seemed like little reward for a day of passing out Christian tracts to Hell's Angels members. But to say the prayer was "just answered" borders on gross understatement.

As The Sheep waited and prayed beside the broken BMW, someone stopped in the night and asked if they could be of assistance.

The offer came from the BMW Racing Team. (BP)

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state paper editors

Adapted from May, 1974 issue of World Mission Journal

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