



-- FEATURES
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75-12

Right Next Door to the
 'Old Time Religion'

By Tim Nicholas

TOPEKA, Kans. (BP)--They have the "Old Time Religion" right next door to Pine Ridge Baptist Center here.

A church carrying the name, "The Old Time Religion" right beside the center is a Pentecostal group, but the Baptists have their own Jesus-centered religion.

"We used to compete for attention Sunday mornings," says Pine Ridge Center's pastor-director Gene Krieger.

"Our congregation would listen to them singing until we got an air conditioner installed this past summer."

Pine Ridge Center is located in the middle of a low-income housing project on the extreme eastern side of Topeka and is new to social ministry, which "doesn't imply social gospel," says Krieger, a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board missionary. "Christianity is social because it involves men."

Before Krieger came in February, 1973 ("Valentine's Day, but I'm not sure what kind of Valentine they got."), the center was a language ministry and mission.

Most of the Spanish-speaking people living there moved out, however, with the slowdown of the Santa Fe Railroad. And Charles Rankin, the previous director, died.

A review of the work resulted in the Home Mission Board and Kaw Valley Baptist Association (Topeka) switching the center to Christian social ministries activities.

Pine Ridge is a church-center of extremes. The average member is in his or her mid-sixties. "We have a strong children's and senior citizens' program," says Krieger, "but not much in between."

The senior citizens group is active. Tuesday nights, they work in ceramics, and Wednesday mornings are spent in other crafts. And the church's Baptist Women visit a local senior citizens home each week with cassette tapes of the previous Sunday services. Every fourth Sunday, Krieger leads a worship service at the home.

Krieger rotates with the local ministerial association in the senior citizens home. He also volunteers a day each month along with 22 other ministers in Topeka to work as a police chaplain.

The Topeka police department provides a special squad car for the chaplain volunteers. As "C-1," Krieger is on 24-hour call to any emergency that might require a chaplain, such as suicide attempts, family quarrels, giving death notices to family members.

The minister's first experience as a chaplain was in New Orleans as a volunteer chaplain with the fire department. At the time, he was assistant director of the Baptist Rescue Mission and a master of theology student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He sat under a truck during most of a sniping episode at a downtown New Orleans motel, where several firemen and policemen were killed along with a sniper.

Once in Topeka, Krieger in "C-1" drove along with another squad car to a home where a loud argument was in full swing.

"I even learned some words I'd never heard," says Krieger. "A woman came out of the house and asked me if I was a plain-clothes cop. I told her who I was."

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DARREN-CARVER LISKART
 S. B. C. HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

"A chaplain," she exclaimed, and yelled back into the house. "You guys shut up, we got a preacher here." The door was opened to Krieger to talk with the family.

Pine Ridge Center's church sponsors change from year-to year but have no financial obligations. "We do hope the churches will take an active part, especially during their sponsoring year," says Krieger. He uses Sunday evenings to visit other churches enlisting support for the center.

"Without volunteers, we couldn't have a program here at Pine Ridge," the missionary says.

Among volunteers are Linda Lawrence, a member of First Southern Baptist Church in Topeka, who leads the senior citizens in crafts classes, including quilling, a paper craft.

Joe DeMotte, 73, "and just about the only active male adult member here," is in charge of the ceramics shack and does much of the grounds work at the center.

Mrs. Delores Collins arranges most of the clothing for the large clothing room the center opens to the community. And Jo Ann Westlund travels 30 miles several days each week to work with the seniors and do correspondence for the center.

Krieger's wife, Karion, a registered nurse, volunteered to teach a beginning sewing class which was shunned by the community at first.

"They wanted to test us to see if we were really going to stay," says Krieger. In the first class a few months ago, 12 community residents showed up to learn how to make T-shirts.

"People around here are a bit gun-shy. They've had every type of government program shot at them," says Krieger, "so we're trying to do something different from standard senior citizens fare."

Recently, Krieger took a group of 9 senior citizens on a camp-out to nearby Lake Shawnee. "We took homemade ice cream and had a grand time together." A highlight of the trip, Krieger said, was "when we fried and ate the 33 fish we caught out of the lake."

For children, Krieger has operated a Saturday morning ceramics class in the winter and in the summer has moved them outdoors for a day-camp-type Vacation Bible School.

"Last year, I got the fire department to bring out a fire truck and the kids said, 'Oh, do we have to go look at that old truck?' I guess I'm older than I thought," shrugged Krieger, 35.

Sunday mornings after the first hymn, the children, usually about 25 of them, (church membership is only about 35) are dismissed to the center's annex building for their own services, led by volunteers from the sponsoring First Southern Baptist Church in Topeka.

Pine Ridge is a church and center. It has a relaxed atmosphere during worship and other activities. Everybody appears to feel as though he or she is among friends.

Gene Krieger is the man in the middle of all those children and senior adults. He seems to enjoy it.

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(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state paper editors.

Adapted from the February, 1975, issue of Contempo magazine.

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CORRECTION

On the BP Feature dated 1/16/75, headlined "An Eyewitness Tells of Cooperative Program Birth," --change the first line to read Louie (instead of Louis).
Thanks--Baptist Press.



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Lowndes Succeeds James As N. Y. Executive Secretary

SYRACUSE, N. Y. (BP)--Jack P. Lowndes, 51, pastor of Memorial Baptist Church, Arlington, Va., was elected here as the second executive secretary-treasurer in the seven-year history of the Baptist Convention of New York.

He will succeed Paul James, who retires March 1, as chief executive of the convention, one of 33 state or regional conventions, covering 50 states, in the 12.3-million member Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant-evangelical denomination. He also succeeds James as editor of the New York Baptist, convention news publication.

James, then under appointment by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, pioneered Southern Baptist work in the area now covered by the New York convention for a decade before the convention organized in 1968.

The convention covers all of New York State, the northern half of New Jersey and a small portion of Connecticut, and it has grown in 17 years (including the period before official recognition as a convention) from three congregations to 150. Membership exceeds 15,400 and the total budget, which continues to include a supplement from the Home Mission Board, is currently \$762,000.

Lowndes, immediate past president of the Home Mission Board's directors, has served the Arlington church since 1967. Before that, he spent 17 years as pastor of Baptist churches in Dandridge, Tenn.; Erlanger, Ky.; and Brunswick, Ga.

A native of Atlanta, he has been active in denominational life. Besides his Home Mission Board membership, he is a former vice chairman of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and served on the SBC's '70 Onward Study Group.

He served as Acting Chaplain for the United States House of Representatives, 1969-72, and as president of the Mount Vernon Baptist Ministerial Association in Virginia.

Lowndes holds a bachelor of arts degree from Furman University, Greenville, S. C.; a bachelor of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Louisville, Ky.; and an honorary doctor of law from Atlanta Law School.

He is married to the former Doris Jean Thurman of Louisville. They have five children.

James, who is scheduled as the alternate for the SBC convention sermon at the denomination's annual meeting in Miami Beach in June, will spend retirement preaching, teaching and writing. He is scheduled to teach urban evangelism at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during June.

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(BP) Photo mailed to state Baptist editors.

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Baptist School Gets
\$1 Million Grant

Baptist Press

HOUSTON, Tex. (BP)--Houston Baptist University here has received a \$1 million challenge grant from trustees of Houston's Cullen Foundation to construct a new science center.

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The facility, which will cost about \$2.5 million, will house the instructional programs of the university's departments of basic science, biology, chemistry, mathematics, nursing, physics and paramedical professions.

Houston Baptist University is operated by the Baptist General Convention of Texas and is one of 71 colleges, universities, seminaries and schools affiliated with the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools.

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Torch Run To Celebrate 50th
Cooperative Program Year

Baptist Press

MEMPHIS (BP)--More than 500 youthful runners, in the Southern Baptist Convention's Royal Ambassador (RA) program for boys, will relay a lighted torch 1,280 miles from Memphis to Miami Beach during May and June in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the SBC's basic unified Cooperative Program budget.

The torch, symbolizing the gospel spread in the United States and 82 countries around the world by the Cooperative Program, will be officially lighted May 13 in Memphis during a major birthday celebration for the unified budget. The 1976 Cooperative Program goal is \$150 million.

Royal Ambassador boys will leave during the celebration to begin the 1,280 mile torch run, stopping for rallies along the way. One month later, the lighted torch will arrive in Miami Beach, site of the 1975 SBC annual meeting and be presented to SBC messengers June 10 during the SBC Stewardship Commission report the opening night of the convention.

Each RA will run the torch one or more miles. RA chapters from local churches across the Southeast will be responsible for designated segments along the route.

Cooperative Program rallies are planned at five cities enroute. Each rally will spotlight one aspect of Cooperative Program supported ministries.

The highlight of each rally will be the entrance and exit of a Royal Ambassador runner carrying the lighted torch. Most rally programs will include brief addresses by the state Baptist convention's stewardship secretary and executive secretary. A multi-media drama on the history of the Cooperative Program will be presented by the SBC Stewardship Commission.

Rally sites and dates include: Nashville, May 15, SBC emphasis; Gadsden, Ala., May 24, foreign missions; and Jacksonville, Fla., June 3, state missions.

Other major cities on the torch route are: Jackson, Chattanooga, Huntsville, and Augusta. The route through Florida will generally follow Highway 1 and 1A.

Mike Speer, associate executive director of the SBC Stewardship Commission, and Jay Chance, director of the SBC Brotherhood Commission's Royal Ambassador division, are convention coordinators for the "Carry the Torch" project. They will be assisted by Brotherhood and Stewardship secretaries of state Baptist conventions, who will coordinate runners along the route.

The torch route will follow non-interstate highways. A mobile home unit and safety car will accompany the runners the entire route.

Chance says RA boys who wish to take part in the relay still have a chance to do so by contacting their state Brotherhood or by writing "Carry the Torch," Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104.

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