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75-29

Deaf Church Affiliates With Southern Baptists

By Tim Nicholas

PORTLAND, Ore. (BP)--First Baptist Church of the Deaf here is currently the only separate and autonomous deaf church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

They hold that distinction even though there are a number of other deaf congregations with a full program among Southern Baptists. The others, however, are missions of a "hearing church."

The church was formerly called the United Evangelical Church of the Deaf in Portland. The members had been interested in restructuring upon what they termed "a single set of beliefs."

Under the ministry of the former pastor William Thompson and his wife, Lenora, the church joined the local association and the Northwest Baptist Convention. The church's members were baptized into what became a brand new church.

The Thompsons first learned sign language from Jerry Potter, a Portland native who now works with the deaf in North Carolina. They later used the "signing" in mission work in Puerto Rico and Jamaica.

When Thompson resigned, Harold Hitt, general secretary of language missions for Northwest Baptists, began filling in as supply pastor.

Interpreting into sign language were Stan and Lynn Stepleton of Albertsville, Ala., and Carrilton, Ga., respectively, US-2 missionaries of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. (The US-2 program is the board's two-year missions program for college graduates.)

The US-2 couple interpret services at both the Lincoln Street Baptist Church in Portland and at Calvary Baptist Church in Vancouver, Wash., in addition to responsibilities at the deaf church.

They teach sign language classes at Lincoln Street and Calvary churches. And they teach two Bible study classes at the state schools for the deaf in Salem, Ore. and Vancouver, Wash.

Lynn had been teaching a ladies Bible study class at the deaf church when the couple was asked to interpret for worship services. "We take turns interpreting," she said, "Interpreting at full speed for an hour can be tiring."

The Stepletons should have some help before long, as they are teaching the sign language to about 50 hearing persons at present. Most of their students are teenagers, but "anyone can learn to sign," Lynn said.

"These are the people who will take our place."

These are people who can help make a bridge between the world of sound and the world of silence, she noted.

If you doubt that, you should see the choir at First Church of the Deaf. It's a symphony of gracefulness.

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(BP) Photos mailed to Baptist state papers.

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**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Challenge to Educators**

HOUSTON (BP)--Over 1,000 Southern Baptist religious educators, meeting here in the first national REnew '75 Conference, were challenged to adapt trends in religious education to greater meet the cultural needs of a changing American society.

"To do a better job in the world today, we should study the situation, grasp what is happening, and see how we need to adjust our approach to religious education," said William M. Pinson Jr., professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Pinson cited that many people feel religious education has fallen on hard times but said the facts indicate otherwise. "Although involvement in traditional structures of religious education may be declining," he added, "the total involvement in religious education has become more extensive today than ever before.

"This may be threatening to the professional churchman who is accustomed to controlling the religious realm. The materials studied, teachers, students, meeting places and entire development is beyond the grasp of the establishment-type religious educator."

Pinson characterized the American society saying it possesses impersonal structures, a need-oriented culture, secular-leisure time, demographic trends and activist-fragmented tendencies.

REnew '75, the first national conference on church educational ministries, was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association and the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

According to Morton Rose, chairman of the REnew '75 executive committee, "the heart of the conference was the 33 work groups aimed at specific topics related to religious education. The objectives of the conference were more than achieved."

The work groups were clustered around five theme assemblies: the educational ministry of the pastor; the challenge of religious education in contemporary crises; the educator as administrator; the self image of the religious educator; and the multiple ministries of the church. The 33 groups included such diverse topics as the church ministry to the aging, ministry through church owned schools, roles of the church educator, helping parents provid religious education, financial management of churches, and ministry to singl adults.

In another vein of religious education, Grady C. Cothen, president of the Sunday School Board, discussed the "evil educational process that is overtaking America."

"A subtle educational program is going on without us knowing it," he said. "We hear and see the evils of the world but try to explain them away by saying it is reality. However, many forms of reality are not desirable. There are many kinds of reality that I don't want for dinner," Cothen said.

"The whole thrust in our society is on material things," he added. "Our philosophy is do anything you want to do because you are free--you don't have to be responsible for that freedom.

"Too long we have trusted our world and accepted it's standards of morality," h stressed. "We must change--we must set our own standards in Jesus Christ and live by them.

"It's time to counter-attack. Unless we get the gospel to a dying soci ty, it will not be here long. As Christians, we are called to confront the world with the mind of God in Jesus Christ."

**Fletcher Resigns FMB Post;
Enters Tennessee Pastorate**

RICHMOND (BP)--Jesse C. Fletcher has announced his resignation as director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's (FMB) Mission Support Division, to become pastor of the 3,500-member First Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn.

The Knoxville church officially extended the pastoral call February 23 and Fletcher accepted the new post the same day. He will begin his duties as pastor in May.

Fletcher, who has been at the board for 15 years, said, "Though I do not fully understand all the implications involved in leaving a task that has been my life for 15 years and which has provided me such a sense of satisfaction and joy, I go obediently and with a strong desire to do the work to which God has called me.

"I could gladly work at the Foreign Mission Board the rest of my active ministry with joy and fulfillment," Fletcher continued.

"Dr. Baker J. Cauthen's leadership has been the finest any Christian minister has enjoyed. (Cauthen is executive secretary for the FMB.) The fellowship of the board in terms of missionaries and staff and board members has been supportive and rewarding. The wider fellowship involving all those within our corporate life has been an extension of the same spirit.

"My convictions regarding missions and the task of mission support will be if anything even stronger in my new role. I hope to be a spokesman both in terms of my speaking and writing for the same cause which has dominated my ministry for the past 15 years."

As director of the board's Mission Support Division, Fletcher has coordinated the work of the departments of missionary personnel, missionary education, and promotion and furlough ministries. He also has given general supervision to public relations and press personnel and served as chief of the Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

While at the board, Fletcher has served as associate secretary of missionary personnel, secretary for missionary personnel and for the past six years as director of the mission support division. He became division director on Nov. 1, 1968.

He has seen the missionary force double, from about 1,300 to 2,600 missionaries. Also under his leadership, the missionary journeyman program was begun, the extended missionary orientation program was initiated, the first data processing equipment was utilized at the board, the department of promotion and furlough ministries was organized, and the board's press office became the Richmond Bureau of Baptist Press.

A former vice-president of the Baptist Public Relations Association (BPRA) and past president of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Alumni Association, Fletcher serves on the Southern Baptist Convention's Interagency Coordinating Committee and on the advisory committee of the Radio and Television Commission and National Student Ministries.

He has written many articles, several motion picture scripts and six books, including four missionary biographies.

A native of San Antonio, Tex., Fletcher holds the bachelor of business degree from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (now Texas A & M University), College Station, and the master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. Before joining the board staff he was director of Baptist student activities and Bible teacher at the University of Texas in Austin. He is married to the former Dorothy Jordan of Dallas. They have two children, Scott, born in 1958; and Melissa, 1962.

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(BP) Photo to be mailed to Baptist state editors.

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'MasterControl' Wins Award
From Freedom's Foundation

Baptist Press
2/24/75

FORT WORTH (BP)--"MasterControl", a half-hour show produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, has received the Freedom's Foundation of Valley Forge 1974 Distinguished Service award for a radio program.

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"Master Control"*, syndicated on 632 stations across the country is produced for the Radio and Television Commission by Charles Yates.

The show was cited for "outstanding accomplishment in helping to achieve a better understanding of America and Americans."

The program submitted for judging featured a July 4 theme and was aired during the week beginning June 30.

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Southwestern Honors
3 Outstanding Alumni

Baptist Press
2/24/75

FORT WORTH (BP)--A national television personality and Newsweek magazine columnist, a seminary president and leader in the field of denominational church music were named the 1975 Distinguished Alumni of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

Bill D. Moyers, 41, host of the Public Broadcasting System's "Bill Moyers Journal" and Newsweek columnist, is the youngest person to be named a Distinguished Alumnus of Southwestern. Joining him for honors were Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., and William J. Reynolds, head of the church music department of the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville.

Moyers was the first deputy director of the Peace Corps and was press secretary for President Lyndon B. Johnson. He is former publisher of Newsday, a Long Island newspaper.

Ferguson became president of Midwestern Seminary in 1972 and was the youngest man ever to be named president of a Southern Baptist seminary.

Reynolds, a 1945 graduate of Southwestern and an accomplished musician, has composed several sacred choral works and authored three books in the church music field. His work with the Baptist Sunday School Board influences music utilized by more than 34,000 Southern Baptist churches.

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Germans Honor
Baptist Minister

Baptist Press
2/24/75

By Baptist Press

Johanness Arndt, 70, former president of the German Evangelical Free Church Union (Baptist) and recently retired pastor, was awarded the German Service Cross by the Federal Republic of (West) Germany.

Arndt was recognized for his work in youth and social work as director of the youth program for German Baptists in the post-war years of World War II, including work among emigrants from the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), according to European Baptist Press Service.(BP)

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CORRECTION

In BP story of 2/21/75, headlined "Acteens Grows Bigger Meeting Hall," headline should read "Acteens Grows Into Bigger Meeting Hall."

Thanks--
Baptist Press.

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