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White Minister's 1st Sermons
Were Heard by Black Churches

By George Sheridan

ATLANTA (BP)-- W. R. Grigg, 65,--a white Southern Baptist minister--preached some of his first sermons at age 19 in black churches and some his first close friends in the ministry were black pastors.

That was back in the days when it was a daring and sometimes dangerous thing for blacks and whites to relate too closely.

"I just wanted places to preach," Grigg recalls, "and I wasn't aware that this was not the way it was done. After that, I always had black pastors to preach in my pulpit whenever I wanted.

"I felt that I might just as well have a storm over this issue as over my preaching on tithing or my attempting to reorganize the Sunday School."

Grigg's career has been one of promoting cooperation and understanding between black and white Baptists. Now he is retiring from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of cooperative ministries with National Baptists.

But even this retirement does not signal an end to his mission efforts.

The former pastor is going to Shaw University Divinity School, a black institution founded by Baptists after the civil war in Raleigh, N.C., where he will serve as professor of missions and director of development.

"My basic intention in life for many years," Grigg recalls, "has been to bring about a more Christ-like understanding of all people and to grow more and better Baptist churches."

In his retirement career, he hopes to work toward this end by helping his students see themselves as resources and objects for christian mission.

Grigg began to develop interracial cooperation in his ministry as soon as he began preaching, almost immediately following his conversion at age 19 in Cliffside, (N.C.) Baptist Church.

He attributes his openness to his parents who he recalls "always had a concern for people as people."

When his father died, Grigg's mother moved her family to her native North Carolina where Grigg worked side by side with blacks on a cotton plantation where his uncle was overseer.

Grigg obtained degrees at Wofford College in Spartanburg, S.C. and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. He served churches in North Carolina, Indiana, Illinois and Georgia between 1935 and 1953.

"As a pastor, I always tried to be a part of the whole community," Grigg says. "I attended and often was a member of the area's black Baptist pastors' conference as well as the white. And I made opportunities for interracial pastoral contacts."

When he went to the Southside Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., Grigg organized an interracial "simultaneous revival," a cooperative attempt of area Baptists churches to evangelize a community.

"They would talk about winning a whole community for Christ," Grigg remembers, "but then ignore the black folks."

In Winston-Salem, Grigg also initiated a pastors' school with an interracial faculty and an interracial student body. And he brought about some of the first invitations to blacks to be on the program at annual associational meetings.

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Grigg never concerned himself much about whether his approach was innovative.

"I did a lot of things that were not widely done, like having week-long conferences on mental health, but I had a church that was willing to support its pastor and I felt free,"

In 1954, Grigg became director of the department of work for Negroes in the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

"I was the first state director of cooperative work," he recalls. "I had no precedents."

His work in developing cooperation among white and black Baptists progressed slowly.

"There had been few relationships between white and black pastors previously and hardly any among the laypeople."

One advance in Baptist race relations in Louisiana in those early days was an interracial evangelism conference (with a black man on the program) held at the West Monroe First Baptist Church during the pastorate of current Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Jaroy Weber, now pastor of First Baptist Church in Lubbock, Texas.

"Our biggest success," says Grigg, "was getting black pastors and laypersons."

One outcome of this work is the United Baptist Seminary, with campuses in Monroe and Houma and an outgrowth of the educational efforts Grigg initiated.

From 1957-65, Grigg served as director of the department of work with Negroes for the North Carolina Baptist State Convention.

During the civil rights movement, Grigg was a frequent participant in demonstrations promoting desegregation of public services. He also wrote numerous articles for general publication opposing segregation.

"Sometimes I felt I was putting my job on the line," Grigg said. But he felt that he had the support of North Carolina Baptist's then-General Secretary Douglas Branch who, "was understanding and open on the racial issue."

Grigg notes that throughout his career there has been an undercurrent of opposition to his efforts at interracial cooperation, but says this has been mostly verbal.

"I never worried about opposition, but I do remember two times when I was afraid for the safety of my wife and me."

The first was at a service station near Enterprise, Ala., where an attendant spotted some interracial tracts in their car, pointed a pistol at the couple and threatened several times to shoot them before finally allowing them to depart with a warning never to return.

Another time, the Griggs were harassed by a deputy sheriff in Warren County, N.C., after he saw them leaving a black church where Grigg had been preaching.

Grigg remembers times when he has been embarrassed about Southern Baptist attitudes toward blacks. But he believes that as long as he has tried honestly to promote understanding, the blacks have been sympathetic to his efforts.

"Their (blacks') ability to survive has rubbed off on me somewhat," Grigg said. "When I can't work through some problems, I work around them."

In 1966, Grigg moved to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board offices in Atlanta where he served as associate secretary in the department of work with National Baptists groups in 34 states where no such program existed.

Since 1972, his efforts have focused on the 14 northeastern states, and his office has been in Winston-Salem.

Grigg's career of promoting interracial cooperation among Baptists roughly has paralleled the civil rights movement. The movement, he said, has had a profound impact upon both black and white churches.

Many black church members plunged into the programs of the movement, but Grigg now sees them regathering to set about strengthening the churches. In the white churches, he observes, even the most prejudiced have a clearer concept of the social implications of the gospel because of the civil rights movement.



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Baptist Missionaries Aid
Vietnam Refugees In Guam

GUAM (BP)--Ministry to Vietnamese people isn't over for Southern Baptist missionaries who recently evacuated Vietnam.

If anything, ministry has intensified for several missionaries working among tens of thousands of Vietnamese refugees here, according to R. Keith Parks, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Southeast Asia who just returned from a visit to the area.

These missionaries, working in what has been dubbed "tent city," are helping register and process refugees; providing religious activities, Christian literature and personal counseling; aiding medical needs; serving as interpreters in the Vietnamese language; and assisting U. S. military efforts in various other ways.

Gene V. Tunnell is coordinating the overall Baptist ministry in tent city while H. Earl Bengs Jr., is coordinating evangelistic efforts.

William Dotson, U. S. Navy chief of staff in Guam and a Baptist layman, requested the assistance of the Vietnamese-speaking Baptist missionaries and has been "more than cooperative," according to Parks. He provided them with passes to all military operations, the use of two tents for religious activities (shared by all religious groups) and a tent for their personal use.

The tent being used as their headquarters is located near the main entrance where refugees are registered as they arrive. As each refugee bus arrives, Baptists board it, seeking bi-lingual persons who might assist as interpreters. This also allows them to watch for Vietnamese Baptists.

Christian literature in Vietnamese, previously used by Baptists in Vietnam, has been reproduced in Guam for distribution among the refugees. A Christian film, also previously produced for Baptist work in Vietnam, is now being shown in the Guam refugee camp.

The Baptist missionaries are holding Christian services in the religious activities tents as well as in other areas of tent city.

Missionaries Robert C. Davis Jr., Herman P. Hayes, Samuel F. Longbottom Jr., and Peyton M. Moore are assisting in the camp's hospital tent, serving as interpreters and ministering to the sick and injured.

Missionary Samuel M. James is assigned to a major military hospital off base, where the more severely ill or injured patients are being taken, as an interpreter and counselor.

Assisting as interpreters at Red Cross headquarters are missionaries Kenneth L. Goad and James H. Lassiter. They answer Vietnamese-speaking phone calls at the switchboard, assist refugees who are trying to locate friends and relatives, and aid the Red Cross personnel in whatever other ways they can.

Speaking of the future ministry to the refugees with whom the missionaries are working, Tunnell said, "These people come from a hot country. Many are simple farmers and all have experienced great emotional trauma which will be compounded by culture shock. I believe a ministry of compassion to Vietnamese refugees . . . at a time when they are literally and totally helpless and dependent, has the potential of seeing more Vietnamese come to know the Lord . . . than we have seen won in Vietnam."

Continuing, he posed a question, "Is Baptist ministry to the Vietnamese really over?" (BP) Photos will be mailed to Baptist state papers. -30-

1974 Lottie Moon Offering
Exceeds \$23 Million Goal

RICHMOND (BP)--The final total for the 1974 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions has exceeded its \$23 million goal and topped last year's total by more than \$1 million, according to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials here.

The \$23,234,094 received is the highest total ever since the first Lottie Moon Offering (\$3,315) was given in 1888. In 1973, Baptists gave \$22,232,757 to the offering.

The 1975 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal has been set at \$24 million by the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), which sponsors the offering annually in connection with the Week of Prayer for foreign missions in 34,734 Southern Baptist churches across the nation. Monies received after April 30 are included in the following year's offering.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission efforts in 83 countries are supported financially by two major channels of giving, the Lottie Moon Offering and the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget plan. Each of the channels accounts for about half of the board's total operating budget. The Cooperative Program is celebrating its 50th year.

"Southern Baptists have demonstrated again their deep commitment to the great commission," said Baker J. Cauthen, the board's executive secretary. "Gifts in money and life continue to make possible a worldwide witness in our Lord's name. We believe the greatest days in missions labor lie ahead. We are profoundly grateful to the Woman's Missionary Union and all others who have given."

"Regardless of international and economic troubles, Southern Baptists will not let missions be dislodged from top priority," said Carolyn Weatherford, executive secretary of WMU. "Topping the \$23 million mark proves this. WMU believes \$24 million for next year is both a challenging goal and a realistic expectation of the support Baptists want to give foreign missions."

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Jury Says Boy Friend Not
Guilty in Mars Hill Murder

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MARSHALL, N.C. (BP)--A Madison County jury spent just 20 minutes here deciding that a New Jersey man was not guilty of murder in the October, 1973, death of his girlfriend, a Mars Hill College coed.

The jury of three women and nine men found Wayne Schilling, 22, formerly of Mt. Holly, N. J., not guilty of all charges, including second degree murder and manslaughter.

Charged in the death of Miss Sally Bell Moffitt, 18, of High Point, Schilling has been under \$25,000 bond since his arrest last May, more than seven months after the pretty coed's body was found dead at a highway intersection about a mile north of the campus.

Schilling said he did not know who killed Sally Moffitt. He said he doubted if the state would ever learn who her killer was.

Schilling was a senior biology major at Mars Hill, a Baptist college, and nearing completion of his student teaching when he was given an interim suspension from the college--pending the outcome of his trial--last May following his arrest. He said he wants to complete his education, but not particularly at Mars Hill.

Madison County Sheriff E. Y. Ponder, the man who signed the original warrant against Schilling, maintained his belief that Schilling was guilty in the death.

Asked if he would automatically reopen the case now that Schilling had been acquitted, Ponder said he would not.

The judge said even though the state may have aroused suspicion regarding the defendant, had speculated how he might have committed the crime and shown how he might have had the opportunity to kill her, this was not enough to find him guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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