



September 10, 1976

76-149

Baptist Preaches
At 105-years-old

By Woodrow W. Hill

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--Southern Baptist evangelist James Fell Aker is 105-years-old and still preaching revivals.

"If you want him for a revival, you'll have to book him three years in advance," newscaster Paul Harvey said of Aker in a recent broadcast.

Aker has not retired. He is an evangelist and keeps a schedule that would tire many younger men. One of his greatest difficulties is finding time to accept additional invitations to preach.

He preaches three revivals a month and then pauses a week for rest. At age 105, he is actually booked up for the next three years.

Born in Marion, Smith County, Va., Feb. 12, 1871, Aker went to college at Emory and Henry, where he also received seminary training. Although his education was temporarily interrupted while he was a pastor and taught school seven years, he soon entered full-time evangelistic work and has been at it since.

He accepted Christ into his life 88 years ago, at age 17, and completed 85 years as a minister of the gospel on April 12, 1976. He has been married twice; his first wife died in 1955. In 1960, he married Louise Wood Fields, a widow, who travels with him. The couple are members of First Baptist Church, Radford, Va., although he preaches in churches of all denominations.

"I preach the same gospel in all of them," he said during a recent interview between revival services in western North Carolina.

Discussing the Bold Mission Thrust of Southern Baptists, in which the denomination is attempting to let every person in the United States hear the gospel by 1980, Aker said, "I'm going to do my part in it." He expects to be involved in other parts of the world also: "In 1978, if I live and the Lord delays his return, I will be in a crusade in Japan with a missionary friend."

Standing 5 feet, 9 inches tall, Aker moves about like a much younger man and looks decades younger. His memory is excellent. He quoted the text of his first sermon, then the third, fourth and fifth. "I have prayed for a good memory," he said, "and God has given it to me."

Aker preaches "like a doctor treats patients. I diagnose the case, and when I find the trouble spot I apply the medicine."

The secret of his long life, the minister said, is attributed to four things:

"I honored my father and mother; I have tried to take care of my body; I have made it a habit to get my rest at night; and I have tried to put my Lord first.

"My mother carried me to church in a blanket when I was a baby, and I have tried to be faithful ever since.

"You're not going to believe this," Aker said, "But I don't think I'm going to die." He added, "For years I've prayed that I would be here when the Lord returns. I think I'll be here."

Until the Lord comes, "I want to be in the harvest field. I expect to be on the battlefield for Christ."

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Beirut Still At War;
Baptists Still At Work

By Ruth Fowler

RICHMOND (BP)--With growing crops and crowded stores, life seems remarkably normal in some parts of Lebanon--but in Beirut, lost lives, military troops and piles of garbage tell the story of a continuing war.

J. D. Hughey, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Europe, the Middle East and South Asia, visited Beirut for two days and nights during a recent tour of his administrative area. He wanted to see for himself what life was like in Beirut.

Hughey, along with Southern Baptist missionaries Mr. and Mrs. William O. Hern, William T. (Pete) Dunn and the David W. King family, made the journey from Jordan, traveling for 13 hours--twice as long as the trip would have taken during normal times.

"We saw many Syrian troops and Phalangists along the way, but we also saw crops growing in the field," said Hughey. "We saw many houses along the way that had been burned out or demolished. On the other hand, we saw many houses that were normal."

One of the first items on the agenda was a survey of the damages done to the HERNs' home.

"The house had actually been hit five times. There were gaping holes in the walls of the study and of the master bedroom. It is a one story house except for one bedroom on a second floor which was demolished. There was also a hole in the dining room," Hughey said. "It was clear that if people had been in certain parts of the house when it was hit they would have been killed. But the HERNs had left two weeks before the hits. The Kings had slept there two nights before the bombs hit."

As soon as it was safe, the HERNs' remaining furniture and possessions were moved to the dining room of the Arab Baptist Seminary in the Monsourleh area.

"What impressed me most about the HERNs," Hughey said, "was not that they grieved over what they found ruined, but over and over again they exclaimed with joy over what was still there."

Among the things found was Mrs. Hern's favorite study Bible and a printed text which had hung on the office wall. It read, "the eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27).

The seminary itself has two holes in the roof where shells came through. "I had never realized how a building is affected. The shells evidently did not explode inside so there was not the damage expected. They came through the roof, making clean holes, peeling back the steel supports as if they were tin."

All the windows of the seminary were broken in the front and the back by shells. "I don't think any of them were aimed at the seminary," Hughey said, "but the seminary is just a mile and a half from the recently fallen Tela' Zaatara camp."

"It's rather unlikely the seminary will be open in the fall," Hughey continued. "An alternative will be to hold training courses for pastors and prospective pastors and laymen in different places."

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The seminary continued last spring through all of its classes and graduated one student. The Beirut Baptist School remained open throughout the year and for the first time in its history held summer school, offering courses in typing, English, music, art and preaching. Five young men studying preaching are conducting a service every afternoon in the church adjoining the school with about 30 people attending. They are doing the preaching themselves.

Emma Cooke and Mabel Summers, both Southern Baptist missionaries, have been teaching at the Beirut Baptist School.

All of the churches that have been heard from are continuing to meet, despite the death of the First Lebanese Baptist in early August. She ran outside to help her daughter, who was hurt by sniper fire and was killed.

"I think the missionaries who have stayed have been a great encouragement to the Lebanese Baptists who have had to stay and to other people as well," Hughey said. "The fact the seminary was able to complete its year's program is a very, very significant thing. There's nothing that seems much more important than training Christian leaders for that part of the world.

"I think the fact that the Beirut Baptist School was kept open so much of the year and was able to hold the graduation service a few weeks ago said something to the whole community," Hughey continued. "The presence of the missionaries has said, 'We love Lebanon, we love the Lebanese people, we love the Lord. We are here because we are needed here.'"

Hughey went on to say he had made it clear the missionaries shouldn't stay simply to protect property which might be occupied if they left, because the missionaries' lives are infinitely more valuable than any property.

"I would be so much more comfortable, really, if they were all out and safe. Yet, I'm filled with admiration for those who have felt they ought to stay. I'm full of confidence, also, in those who have felt the time had come for them to leave," Hughey said. "I think it would have been a terrible mistake for the entire missionary group in Lebanon to have stayed."

Hughey and some of the missionaries left safely after two days stay. Others were retained at the border, sleeping at an inn at night and waiting during the day to be allowed to cross. It was four days before they were permitted to go to Jordan.

Southern Baptist missionaries still in Lebanon are the Kings, Emma Cooke and Mabel Summers.

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Texas Baptists Launch
Voter Registration Drive

Baptist Press
9/10/76

DALLAS (BP)--Texas Baptists have launched a major effort to have all two million of their members register to vote in the Nov. 2 general election.

The drive is being spearheaded by the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, which is enlisting the support of pastors, educational directors, and leaders of other key groups affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"This is probably the most intense voter registration effort that Texas Baptists have ever entered into," said Phil Strickland, the commission's associate director.

The commission is urging each of the state's 4,000 Southern Baptist churches to designate its own deputy voter registrar to register voters prior to the Oct. 2 registration deadline.

"The thing that protects us from the kinds of tragedies the American government has experienced in recent years is the involvement of responsible people who care," Strickland said. "If we really want a better life for our children, a beginning point for that is being a part of the decision-making process."

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26 New Churches Began
In Three Weeks In Kenya

MALINDI, Kenya (BP)--The first three weeks of evangelistic work by Baptists in the "Giryama Project" here has resulted in 26 new churches with 319 baptisms and 250 people awaiting baptism.

The Giryama Project, an intensive effort to evangelize people of the Giryama tribe, began in July with the digging of much needed water wells in Giryama land in Northern Kenya. More than 80 percent of the Giryama people are still uncommitted to any religious belief, according to Southern Baptist missionary Betty (Mrs. Harold T.) Cummins.

For the past three weeks, five evangelistic teams have been traveling throughout the area preaching. Each team consists of a recent seminary graduate and a layman.

Project director is Southern Baptist missionary G. Claylan Coursey, Southern Baptist missionary Louie T. Scales will work with Morris Wanje and Lawrence Fondo during phase two of the project.

Wanje, a Giryama tribesman, reported that the people of his tribe "are even more hungry for the gospel than was thought."

Phase two will include classes for lay leaders in the new churches. Wanje and Fondo are teaching. Because the Giryama area is rural, lay leaders will be used to maintain the new work and expand it to other villages.

Leaders of the project have dedicated themselves to leave family and friends to travel throughout the Giryama Project, preaching and teaching. The 10 team members are David Kombe, Solomon Kimuyu, Joel Mushuki, Wilson Chiko and Richard Nyenga, all seminary graduates, plus Jonathan Masha, Alfred Katana, Dickson Mangi, Sameli Chea and David Karisa, laymen.

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Home Mission Board
Names 31 Missionaries

Baptist Press
9/10/76

ATLANTA (BP)--Directors of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Home Mission Board appointed 31 persons as missionaries and approved financial aid for 28 mission pastors during the September meeting of the board here.

Appointed career missionaries were:

Joe and Pat Deaton of Smithfield, N. C.; Joseph Maddox of Louisville, Ky.; Bob and Janelle Mills of Kansas City, Kans.; Ed and Oneta Terry of Las Cruces, N. M.; Lefanoga (Ray) and Lena Viliamu of Nanakuli, Hawaii, and Gerald and Osa Marie Wittenmyer of Shawnee Mission, Kans.

Named missionary associates were:

Mary Adams of Louisville, Ky.; Stephen Aycock of Kansas City, Mo.; Carl and Hazel Ellison of Piedmont, S. C.; Larry and Betty Maxwell of Kamiah, Idaho; Paul and Daisy Nevels of Williamsburg, Oh.; Daniel and Gloria Rivera of San Antonio, Tex.; Deborah Snyder of Hampton, Va.; Tim Terry of San Antonio, Tex.; Dave and Susan Turner of Kansas City, Mo.; and Nancy Wickham of Tampa, Fla.

Approved as missionary associates--student interns were:

Martha Foster of Louisville; Ronald W. Lee of New Orleans; Linda McCluney of Louisville; and William and Pam McIntyre of Kansas City, Mo.

The Deatons will serve in the Macomb Association of Troy, Mich., where Deaton will be director of missions. Until his appointment, he was pastor of Wilson's Mill Baptist Church, Wilson's Mill, N. C. Both are natives of North Carolina.

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Maddox, a native of Fort Worth Tex., will be director of weekday ministries at First Baptist Church of Miami Beach, Fla. Prior to his appointment, he was a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

The Mills will serve in Kansas City, Kans., where he will be director of Christian social ministries for the Kansas City Association. He was previously minister of youth at First Baptist Church of Bethel, Kans. He is a native of Florida; she of Missouri.

The Terrys will serve in the San Juan Association of New Mexico, where he will be director of missions. Previously he was pastor of Westside Baptist Church in Las Cruces.

The Villiamus will serve in Pago Pago, American Samoa, where he will be missionary. Prior to appointment, he was director of religious activities at Hawaii Baptist Academy. They have been serving as missionary associates and were upgraded to career missionary status. He is a native of American Samoa.

The Wittenmyers will work in the Puget Sound Association of the Northwest Baptist Convention, where he will be associate director of missions. Prior to appointment, he was manager of a garden and gift shop in Shawnee Mission. He is a native of Oklahoma; she of Kansas.

Mrs. Adams will be assistant director of the Baptist Center in Louisville; Aycok will be director of Christian social ministries in Dodge City., Kans.; the Ellisons will serve in North Dakota, where he will be director of missions; the Maxwells will serve in Kamiah, Idaho, where he is pastor of Pine Ridge Baptist Church; the Nevels will serve the South Hills Association of Ohio, where he will be director of missions; the Riveras will serve in San Antonio, where he will be president of Mexican Baptist Bible Institute; Snyder will work as associate director of Friendship House in Newport News, Va.; Terry will be a catalytic missionary with the Chicago Baptist Association. The Turners will work in Milwaukee, Wisc., where he will be a catalytic missionary.

Wickham will work in the Sellers Home in New Orleans as a nurse.

Those who will receive Church Pastoral Aid (CPA) and their place of service are:

John C. Besse of Gaylord, Mich.; James Bland, Eaton, Oh.; William A. Bragdon of Lordstown, Oh.; Howard Randall Clark of Bornego Springs, Calif.; Danny Mike Cook of Minerva, Oh.; Samuel Lee Duncan of Coal Valley, Ill.

Also, Fernando W. Elmore of Newton, Kans.; Homer W. Farris of Johnstown, Oh.; Leroy Gainey of Syracuse, N. Y.; Benjamin Carl Gilliam Jr. of Bay City, Mich.; William Brantley Hale of Saranac, N. Y.; Michael Hatfield of Chester, Md.;

Bill Higgins of Clarkston Wash.; Milton Hodge of Towanda, Pa.; Harold D. Hutcheson of Muskegon Heights, Mich.; Ralph Lindsey of West Yellowstone, Mont.; Ronald McIlroy of Wichita, Kans.; Paul Maxey, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Gene Medaris, Fairbanks, Alaska.

Charles Mullins of Wainae, Hawaii; Donald L. Neisler of Auburn, Ill.; Oscar Pate of Saginaw, Mich.; Lee Norman of Pewaukee, Wisc.; Don Plott of Anoka, Minn.; Richard Lee Sciranko, of Nebraska City, Neb.; Ray Alan Swartz of Laurend, Kan.; Donald Swilley of Olmsted Falls, Mich.; and Willie Edward Tinsley of Long Beach, Calif.

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Home Mission Board
Makes Staff Changes

Baptist Press
9/10/76

ATLANTA(BP)-- Three new staff members were elected and two staffers were given new assignments during the September meeting of directors of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Home Mission Board here.

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Elected to the staff were Kenneth Carter, as director of small church and revival evangelism; Frank Crumpler, as director of evangelism planning and consultation, and Michael David (Mike) Robertson, as assistant director of the department of special missions ministries.

Given new assignments were Roy Edgemon, who becomes director of volunteer projects correlation, and David Benham, who becomes assistant director of church extension.

Carter has been director of evangelism for the Illinois Baptist State Association since 1974. Previously, he was pastor of churches in Pantex, Plainview, and Amarillo, Tex., and Pooleville, Marietta and Duncan, Okla. He is a graduate of Wayland Baptist College, Plainview, Tex., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex.

Crumpler has been secretary of evangelism for the Baptist General Association of Virginia since 1973. Previously he was pastor of churches in Charlotte, Durham and Monroe, N. C., and Camden, S. C., and Richmond, Va.

He is a graduate of Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N. C.; Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N. C.; and Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

Robertson, who has been campus minister at Murray State University in Murray, Ky., since 1973, will work in correlation of volunteer projects in the special missions ministries department.

He is a graduate of Memphis (Tenn.) State University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

Benham has been assistant director of the language missions department of the Home Mission Board since 1974. Prior to joining the staff, he was general language missionary and language missions program leader for the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, a missionary to the Indians in Tuba City, Ariz., pastor of the Fort Worth (Tex.) Indian Mission, and a student summer missionary in Arizona.

He is a graduate of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Ark., and Southwestern Seminary.

Edgemon, a native of Wichita Falls, Tex., has been planning and consultation director since 1975, following his resignation from the Foreign Mission Board. He was a missionary in Okinawa and Japan.

Previous to his appointment as a foreign missionary, he was pastor of churches in Padgett, Jolly, Wichita Falls, Throckmorton, Seminole, and Odessa, Tex.

He is a graduate of Midwestern University, Wichita Falls, Tex., Southwestern Seminary and Luther Rice Seminary, Jacksonville, Fla.

John Hurt Announces
Retirement from Texas Paper

Baptist Press

DALLAS (BP)--John J. Hurt, editor of the 375,000-circulation Texas Baptist Standard and dean of Southern Baptist state paper editors with almost 30 years tenure, has announced his retirement.

Hurt, who succeeded E. S. James in 1966 as the first layman to edit the Texas Baptist news weekly, will reach the Standard's mandatory retirement age of 68 in April, 1977. He suggested to the Standard's board of directors that it is time to begin the search for his successor.

He set no date for relinquishing the editorship. "Realizing your election of the next editor may be quick," he said to the directors, "the date of retirement is at your convenience and that of the one you select. In effect, this is my resignation effective at your pleasure."

Hurt, the son of a Baptist preacher, came to Texas 10 years ago after 19 years as editor of the Georgia Baptist paper, The Christian Index. He has the distinction of having served the oldest in the network of the Southern Baptist state papers, the Index, and the largest, the Standard. He has served longer than any other active editor.

"Not a day has passed I did not thank God for the responsibilities and opportunities for the service you and the Standard have given me," he told the directors.

He said Texas Baptists "are the world's greatest, gracious with commendation and tolerant with failings" and praised the Standard directors "for not once placing any limitations on the editors' editorial freedom."

Widely known among Texas Baptists and across the Southern Baptist Convention for his editorial style and his replies to letters to the editor, Hurt has also contributed to the news style approach utilized by most state Baptist papers today.

When Hurt became editor of The Christian Index in 1947, the papers were largely journals edited for preachers.

A veteran journalist who worked on newspapers in Tennessee and later served as a bureau manager and editor for the Associated Press, Hurt changed the Index to a news magazine approach edited for laymen as well as preachers--thereby influencing approaches of other state Baptist papers.

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(BP) Photo will be mailed to Baptist state papers.