

**(BP)****BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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### Plains Church Denies Membership to King

PLAINS, Ga. (BP)--Black activist minister Clennon King, another black man and a white woman--all out-of-town residents--were denied membership in Jimmy Carter's home congregation here by unanimous votes of both the church's membership watchcare committee and the congregation.

The congregation's vote, on Sunday, Jan. 9, came about two months after Plains Baptist Church, confronted by the application of King, a non-denominational minister from Albany, Ga., voted to drop all racial barriers, name a watchcare committee to rule on membership requests, and retain Pastor Bruce Edwards, who had vigorously urged racial openness.

The other two refused membership were Austin Black, a black, and Charlotte Weinberger, white, both from Los Angeles. No action was taken on the membership request of another person, Mrs. Randy Coleman, a white and wife of an employee of President-elect Carter's brother, Billy, because she had not yet had the opportunity to meet with the watchcare committee.

Church leaders said any non-member, including King, is welcome to attend services and that the vote had nothing to do with race.

They cited three reasons for refusing King: 1. he had not complied with, nor even acknowledged, an invitation to meet with the membership committee; 2. he had not shown a willingness to cooperate with the membership in carrying out the goals and objectives of the church; and 3. it would be difficult for him to carry out the spirit of the church covenant because of the distance of his residence. (Southern Baptists encourage new members to join churches in the immediate community so they may be active.)

Reasons given for refusing the application of Black and Weinberger were the distance of their residence, neither had responded to an invitation to meet with the watchcare committee, and nothing was known of their spiritual commitment.

Edwards, who earlier opposed the deacons' refusal to allow King to enter the church and present himself for membership, told reporters on the doorstep of the church that King had not cooperated with the church's attempts to examine his membership application.

President-elect Carter attended services but it is not known what role he played in the decision.

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Austin Church Ordains  
Woman to Ministry

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1/10/77

AUSTIN, Tex. (BP)--A minister's daughter is believed to be the third Texas Baptist woman ordained to the ministry in a service on Jan. 2 at First Baptist Church here.

Priscilla Lane Denham, 24, is the daughter of W. E. Denham, who served as pastor of that church from 1963 to 1974.

Although no exact totals are known, between 20 and 30 women are believed to have been ordained to the ministry by Southern Baptist churches, which generally will ordain only men. The Southern Baptist Convention has some 35,000 churches in 50 states. Ordination decisions are made by local congregations.

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Ms. Denham, a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and presently a student at Union Theological Seminary in New York, requested the ordination as a prerequisite to a career in pastoral care.

She served as student chaplain at the Philadelphia (Pa.) State Hospital last summer and has expressed a desire to work as a hospital chaplain or counselor.

Ms. Denham is married to Lon Palmer, also a seminary student and member of the Austin church. However, she retained her maiden name.

Browning Ware, pastor of the church, said the congregation voted unanimously in December in favor of the ordination.

"She first approached me about a year ago with the question of ordination," said Ware. "The strength of this experience comes in the fact that she grew up here and has maintained an openness about her desire for ordination."

Ware said the Austin church has had women deacons for several years.

The ordination service included participation by her father, now a counselor in Austin and still a member of the church; her husband; and Ware.

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Church Gets Response On  
Presidential Prayer Day Idea

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BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Governors of at least five states have responded to the request of South Avondale Baptist Church here to proclaim January 16 as a National Prayer for the President Day, according to the church's interim pastor.

H.Lindy Martin, an American Indian from Pembroke, N. C., and dean of students at Samford University, a Baptist school in Birmingham, said the proclamations came from the governors of Alabama, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Utah, and Arizona. Governors of seven other states, he said, expressed approval of the idea but declined proclamations because the church is outside their state.

Martin, national chairman of the effort, said the church has received wide response from its attempts to promote the day of prayer, which has included some 50,000 letters to churches of various denominations. He has received response from Catholics, Protestants and Jews.

One response came from President Ford's director of correspondence, who said the President supports the idea but had already proclaimed a national day of prayer last May. No response had yet been received from President-elect Carter.

The 750-member church, which has coordinators in each state for the effort, proclaimed the day for both Ford and Carter and hopes that the administration of Carter will walk into office on a "nationwide carpet of prayer."

"We want the new administration to go into office tuned into God's leadership," Martin said. "We believe that the good things in our nation's heritage have come from dependence on God. We need this kind of trust today."

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Baldrige Joins Golden  
Gate Seminary Staff

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MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--A former New Mexico political reporter has been named to the public relations staff of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary here.

Gary Baldrige, 25, formerly of The Albuquerque Tribune, joined the Golden Gate staff as public relations assistant. He will be gathering, writing and editing news about the seminary.

A new student at Golden Gate, Baldrige is a foreign missions volunteer who plans to specialize in publication work. He is a native of Houston, Tex., and a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin.

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Seven North Central States  
Hope to Enlist 32,000 in 1977

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP)--A goal of enlisting 32,000 people in Bible study during 1977 was spelled out in a meeting here of Baptists in the seven north central states.

The goal setting came during a church growth workshop sponsored by the Baptist state bodies involved in North Central Missions Thrust, a cooperative effort to enhance missions and evangelism in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa.

North Central Missions Thrust dovetails with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Bold Mission Thrust, which has as its dual purpose evangelization and congregationalization of the nation.

"The North Central Missions Thrust was launched in 1974 and has gained steam as it has gone along," said James H. Smith, president of the effort for 1977.

Smith, executive secretary of the Illinois Baptist State Association, added that 1976 was a learning year leading to the Bible study emphasis in 1977, church extension efforts in 1978, and an evangelistic push in 1979.

The overall objective of North Central Missions Thrust is to double the number of churches in the seven states by 1990. Some 1,784 Southern Baptist churches were in the seven states in 1974, and the goal is to have at least 3,590 by 1990.

The overall population of the seven states--generally clustered around the Great Lakes (with the exception of Iowa)--is more than 50 million, or about one fourth of the population of the United States.

Smith estimated the unchurched population of the area is 32 million people.

During 1977, the states aim to enlist 32,000 new people in Bible studies: 8,000 in Ohio; 3,000 in Michigan; 5,000 in Indiana; 15,000 in Illinois and 1,000 in the "fellowship states" (not yet organized into state conventions) of Iowa and Minnesota-Wisconsin.

Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Ohio each form a convention while the Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship is attached to the Missouri Convention and the Minnesota-Wisconsin Fellowship is sponsored by the Texas Convention.

During the three day workshop, 545 persons from across the area--mostly covered by snow--were registered.

Keynote speaker, James L. Sullivan of Nashville, president of the 12.9-million-member Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), said Southern Baptists have a unique opportunity to witness because of the publicity focussed on the denomination by news media coverage of one of its most prominent members, President-elect Jimmy Carter.

"This publicity is long overdue," Sullivan said. "We are partially at fault because we have failed to speak up to say who and what we are. For too long, we have had the image of a southern sect that strums guitars while handling snakes."

Sullivan said it has only been in recent months that the public has become aware of the size and influence of the SBC, the nation's largest Protestant denomination. He pointed out that last year members gave \$1.6 billion in offerings, that one in every six ministerial students in the nation is enrolled in a Southern Baptist seminary and that on an average Sunday the 35,000 member churches of the denomination baptize 9,000 converts.

Sullivan warned that all of the national visibility and publicity "will not do us any good unless we correctly interpret ourselves" to people.

He also warned that it is not enough for churches merely to put out signs, publish a bulletin and run a notice in the paper about services.

"Too many of our church leaders adopt the attitude that the general public has two legs and that people know where the churches are . . . and can come if they want too.

"A vital religious faith always takes the initiative and goes out of its way to reach people and make them feel welcome," he said.

"I once heard of a church that announced a revival 'for members only' because they had all the folks they wanted. I'd just as soon serve as pastor of Arlington National Cemetery as a church like that because it has about as much life."

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Baptist Evangelist Arrested  
On Bond Fraud Charges

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TULSA (BP)--James Whitby, a Baptist minister and evangelist, has been arrested by FBI agents on a charge he allegedly defrauded a Swiss bank through a \$5 million bond issue.

Whitby, 48, formerly pastor of a Southern Baptist church in Tulsa and formerly affiliated with Youth for Christ, operates Gospel Outreach Corporation.

Federal authorities allege he received a partial payment of \$100,000 from Bank Robinson A. G. of Basel, Switzerland, for the Gospel Outreach Corporation bonds, according to a report by Religious News Service (RNS). He was freed on \$100,000 bond and ordered to appear in U. S. District Court in Los Angeles at an unspecified date.

Bruce Day, director of the Oklahoma Securities Commission, said that Whitby did not register the bonds with his agency or with the federal Securities and Exchange Commission, and therefore could not lawfully sell them outside the state, RNS reported.

According to the FBI complaint, Whitby arranged for proceeds from the bonds to be deposited in a trust account for Gospel Outreach, Inc., and backed the trust indenture with real estate owned by the Arkansas Valley Development Corp. But Mildred Dotson, head of the corporation, said she never gave Whitby permission to use the property to issue bonds, RNS said.

Although the minister signed a contract to buy the California property in 1975, he failed to raise enough money and the land was sold to other buyers, RNS said. When the Swiss bank failed in that year, Swiss authorities discovered that several million dollars of allegedly worthless bonds, issued by Gospel Outreach, Inc., were among its supposed assets.

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Carter Election Tops  
Two 1976 UPI Polls

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1/10/77

NEW YORK (BP)--The election of Jimmy Carter as President, a story which topped several 1976 national religious year-end top 10 story polls, also came in first in two top 10 polls conducted among U. S. editors by United Press International (UPI).

The near miraculous sweep of the Southern Baptist deacon and Sunday School teacher of Plains, Ga., from national obscurity to a victory of Gerald Ford last November, ranked first in UPI's "Top 10 Headline Stories of 1976" and 10 "Most Significant Stories of 1976" polls.

Behind Carter in the top 10 headline stories were 2. Legionnaires' disease, 3. Kidnapping of 26 Chowchilla, Calif., schoolchildren. 4. China: deaths of Chou En-lai and Mao Tse-tung, 5. Elizabeth Ray-Wayne Hayes scandal, 6. Patricia Hearst trial, 7. Israeli raid freeing hostages at airport in Entebbe, Uganda, 8. U. S. Viking spacecraft landing on Mars, 9. U. S. Bicentennial, 10. Death of Howard Hughes.

In the top 10 stories with most long-range significance, the Carter election was followed by 2. China leadership transition, 3. Mars landings, 4. FBI-CIA scandals, 5. Supreme Court ruling on capital punishment, 6. Racial unrest in Rhodesia, South Africa, 7. British economic crisis, 8. Lebanese war, 9. U. S. Bicentennial, 10. Lockheed scandal.

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