



-- FEATURES
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Minister Was Pastor of
A 1-member Congregation

By Dan Martin

KAMIAH, Idaho (BP)--Larry Maxwell is one of the few men who was called as pastor of a two-member church, that within a few months had a "split."

It's a joke, of course, but one which officials of the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention frequently tell on Maxwell.

Actually, Maxwell was a pastor in Glen's Ferry, Idaho, and was called by the 14 members of Pine Ridge Baptist Church in Kamiah, Idaho, in the early months of 1972.

By the time he arrived, 12 members had moved away leaving two elderly ladies as his congregation.

Within a few months, one woman moved away, leaving one member in the church.

Maxwell is the center of many jokes. He's that type of man. He inspires laughter and fun in people. He also inspires spiritual commitment and dedication to Christ.

"Up here, people don't always have a favorable image of ministers. And, in the past, a lot of Protestant ministers have been drab, legalistic, and judgmental. It surprises a lot of people I've been around that a minister has a sense of humor. They've gotten the idea that it is almost anti-Christian to smile."

Maxwell "always knew" he would be a pastor, missionary or church worker of some sort, but he "sort of felt" God had called him to be a foreign missionary: "It came as quite a shock to me when I realized that my own state and home town were wide open" to missions.

Maxwell grew up in southern Idaho, and planned to be an American Baptist when he was graduated from high school but changed his mind after working for a Southern Baptist in Spokane, Wash., and hearing W.A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, preach.

He attended Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee but "had a little difficulty scholastically ...and promised the Lord that if he would get me through (that year) I would start a mission when I got back to Idaho.

"On my way back to Gooding, my home town, I stopped in Glen's Ferry and had prayer. I asked the policeman if there was a Baptist church, and he said there was. In the cafe, a waitress said there wasn't. Come to find out, there was no Baptist church in the railroad town of about 1,300.

"So I rented the VFW hall for \$1 a month and put a half page ad in the paper. The first service, I had two high school kids. We went visiting that afternoon, and halfway, through the evening service a retired man and his wife came. I felt like W.A. Criswell...my congregation had already doubled," he said.

Maxwell soon was drafted into the Army and served in Korea. When he got out of the service he attended Grand Canyon College, a Baptist School in Phoenix, Ariz., and then Wayland Baptist College in Plainview, Tex.

In his final year at Wayland, he married, and when he was graduated--in 1962--headed to Glen's Ferry where he taught school and was pastor of the church he had started.

"We built a barracks building, which was our educational building. Then we bought the VFW Hall next door, and next, we built an auditorium out of railroad ties... We got the ties from the railroad company. We staggered them like bricks and ran a great big spike through them," he said.

During part of his ministry in Glen's Ferry, Maxwell was supported by Church Pastoral Aid (CPA) a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board program designed to support a full-time pastor on a church field, and the church received a building loan from the board.

"Three different times I served on the executive board of the Utah-Idaho Convention, and that gave me more of an awareness of what the Home Mission Board was doing convention-wide.

"I found out that 95 cents of every dollar that supports the state convention in Utah-Idaho comes from the Home Mission Board," Maxwell said.

He then decided to go to Kamiah in March of 1972, to the two-member church, although he had been offered another larger church in Nevada.

"...For a year-and-a-half I preached to one lady and my family. We had no visitors... They were times of discouragement...The first year was very difficult for us."

That first year, Maxwell baptized two teenagers. "The second year, we had no baptisms at all...the first year in my ministry that I had no baptisms."

A breakthrough came through a tested way of church planting: Home Bible Fellowships;"It was going into the homes of one or two individuals and having Bible studies that bore fruit."

Maxwell and his wife also used other methods, such as having a "Monday school" at Headquarters, a logging town 40 miles from Kamiah --"just like Sunday School, only on Monday,"

He had several Home Bible Fellowships, started weekday ministries, Girls in Action, Royal Ambassadors for boys, Vacation Bible Schools, backyard Bible clubs, puppet ministries, resort efforts, work at the Job Corps camps and associational work.

And he learned some hard lessons. "First," he said, "I learned not to count on Baptist people to be the nucleus. Many people who move out here and claim to be Baptists tend to be rather disappointing. I feel unsaved people are the best prospects for a new work...indigenous people are necessary.

"The second thing I learned was that you grow not by reaching children first, but by reaching the men. If you reach the father, you've got the family, in most cases.

"Third, it takes three years before you will be completely accepted...you must give the idea that you are here for the rest of your life..."

Maxwell is a firm believer in starting new churches. He has work going in Pierce, Weippe and Headquarters. He preaches on Sundays in Weippe, and has Bible studies in Pierce and Headquarters.

"I have a feeling we are in danger of blunting the edge of pioneer missions," Maxwell said. "We must start new churches or we will cut our own throats...There's a real battle in Utah and Idaho where we hear the theory that we must strengthen our churches before starting something new. People say we have so many weak churches...they don't seem to realize that by being mission-minded the churches strengthen themselves."

The two-member Kamiah church has grown to a thriving congregation in a brand-new house of worship on the outskirts of town. Work in nearby towns have also been started.

Ministries in a helicopter logging camp near Headquarters are an example. Loggers bring their trailers in and camp in the area while the logging weather is good, moving on when bad weather comes.

Last year, Maxwell and Jim Russel, a seminary student assigned to help him during the summer, showed films and visited people in the logging camp. One woman was saved, Maxwell said.

He concluded, "I'm optimistic about the work...I know my work is here..."I really feel this area is going to be the Bible belt of the Northwest."

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Religious Faiths Join In
Prayers for the Nation

WASHINGTON (BP)--Christian, Jewish and Islamic religions joined in prayer at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception here at the beginning of inauguration week and at the start of the third century of the American republic.

The unifying theme for the hour and fifteen minute service was prayer for President-elect Jimmy Carter, Vice President-elect Walter F. Mondale, U. S. congressmen and other governmental officials.

Harold Trammel, pastor of the Mt. Jezreel Baptist Church here and chairman of the Inaugural Religious Activities Committee, said that the interfaith service was a demonstration of "sundry faiths striving to become one in our concern for our country." He said that it was hoped that such a demonstration on the part of the religious forces in the nation's capital would set a precedent and would continue the prophetic tradition set forth in the Old Testament to develop the moral character of America.

In effect, the service was a call to the people to "enter the third century with a new commitment and a new spirit for a new America," Trammel continued. Goals of this new America should be a new spirit of cooperation, a new spirit of brotherliness, emphasis on the value of personal character, achievement of social justice, and an end of racism and war, he said.

The multi-faith meeting joined in a litany written by Jack E. McClendon, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church here, and led by Violet Ankrum, president of D. C. Church Women United.

In the litany the congregation prayed, "Gracious God, may we resolve to attempt great things in your name. If asked to assume responsibility for change in our community, may we not allow timidity to stand in our way. If some say conditions will always be the same, and nothing can be done, help us to act boldly and speak courageously."

The prayer continued, "Gracious God, may a new spirit of good will prevail among us. May we be filled with a spirit of love, patience and generosity as we work together to create a climate in our nation in which all persons will be free."

The Inaugural Religious Activities Committee is composed of 27 clergypersons from the Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths. James A. Langley, executive secretary of the D. C. Baptist Convention, is one of four co-chairmen.

The Jubilee Majestic Concert Choir of the Mt. Jezreel Baptist Church and representatives of Judaism, Islam and the Greek Orthodox Church provided the music for the service.

Among those offering prayers for the nation were William Cardinal Baum, archbishop of Washington, Rabbi David Z. Ben-Ami of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Theodore Chelpon of the Greek Orthodox Church and Mohammed Abdul Rauf, director of the Islamic Center in Washington.

African Baptists Look
At Carter's Presidency

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--African Baptist leaders here have responded favorably to the election of Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist, to the U. S. presidency, but they also have some concerns.

In an interview with four African leaders, Southern Baptist missionary press representative, Laura Lee (Mrs. R. Jay E.) Stewart learned they were as a whole very pleased with the election of Carter.

But fear most often expressed was that the mistakes Carter makes will reflect on him not only as the President but as a Christian and that the whole world will be watching.

All the leaders urged constant prayer support for President Carter.

"He will need strength and the Lord's leadership because he has a hard job," said Arthur Kinyanjui, a pastor who serves as chairman of the Baptist Convention of Kenya and vice president for Africa for the Baptist World Alliance. "This is his opportunity to let the world see the difference between being a Christian and being of the world. Jimmy Carter needs to show the difference that Jesus Christ can make in one's heart and life. I hope that all he does will be for the glory of God and his kingdom."

Douglas Waruta, a former pastor now employed by the Bible Society of Kenya, also expressed concerns. He is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University, a Baptist school in Abilene, Tex., and plans to attend seminary in the States.

"My fears for a Christian in politics are that the world has a double standard in judging Christians and other people," Waruta said. "One cannot succeed all the time, and if Carter fails it will be identified with his Christian commitment."

Waruta also talked about Africa's hope for President Carter.

"I believe most of the people here have high hopes. These hopes are for improvement in moral conditions, equality and justice.

"People are looking at the positive side. Our hopes are similar to those we had when John F. Kennedy was president. African countries were gaining their independence about that time, and he offered this sort of hope," Waruta said. "We hope for racial justice, political freedom and economic fairness."

Leonard Otita, a translator at Baptist Publications House here, pointed out that Carter can be a good example to the world. "There are restrictions in some countries, and this is his chance to proclaim to the world the Word of God."

Another Kenyan Baptist, John Wathika, an employee of Brackenhurst Baptist Assembly in Limuru, Kenya, wanted to read more about Carter. "All I know is what I read, but I've followed him since he was a farmer. I believe he will be a hard-working President. The whole world will be watching to see what he does, especially the non-Christian world. We must pray for him."

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Students Distribute Bibles
At University In Thailand

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BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)--The first student project approved at the Ramkhamhaeng University since the military coup here was the recent distribution of 20,000 gift Bibles on campus.

"This was the first student initiated project of any kind approved at the university since the coup of Oct. 6, 1976," said Maxine (Mrs. Robert R.) Stewart, Southern Baptist missionary press representative in Thailand. She said faith, prayer and diligence finally led to administrative approval for the distribution.

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Prior to the recent government change, Ramkhamhaeng University was the scene of virulent student demonstrations and intense political activity, according to Mrs. Stewart.

"Following the coup in which a number of university students were killed or jailed or fled to neighboring Communist countries, all student activities were prohibited," she said.

The Christian students, organized into cell groups, could no longer openly meet, hand out tracts, hold assemblies, put up posters, or have any public meetings on or off campus, according to Mrs. Stewart.

The 60 Christian students felt impressed to attempt a massive Scripture distribution on campus, contacted the Gideons International, and were given 20,000 New Testaments.

The students took the Bibles to 10 campus locations for distribution and in less than two and a half hours, all were gone. While the Christians prepared to leave, students continued to come by and ask for Bibles.

The students who gave the Bibles away said they did not see a single volume thrown away or discarded.

Southern Baptist Missionary William W. Smith Jr., who is involved with student work at several of the Thailand campuses, helped the students with the project, along with several members of Gideons International.

Ramkhamhaeng University is one of the largest universities in Asia with an enrollment of more than 100,000 students, according to Mrs. Stewart.

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Dallas Church Pledges
\$2.8 Million Toward Debt

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DALLAS (BP)--First Baptist Church here, the largest Southern Baptist congregation with 18,500 members, pledged \$2.8 million Sunday, Jan. 16, toward debt retirement.

The drive was initiated to pay for a new education building which has just opened. Mrs. Mary Crowley, a Dallas businesswoman and long time church member, pledged \$750,000 toward the building, which is named after her, if the church would match it.

The response netted \$2,817,768 in pledges, which includes Mrs. Crowley's pledge. This not only paid for the newest building but also eliminated nearly all other building and renovation debts, a spokesman said.

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