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Historical Journal Cites Firsts Among SBC Women

NASHVILLE (BP)--"Woman's time has come," a South Carolina woman who is a member of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission declares in the latest issue of Baptist History and Heritage, the agency's quarterly publication.

"Women, at last, are on the way," writes Loulie Latimer Owens of Irmo, S.C., in the issue which deals with the role of women in Baptist history, "with all the potential for advancing civilization in the future in ways that men have contributed to it in the past."

And Southern Baptist women, she indicates, are part of the movement and have been for some time.

Leon McBeth, professor of church history at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, concurs. "To ignore the contributions of Southern Baptist women would be to read history with one eye shut," McBeth says in the same issue of History and Heritage.

"Women have been significantly involved in Southern Baptist life and have made major contributions..." McBeth adds. Women, he states, have exerted particular influence on Southern Baptist progress in Sunday School work, missions, Christian education, worship and stewardship.

But, McBeth notes, "Southern Baptists have basically followed their host culture in their teachings and attitudes about women. There is no convincing evidence that Southern Baptists have ever influenced their culture or been in advance of the culture on the question of women's rights."

Now in progress among Southern Baptists is "a basic and fundamental reappraisal of the role of women," McBeth observes.

Possibilities for ministry by women and women's ordination are basic issues at stake, he says.

The status of women in Southern Baptist organizational life has vastly improved, suggests Norman H. Letsinger, an assistant pastor in Ludington, Mich., in the same issue of Baptist History and Heritage.

He cites that women vote as "messengers" at SBC annual meetings, serve as members of committees, commissions and SBC boards (as well as in Baptist state conventions.). Also, a woman is presently serving as a SBC officer, he notes.

McBeth and Letsinger cite nine "firsts" among Southern Baptist women nationally which help to illustrate the historic role and status of the denomination's women.

--The first single woman appointed as a foreign missionary by the SBC was Harriet A. Baker, of Virginia, who served in China 1849-53. Not until 1872 were other single women, Lula Whilden and Edmonia Harris Moon, sister of Lottie Moon, appointed as foreign missionaries.

--The first general meeting of Southern Baptist women was in the home of Mrs. Ann Graves in Baltimore in 1868 in conjunction with the SBC meeting there. After 1868 women continued to meet at the time of the Convention.

--The first Southern Baptist state convention to admit women as messengers was Kentucky, in 1869. Several other state conventions had done the same before 1900.

--The first state to form a central committee of Baptist women to correlate the work of local church missionary societies was South Carolina in 1876. Other states soon followed.

--The first woman to register as a SBC messenger was Mrs. Myra E. Graves in 1877 and again in 1882. This apparently went unnoticed because she registered as M.E. Graves. After this women were excluded as messengers until 1918, when the Convention voted to allow to seat them.

--The first denomination-wide organization of Southern Baptist women for the promotion of missions was Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), established in 1888 in Richmond, Va.

--The first woman to address the SBC in annual session was Mrs. W.J. Cox, president of WMU in 1929.

--The first woman to serve as an SBC officer was Mrs. R.L. Mathis, former president of WMU. She was elected second vice-president in 1963 and was the first woman to preside over a part of the convention meeting (1964). In 1972, Mrs. Mathis was nominated as SBC president but was not elected. Mrs. Carl E. Bates, elected second vice-president in 1976, is the second woman SBC officer.

--The first woman ordained to the ministry by a Southern Baptist church was Addie David in 1964, so far as is known. Twenty or more women have been ordained since that time, according to reports. Northern Baptists have ordained women to the ministry at least since 1894, when Edith Hill Booker was ordained in Kansas.

Southern Baptists have ordained women to diaconate roles, although few in number, for over 100 years, McBeth notes. By 1975, 200-300 SBC churches were thought to have women deacons, and indications are that many more churches are considering ordaining women deacons, McBeth says. The 18,191st messenger to register at a SBC meeting was Mrs. Annie Nobles Mizell, a woman deacon from North Carolina, at the June 1976, SBC sessions in Norfolk, Va., which broke an all-time registration record previously set at the 1974 convention in Dallas.

"To a degree which might surprise some," he concludes, "women have helped make the Southern Baptist Convention what it is today."

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Disaster Response Info
Sharing Discussed in D. C.

Baptist Press
2/4/77

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Disaster response officials in the U. S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) met here with Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board staff members and two field representatives to discuss information-sharing procedures and coordination of relief efforts.

The special briefing to inform board staff members concerning the OFDA operation and planning procedures, was arranged by Bill Dalton, OFDA assistant director for planning and evaluation, and W. Eugene Grubbs, the board's disaster response coordinator.

The OFDA, a division of the U. S. Agency for International Development (AID), coordinates relief efforts in response to natural disasters and needs relating to civil strife.

"We were warmly received," Grubbs said. "I got the impression that OFDA officials feel good about Southern Baptist responses in terms of immediate action and type of response." Previously, Paul Bell of the Latin America desk in the State Department, had commended Guatemalan relief efforts in a letter to James Harris of Fort Worth, president of the Foreign Mission Board.

While most relief agencies have representatives assigned only to relief, Southern Baptists operate through missionaries who have other primary responsibilities.

Although OFDA must have an official request from the U. S. embassy in a country when a disaster occurs in order to provide assistance from the U. S. government, the Foreign Mission Board is free to move into disaster areas to determine needs and make appropriate response.

When a disaster occurs, the board's office of disaster response makes immediate contact with OFDA and with Southern Baptist missionaries to compile as much information as possible concerning the event, including amount and type of aid needed immediately, Grubbs explained. Information concerning a disaster in a nation is channeled to OFDA from embassy sources. Missionaries report directly to the Foreign Mission Board. In catastrophes of major proportions, a survey team from the Foreign Mission Board staff is sent.

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Foreign Mission Board representatives at the meeting were Charles W. Bryan, area secretary for Middle America and the Caribbean; the two field representatives, A. Clark Scanlon and William W. Graves, from Bryan's area; Harold E. Hurst, assistant to the medical consultant; and Grubbs, W. L. (Wimpy) Smith, Myrtle Wells and Mary Mountcastle of the Hunger Relief and Disaster Response Office.

OFDA representatives included Dalton, and Stan Guth, assistant director for operations, and other staff members.

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Georgia Baptists Expand
Ministry to the Elderly

Baptist Press
2/4/77

ATLANTA (BP)--The Georgia Baptist Convention has purchased Paces Ferry Towers, a large apartment complex in downtown Atlanta, to expand its ministry to elderly persons.

The apartment complex, which cost the convention \$1,850,000, contains 200 apartment units in three separate buildings, 4.5 acres of land, a restaurant, a beauty parlor and other facilities.

It is located on East Paces Ferry Road in northwest Atlanta, a short distance from the Georgia governor's mansion and near Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church.

Purchase was consummated by trustees of Peachtree on Peachtree Inn, a highrise home for senior citizens which was given to the Georgia Baptist Convention in 1967 by the Fred W. Beazley Foundation. About 160 persons live at Peachtree on Peachtree Inn, which was at one time the Winecoff Hotel and later the Peachtree on Peachtree Hotel.

Searcy S. Garrison, executive secretary of the Georgia Baptist Convention, said, "This new facility at Paces Ferry Towers will enable Peachtree on Peachtree Inn to enter an apartment ministry for eligible older people. It will also make it possible to begin serious plans to develop a nursing home ministry in the future."

Garrison said trustees will take about one year to make final plans for policies and procedures for development of Paces Ferry Towers. Georgia Baptists also operate Baptist Village at Waycross, Ga., a home for the elderly, opened in 1955 and housing about 300 persons.

Southern Seminary D. Min.
Receives Full Recognition

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Baptist Press
2/4/77

LOUISVILLE (BP)--The doctor of ministry (D.Min.) degree at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here has completed the final phase of its accreditation process by receiving full accreditation without notation of any kind.

The action means that Southern Seminary's D.Min. holds the highest possible official rating on the basis of nationally recognized accreditation standards.

The Commission on Accreditation of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is the agency responsible for accreditation of theological education.

Southern's D.Min. program, begun in 1972, had earlier received "preliminary accreditation" status pending the latest round of hearings by the commission on a large group of ATS member institutions.

R. T. Russell Dies
In Dublin, Ga.

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Baptist Press
2/4/77

DUBLIN, Ga. (BP)--R. T. Russell, former secretary of evangelism for the Georgia Baptist Convention, died here, February 3, 1977, after a long illness. He was 81 years of age.

Russell lead the Georgia Baptist evangelism program from 1955-64. He had previously been pastor in Georgia, Florida and Kentucky. He was a graduate of Brewton-Parker Junior College, Mercer University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Survivors include one daughter, Mrs. Charles C. Duncan, whose husband is executive secretary of the Georgia Baptist Foundation, and one granddaughter, Netherland Duncan, office secretary for the Georgia Baptist Convention.

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The Painter of Petropolis
'Holds God's Brushes'

By Teresa K. Shields

RICHMOND (BP)--Artist Wim L. Van Dijk's abundant beard has turned from black to grayish-white, but he still views himself as "the little obedient boy only holding God's brushes."

The Brazilian painter, in the United States to make preparations for an exhibit in New Orleans next October, shared his philosophy of life and religion in a recent visit with friends at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board here.

Besides being an artist, Van Dijk is a professor, a ninth generation Van Dyke from Holland, and for the fifth year has been voted the outstanding citizen of his home city, Petropolis, Brazil.

He has been ranked third behind the president and former president of Brazil in a list of 10 men Brazilians feel have done the most for their country.

But more important than all these honors, in his view, is the fact that he's a Christian.

His faith in Jesus Christ permeates all that he does. "I like to translate Romans 8:14 like this: 'Those are the sons of God who are put in action by God's spirit.' I am put in action by God's spirit when I paint. The Lord paints and uses my hands as instruments."

A man of force in word and strength of character, Van Dijk is a double amputee. He lost both legs during the Dutch Resistance movement of World War II, according to a close friend, Rogers Smith, administrative associate to the executive director of the board. Van Dijk walks on artificial limbs.

Acquainted with Southern Baptist missionaries in Brazil, Van Dijk says he is "not a man of denominations." He continued, "I respect all denominations because I believe we are all the Body of Christ. I am very proud of my Baptist colleagues."

A professor of art history and theology at the United Seminary of the Order of Evangelical Theology in Brazil, he claims 56 years of Bible training.

"Reading the Bible I get inspiration for what I paint," he explained. "I never touch a brush unless first, early in the morning, I study the Word of God. I know those wonderful biblical figures by heart, because I am so close to them."

With his long hair and beard, he resembles one's idea of a biblical prophet. As a matter of fact many of his paintings are self-portraits, which he paints with the aid of two mirrors. In other paintings, he has used his wife and several of his seven children as models.

As an artist, he listens and observes people. "A 5-year-old taught me the word 'father-pleaser,'" Van Dijk said. "And I thought: you know, as Christians we should be Father-pleasers."

Van Dijk's Christian dedication and artistic talent deeply influence those who know him.

Beauty touches every part of him, but unlike ordinary men he watches for it and captures it before it flies away and delicately saves it for all people. He loves to love it, too.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers.

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John Rascoe Heads
Annuity Board Trustees

Baptist Press
2/4/77

DALLAS (BP)--John R. Rascoe, pastor of First Baptist Church, Odessa, Tex., was elected chairman of the trustees of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board here during the agency's 59th trustee meeting.

Other officers besides Rascoe, who succeeds W. Gordon Hobgood of Dallas, are vice chairmen, William D. Geer, dean of the school of business at Samford University, Birmingham; Robert A. Fanning, a Dallas attorney; and Harold Wainscott, pastor, Latonia Baptist Church, Covington, Ky.

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