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Carter Hopes Churches Will Reconcile, But Doubts It

PLAINS, Ga. (BP)--During a visit home, President Jimmy Carter prayed for reconciliation between the split Baptist churches in Plains.

But as he left the worship service at Maranatha Baptist Church, which split from Plains Baptist Church, the President told reporters he doubts whether the two churches will reunite.

Maranatha Church split from Plains Church in the midst of a controversy over whether to fire former pastor Bruce Edwards.

The controversy began during efforts by Clennon King, a black non-denominational minister, to integrate the Plains Church. The church, in which Carter had long served as a deacon and Sunday School teacher, voted to open its membership, but the wounds of the controversy never healed.

Carter ended speculation about which church he would attend by visiting both during his visit home. The President attended Sunday School at the Plains Church and the worship service at Maranatha, which is made up of most of the former Plains members who supported his position for racial openness.

During the worship service he reportedly prayed for reconciliation between the two churches.

Afterwards, he told reporters that both were good churches and that he hopes both would flourish and that both have an important role to play.

He said, "Whatever they decide is up to them," commenting that he has his own church (First Baptist in Washington) to worry about.

The Maranatha Church meets in a 100-year-old church building recently reopened.

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Conference Speakers Oppose
 Mandatory Retirement

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SHAWNEE (BP)--A leading psychiatric educator and former faculty member at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary believes that senior citizens should be utilized in consultative and advisory roles after retirement.

Wayne Oates, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Louisville School of Medicine, spoke here recently at Oklahoma Baptist University's fifth annual Special Adult Conference for persons 55 and older.

"Older persons are particularly adapted to this consultative service," explained Oates. "They can be advisors, mentors or consultants. What they have to offer is judgment, perspective and wisdom--that is if they haven't allowed themselves to become bitter, cynical and vindictive."

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Oates, who taught at Southern Seminary more than 25 years and has authored 24 books on counseling and pastoral care, expressed opposition to mandatory retirement, but said he intends to comply with the mandatory retirement age of 65 enforced by the University of Louisville.

"I don't plan to retire," he said, "I simply plan to change the type of work I do. I'm not going to let someone else decide when and how much work I can do. They can only decide where."

A second speaker at the conference, Adelle Carlson, senior adult consultant at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, agreed with Oates.

"I recommend that people retire early if they can afford it," Miss Carlson said. "But when it's a matter of putting bread on the table, I think there should be the opportunity to continue working. It should be more flexible. Some people are most productive after 65, and it's a shame to stop that."

Miss Carlson also expressed the belief that churches should make weekday activities available for the special needs of senior citizens. "But," she added, "senior adults should also be included in every other activity of the church."

"Their needs are basically the same as everyone else's," she explained, "but the degree of need is greater."