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New Plains Pastor On Job,
Doesn't Like Nation's Gaze

By Norman Jameson

PLAINS, Ga. (BP)--For any pastor called to a new church, there is a certain period of adjustment necessary for him to get to know the pulse of his new congregation; for him to learn what they expect of him and for him to get a working knowledge of what he can expect from them.

But for Don Wilson, newly elected pastor of Plains Baptist Church, that period of adjustment has accelerated into a few days because of the national attention the President's home church has received.

Plains Baptist Church was thrust into national prominence far outstripping its size and influence when a black minister from Albany, Ga., Clennon King, tried to join the church and was refused membership. The incident turned into a racial discrimination conflict, the church split and the pastor resigned.

This all took place when the church's most prominent member, Jimmy Carter, was running for election to the nation's highest office and was perceived by many to be a political move intended to embarrass Carter.

Wilson brings his wife, Linda, and four children into this church where the congregation is now ready to get out of the national eye, settle down and work toward restoring their Christian sense of community.

He was recommended as pastor by a search committee which got his name from a former Navy buddy of his, Comer Williamson, now director of missions for the local association of which Plains Baptist Church is a member.

But the ghost of previous incidents that brought the 400-member congregation to the attention of America continues to haunt the church. Wilson said he has been interviewed more times than he can remember and his church members feel they have gotten "bad press."

He said the sudden attention was a complete surprise to him, that all he wanted and all his congregation expected was for him to "be their pastor, available for counseling, to work with church leaders in trying to develop programs in the church and who would be out knocking on doors for the Lord."

Now, when the newspaper comes out, "I'm almost afraid to read it," Wilson said.

That's a pretty uncomfortable position for a country-reared man born in Athens, Tenn. Wilson has spent the last 11 years pastoring churches like Ten Mile Baptist Church in Meigs County, Tennessee and Vine Run Baptist Church in Kentucky while attending classes at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

Wilson has told reporters that he doesn't want publicity, that if he had his way he'd still be a complete unknown. He says the sooner people consider him just the pastor of Plains Baptist Church, the better for him so he can get moving in his pastorate.

A watchcare committee has been set up to consider membership applications to the church. It is a six-member committee, including the pastor, which will counsel with applicants and determine their qualifications. Wilson and his family have applied for membership under that procedure.

After a period of approximately two weeks, prospective members will be presented to the congregation for a vote. There will be no automatic refusals or acceptances on the basis of race.

Wilson doesn't feel he knows the heartbeat of the church well enough to comment if its spirit has been dampened by the long interim between pastors and the internal turmoil under the hard gaze of the nation.

With two of his children in Plains Elementary School, and two others in Americus, Ga., public schools and his family beginning to get settled, Wilson is determined with all he possesses to help renew a good spirit.

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\$2.95 Million 'Miracle'
Approved For Dallas Baptist

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DALLAS (BP)--Texas Baptists' executive board approved a \$2,950,000 package at its December meeting here designed to solve Dallas Baptist College's financial and accreditation problems.

The 192-member board, which transacts business between annual sessions of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, also accepted an invitation to provide several thousand volunteer short-term mission workers for a four year evangelistic campaign in Brazil.

Dallas Baptist College officials said the financial plan, adopted after lengthy discussion by the board, was expected to insure the school's accreditation when the accreditation committee of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools meets Dec. 11. The accrediting agency placed the school on public probation a year ago, contending that too much of the school's revenues were going to debt retirement. It set a December deadline for the school to remedy the situation or lose its accreditation.

W. E. Thorn, president of Dallas Baptist, called the financial plan "a miracle." He had said earlier that loss of accreditation would render degrees worthless. "We would have no alternative but to close the school," he said.

Thorn, who assumed the presidency of the financially-troubled school in 1975, said the college has already raised \$675,000 of the \$1,275,000 which it pledged to raise in three years, over and above its regular annual sustentation fund.

The remainder of the package includes \$200,000 to be raised by Dallas Baptist Association and another \$1,475,000 by the state convention (which includes \$175,000 approved last May), \$700,000 from the purchase of four tracts of land owned by Dallas Baptist College in Dallas, Tarrant and Johnson Counties; and \$600,000 over the next three years from unrestricted convention monies.

The financial plan will pay off all of the school's capital indebtedness except for bonded indebtedness on residence halls, said Glenn Biggs, San Antonio banker who served on the ad hoc committee that drafted the plan. Income from the dormitories would be sufficient to meet those obligations, he added.

Despite the financial problems which have plagued the school since its inception in Dallas in 1965, the school has almost 1,100 students, said Virgil Henson, retired educator retained to work with the school's administration and the Texas Baptist Christian Education Coordinating Board in finding a solution to the school's problems.

Dallas Baptist College was opened in Dallas in 1965. Its predecessor, Decatur Baptist College, founded in 1892, was known as the world's oldest junior college. The college became a senior institution in 1969, graduating its first senior class in 1970, the same year it won accreditation from the Southern Association.

The college came to the Dallas area at the invitation of the Dallas Association and was located on a 200-acre tract--the first 100 acres given by developer John Stemmons and the second 100 acres acquired in 1965. Otis Strickland, president at Decatur, was the school's first president and served until 1966 when he was succeeded by Charles Pitts. Thorn succeeded Pitts.

Contrary to persistent rumors, the college enjoys broad support from Dallas churches, an association spokesman said. Almost \$200,000 annually is given by churches in the association and this year 711 of the school's 1,068 enrolment are from Dallas. President Thorn says Dallas churches provide more support for the school than others do for any other Texas Baptist college.

The Dallas business community has also supported the college. The sustentation drive annually nets more than \$300,000, about a tenth of the annual budget.

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Baptist Minister Says
KCIA Listing Is 'Curious'

By Barry Garrett and Robert O'Brien

ATLANTA (BP)--William L. Self, a Southern Baptist minister listed by a secret Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) document as a candidate for possible "manipulation," said he finds the listing "curious" and welcomes the chance to discuss it openly.

Self, pastor of Atlanta's Wieuca Road Baptist Church, said he traveled to South Korea, Feb. 15-25, 1975, as a guest of that government because the visit "represented to me a unique opportunity to witness for my faith in Jesus Christ to a foreign head of state. No Christian should ever pass up that chance." Self said he went as a pastor, "not in any official capacity from my government or my denomination."

The visit came after it was recommended by Korean evangelist Billy Kim, who had led an evangelistic crusade at Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Nov., 1974. The trip, at the invitation of the South Korean prime minister, included an audience with Korean President Park Chung Hee. The Korean leaders wanted Self to come to their country to assess widespread charges that religious oppression existed there.

The KCIA document, recently released by the House Subcommittee on International Organization, proposed a "1976 Plan for Operation in the United States" which involved "manipulation" of numerous religious leaders, Congress, the White House, the Pentagon, the media and the academic community. The KCIA, which apparently never got the plan fully launched, plotted infiltration to strengthen "the execution of the U. S. security commitment to the ROK (Republic of Korea) and ROK-US ties."

The House committee deleted names from the released document because the investigation is in progress, but Self openly declared he has been contacted by the committee and told the KCIA document lists his name. He said the committee asked for an interview, "which I welcome wholeheartedly because I have nothing to hide."

"I do not know at this point what some of their (the South Koreans) intentions were," he said in a telephone interview with Baptist Press, "but mine were and are clear. Perhaps I'm naive in international, worldly politics, but it represented to me a most unique opportunity to witness for my faith in Jesus Christ to a foreign head of state."

Self said he has a natural inclination toward internationals because the Atlanta Korean Church uses Wieuca Road Church's facilities and because his church has a long-standing ministry to internationals in Atlanta through language and citizenship classes.

He said that during the 1975 visit, he and Korean officials "exchanged customary gifts, not money; ideas, not contracts, and the chance to explore truths, not intrigue." He said the visit included "a routine public relations visit to the KCIA headquarters, the chief of naval operations and others--all with the knowledge of the U. S. embassy."

But he said no one attempted to bribe or improperly influence him, either in Korea or since his return to the States.

He did note that he has written some letters to U. S. senators and representatives urging retention of U. S. troops in Korea and that Kim preached one Sunday evening

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sermon at his church and introduced him to various Korean dignitaries during Kim's 1976 visits to the U. S.

"But no one has attempted to get me to do anything improper," declared Self. "Billy Kim wanted me to support troop retention, but I wrote the letters because I, along with the Pentagon, happen to believe we should keep troops there. It would be unthinkable to sell my integrity for an overseas trip."

When he returned from Korea, Self said in a 1975 interview that he found that Christians are free to preach and evangelize in South Korea, as long as they refrain from overt acts of political interference that might upset "the delicate balance of power" there.

During his 1975 interview with President Park, Self, a trustee of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Foreign Mission Board, said he told Park that SBC missionaries are instructed to conduct spiritual ministries to persons, not become involved in the politics of the country. Self became president of the board's trustees in 1977.

The KCIA document also called for "manipulation" of a 359-member Baptist tour group (which Self says is "totally unrelated to me") and a series of other proposed actions among leaders from many areas of life.

They include invitations to important persons in the Methodist and Presbyterian churches in the States to visit Korea; manipulation of a minister of the Holiness Church and another person "of the overseas missionary board of the national headquarters of the American Methodist Church;" strengthening of the "utilization of already pro-ROK religious figures;" utilization of a person with a Korean language newspaper; utilization and suppression of anti-government Christians; invitations to influential "resident" religious leaders to visit Korea at the expense of the Korean government; and payment of expenses in an attempt to influence 50 churches in Washington, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago and Houston.

The objectives of the "1976 plan," as stated in the document, were to thwart North Korean control and influence in America, strengthen U.S. commitment to South Korea and disrupt North Korea's infiltration of Korean residents in the U. S.

The document outlined "operational guidelines" to achieve the objectives. They included efforts to "organize forces supporting the ROK in all circles in the U.S. and transform anti-ROK public opinion."

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Prayer Answered
On National TV

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12/7/77

ARVADA, Colo. (BP)--No one can tell members of Ward Road Baptist Church that prayer doesn't work, since they saw their prayers answered on national television.

The congregation here felt that member Jack Dolbin, wide receiver for the hometown Denver Broncos football team, wasn't catching as many passes as they would've liked so they decided to pray for him.

Pastor Stewart McChesney said he doesn't like to think small, so he covenanted with the congregation on a Wednesday evening to pray that Dolbin would begin to have more passes thrown his way on the gridiron.

The following Sunday in the Broncos' game against Cincinnati, "God answered our prayer on national television," McChesney said later.

Dolbin caught two passes for 91 yards, including an 81-yard touchdown reception in the Broncos' 24-13 win. "It was a beautiful catch over the shoulder--the hard way to catch a pass," McChesney said.

Dolbin is now relating the story in testimonies he gives at various churches and other gatherings.

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