



BAPTIST PRESS

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**Georgia Church Elects
Woman Deacon Chairman**

DECATUR, Ga. (BP)--Mrs. Otis A. Johnson was elected unanimously as chairman of deacons at First Baptist Church here.

She is believed to be the first woman named chairman of deacons in a Georgia Baptist church.

Decatur First Baptist Church has 12 female deacons. Mrs. Johnson was one of the first four elected and ordained in 1952. She and her husband have been members there about 30 years. She has taught Sunday School classes and worked in Woman's Missionary Union all of those 30 years. She has also been chairman of the missions and finance committees and served on the pulpit committee in 1965.

Mrs. Johnson has been director of the business services division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta since 1969. She previously was administrative assistant in the Georgia Baptist Woman's Missionary Union office for eight years and supervisor with the telephone company for 12 years.

"It was not an easy decision," she told the Georgia Baptist Christian Index. "But I definitely felt led of God to accept when the committee approached me. I hope I can make a meaningful contribution to my church."

She added, "I would like to think that I was elected because I am the person for the job and not because I am a woman. If I did not feel that way I would not have accepted."

W. W. Lancaster, pastor at Decatur First Baptist Church since 1965, said, "I am exhilarated by this action. It's a symbol of progress that Christian churches are recognizing ability and dignity of individual persons, regardless of sex."

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Pastor in Public Office
OK Say Tenn. Baptists

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--A resolution "supporting any action necessary" to remove a section of the state constitution which prohibits ministers from serving in the state legislature was approved by the executive board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention during a meeting here.

The U. S. Supreme Court has heard oral arguments in a major church-state case involving a Chattanooga pastor who was denied his elective seat to the legislature by a state constitutional prohibition that declares ministers should be excluded from public office.

The minister, Paul A. McDaniel, pastor of the Second Missionary Baptist Church in Chattanooga, was granted his seat when Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart stayed a Tennessee ruling upholding the prohibition until the Supreme Court could decide the case.

The executive board also approved a stewardship challenge to double Southern Baptist Cooperative Program mission giving from 1977's \$9.4 million to \$18.8 by 1982. It announced that mission gifts for the year ending Oct. 31 were \$511,643 more than the budget goal of \$9.4 million.

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Good Standing Restored to
Dallas Baptist College

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools reaffirmed the accreditation of Dallas Baptist College here and restored the school to good standing.

The accrediting agency had placed the college on public probation a year ago, contending that too much of its revenues were going to debt retirement.

A week before the Southern Association acted, the 192-member Texas Baptist Executive Board approved a \$2,950,000 package, which college and Baptist General Convention of Texas leaders hoped would solve the school's financial and accreditation problems.

Dallas Baptist President W. E. Thorn called the financial plan "a miracle" and said that it was a key in the Southern Association's decision to take the school off probation. Thorn said loss of accreditation would have rendered degrees worthless, and "there would have been no alternative but to close the school."

Thorn said the Southern Association expressed "high commendation for the long-range study plan and the package alleviating the burdensome debt."

He said that the college has already raised \$675,000 of the \$1,275,000 which it pledged to raise in three years and that it has paid off the remainder of a \$1 million loan to Civic Savings and Loan, Inc. of Irving, Tex., and a \$300,000 loan to a Dallas bank.

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

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Africa Missionary Forces
Experience Year of Change

By Ruth Fowler

Baptist Press
12/15/77

RICHMOND (BP)--The year 1977 has been one of change for Southern Baptist missionaries in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Some, like two couples in Uganda, have had to change the whole approach to their ministry because of the banning of Baptists and 26 other denominations or independent Christian groups by President Idi Amin.

But these two couples remaining in Uganda are continuing with a restricted ministry of various kinds and are "a rallying point of hope" for the Baptist people in that land, Davis L. Saunders told the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board at its December meeting.

Saunders, the board's area secretary for Eastern and Southern Africa, said the Webster Carrolls and the James Rices are now seeking "to minister to the physical needs of the people in the area where they once served in a church-related capacity."

The missionaries have sent an appeal for removal of the ban to the president's office, and have been informed that a meeting with Amin has been requested. But so far they have received no response about the time or place of such a meeting, Saunders said.

In the meantime, 22 Baptist schools are still functioning as community schools, utilizing premises which formerly served for congregational worship.

Outlining other areas of change, Saunders updated board members on withdrawal of missionaries from Ethiopia, where inability to continue working in the midst of the nation's civil conflicts has led to subsequent reassignment of the majority of these missionaries to other work.

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Two of the Ethiopian missionary families opened work in new countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. The William P. (Bill) Steegers began work in the Republic of the Seychelles and the Dale E. Beighles started new work in Bophuthatswana. In Rwanda, the new work was begun by the Earl R. Martins, who had originally planned to begin work in Madagascar, until that opportunity was closed. New work was begun in South Africa by the Harrison H. Pikes, who formerly served in Angola.

Angola was the scene of civil conflict when missionaries left two years ago, but recently missionaries have been able to ship Bibles and leadership training materials into that country. The Curtis L. Dixons, living in Portugal to maintain contact with Angola Baptists, still hope to return to Angola during 1978, Saunders said.

Rhodesian missionaries are still carrying on medical, educational and evangelistic ministries. "In spite of the continuing political pressure and intensified guerilla activity within the country, the work of the missionaries and the convention has continued to grow both in numbers and in strength," Saunders said.

In late October, word was received by the board that the Rhodesian government intended to place "stringent restriction" on the granting of work permits for missionaries. Although the application for a work permit for one volunteer couple was refused and they were sent elsewhere, Saunders said that the situation has modified "with hopeful signs that missionaries on furlough will be allowed to return to the field and that new missionaries will be granted work permits."

In other developments, Foreign Mission Board leaders hope Southern Baptist missionaries will be given permission to enter two other African nations, Burundi and Mauritius, within the next year.

During the past year, evangelistic, stewardship and leadership training emphases have been spotlighted throughout the area. A conference on agricultural missions in Eastern and Southern Africa looked at different agriculture projects and examined the role of the agricultural missionary as an evangelist.

Saunders also reported evangelistic thrusts in Kenya and Zambia which resulted in more than 2,000 professions of faith in each country.

He said missionaries and their mission organizations in Eastern and Southern Africa are working "with minimum frustration" within the limitations in personnel and finance placed upon them by the degree to which Southern Baptists are responding to the challenge for Bold Mission Thrust, the Southern Baptist goal to evangelize the world in this century.

But he added that these mission organizations could "absorb effectively and utilize efficiently much greater resources in both personnel and funds if such were available."

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Preacher Carries
A Loaded Gun

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12/15/77

PINEVILLE, Ky. (BP)--When deputy sheriff Lewis Jennings grabs a prisoner by the arm and leads him away, chances are the two are not bound for jail, but for church.

Jennings, pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Brodhead, and a staff member at Clear Creek Baptist School here, works with inmates at Chenoa Forestry Camp, a minimum security penal institution near Pineville. He became interested in providing activities for the prisoners but learned they could not leave camp unless in the custody of an officer.

Jennings solved that problem by being sworn in as a deputy sheriff. He takes the men to church gatherings, civic clubs and other functions in the course of his work.

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Congregations Receive
Second-Hand Opinions

By Nancy McGough

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Preachers who totally rely on commentaries when preparing sermons are short-changing their congregations--and God--believes J. J. Owens.

"We shouldn't give congregations second-hand opinions when God has given us the ability and talent to be involved with His word," says the professor of Old Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, adding, "Too many preachers read about the Bible rather than reading the Bible itself."

Owens feels reading the Bible in the original languages not only helps sermons be more authoritative and more accurate, but also more exciting. "It makes your words come alive," he is convinced.

But at the same time Owens is critical of pastors who neglect their language study, he understands why it so frequently happens.

"A preacher goes to seminary and studies Hebrew and Greek and gets just enough to start using it. Then he goes to a church and gets so involved with visitation, administration and everything else that he doesn't study for awhile. By then it's too difficult to go back and pick it up," he says.

To help preachers in their dilemma, Owens is preparing an analysis of the entire Old Testament, giving grammatical and lexical information as well as the translation of each Hebrew word. The work will be released in 22 volumes over the next 11 years.

The text of Exodus is complete and available for those preparing January Bible Studies, and Genesis will be released by the beginning of the new year. Isaiah and the twelve minor prophets will follow next year.

The books will make it possible for a pastor to go through every word of his sermon text in Hebrew, and he is given the exact page of the standard Hebrew lexicon (dictionary) which will provide him with the shades of meaning of each word.

"It usually takes a person two or three hours just to do a couple verses. This book enables him to interpret much more material, since the tiresome work is already done," Owens says.



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Issue-Straddling
Not Grant's Style

By Jack Betts

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--To the secular public, the name J. Marse Grant conjures up visions of a Bible-totin', narrow minded table thumper bent on ridding the world of Demon Rum, sins of the flesh and similar excesses.

Guess again.

For Grant, the usually outspoken editor of North Carolina's third largest newspaper, the Biblical Recorder, could be everyman's kindly grandfather, were he but 20 years older.

To be sure James Marse Grant is against consumption of alcohol, pornography, infidelity and many other things generally associated with immorality and anti-Christianity.

But his demeanor, except when composing a sharp editorial, is that of a stern disciplinarian--neatly-cropped graying hair and well lined face wrapped in steel-rimmed glasses but softened by the sparkle of brown eyes, a glowing smile and an easy manner with strangers.

But most of all there is the air of independence about this man who has for 28 years edited church-related publications, 11 years putting out Charity and Children, the Baptist children's homes publication, and the last 17 as editor of The Biblical Recorder.

Under his tutelage, the Recorder has doubled in circulation from 60,000 weekly to 120,000. "It should have tripled," Grant says. But even at a paltry 120,000 circulation, The Biblical Recorder is running behind only The News and Observer of Raleigh and The Charlotte Observer in circulation.

And part of the reason for that success very likely is Grant's determination to speak strongly about the church, the state and the world.

"It's easier to editorialize on harmless issues like motherhood, the flag, apple pie type attitudes," Grant mused. "But if the church is going to be an influence on activities today, it cannot restrict itself. We've got some real tough decisions ahead of us as a nation and as a state, and as long as I'm editor of The Biblical Recorder, we expect to address these issues."

A Democrat, Grant has served in some capacity for North Carolina's last five governors and had an offer to head the office of citizen affairs. He turned it down because he's not interested in politics.

"Maybe if I have any calling in life," says Grant, "it would be motivating people for good causes. I don't have any political ambition."

Some of Grant's readers are surprised to learn that he is not a preacher--not formally, anyway. Although he has spoken in many of the Baptist churches in the state, Grant is what he calls a "bootleg preacher" who graduated from High Point College in 1941 with a degree in history and English.

Says Grant, "I'm a layman and that means I don't bother too much with pious language."

But strong language, yes, and some of Grant's editorial positions have brought him some criticism.

In July, Grant had fired off a blast at Baptist-sponsored Wake Forest University for allowing Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flynt to speak on campus, and later he criticized evangelist Billy Graham, an old friend, after newspaper stories revealed that Graham's organizations had accumulated nearly \$23 million in various accounts and holdings.

The hostile fire returned at Grant came mostly from Dr. Harold Tribble, past president of Wake Forest, who urged Grant's removal from his editorship for "misusing" the Flynt episode and for a "scurrilous and unfounded attack" on Graham.

Tribble said it was a "violent assumption" to presume that Grant speaks for the Baptist State Convention.

Grant agreed with that statement, at least, answering in a later editorial by another staff member that each Baptist speaks for himself.

Baptist leaders jumped to Grant's defense, standing behind their editor and declaring that the Recorder's Board of Directors was "100 percent in support of Grant."

Later, when the convention created a special committee to study relations between Wake Forest and the church, Grant was quick to support it and pointed out several fields of inquiry--such as the reason for the declining percentage of Tar Heel Baptist students enrolling there.

When all the fuss had died down, Grant says he received two warm letters from Graham promising more disclosure about his organization's holdings. The mail from around the state was split on Grant's positions, and he dutifully published a portion of each.

That, says Grant with a note of pride, is what "the Baptist genius" is all about--the freedom to speak out because there is no individual who can banish a dissident.

"Each man can speak," says Grant. "What has made us what we are today is the freedom to do so, even though it does cause some pain and some embarrassment."

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Jack Betts is a reporter for the Greensboro Daily News.

(BP) Photo mailed to State Baptist papers.

Missionary Recovering,
Released From Hospital

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Baptist Press
12/16/77

RICHMOND (BP)--C. Ernest Harvey, Southern Baptist missionary hospitalized in New York City with encephalitis since Oct. 23, has been released from the hospital and is recovering in Florida.

The Harveys will live in Gainesville, Fla., during the rest of Harvey's recuperation in a house furnished by a local Baptist association. Mrs. Harvey told officials at the Foreign Mission Board here that her husband had made the trip well, but was a little tired. He is still being treated for some infections related to the disease and is termed "progressing" by his doctors.

Harvey, serving in southern Portugal, became ill in mid-October. He was rushed in a semiconscious state to the Lisbon, Portugal, hospital and then on to New York City's St. Luke's Hospital. He was in critical condition for more than two weeks.

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