



BAPTIST PRESS

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April 30, 1979

79-70

Price Accepts Pastorate
Of Newly Formed Church

By Charles Richardson

HIGH POINT, N. C. (BP)--E. W. (Buddy) Price Jr., who resigned recently as pastor of the 2,867-member Green Street Baptist Church of High Point, N. C., has accepted the pastorate of a newly organized congregation here to be known as the Grace Baptist Church.

Price and three staff members resigned at a church conference two weeks after the congregation approved 10 guidelines recommended by the deacons in response to the spread of the charismatic movement in High Point. The staff felt enforcement of the guidelines would create a restrictive situation.

The 58-year-old Price, who has been active in the state and national Southern Baptist work, earlier told the Biblical Recorder, North Carolina state Baptist paper, that he was not personally involved in speaking in tongues or with any movement that might be interpreted as outside the traditional ministry of Baptist churches.

"I am a Southern Baptist and want to remain in a Southern Baptist church," he said.

The new 300-member congregation, formed out of the Green Street Church, also has called the three staff members who resigned at the Green Street Church at the time Price did. They are Melvin B. Anderson, minister of religious education; James Davidson, minister of music, and James A. Purvis, minister of youth.

Plans call for the church, which was to hold its first worship service May 6th, to cooperate with the Central Baptist Association and the North Carolina and Southern Baptist Conventions.

The church has adopted a statement of "common commitment" at its first organization meeting. It reads, "We are committed to the building of a Southern Baptist church, a fellowship that is completely autonomous but cooperating with other Baptist churches in common missionary endeavors."

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'Mighty Pearl' Hits
400 Baptist Families

By Tim Nicholas

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The "Mighty Pearl" River, in a rampage beyond its banks, left all Mississippi Baptist churches dry, but damaged the homes of more than 400 Baptist families.

Four Jackson churches reported nearly 400 families with homes underwater. Colonial Heights Baptist Church, in one of the hardest hit areas of Mississippi, counted 140 families, fully one-third of its membership, with flooded homes.

Jackson's Broadmoor Baptist Church has at least 100 families affected by flooding; First Baptist Church, 75; and Northminster Baptist Church about 30.

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Dozens more were flooded in the Pearl and Flowood areas and further downriver, but accurate estimates weren't available.

Baptist pastors with homes flooded included Len Turner of Colonial Heights, Joe Tuten of Calvary, David Grant of Broadmoor and Riley Ainsworth of Hopewell in Copiah County. Though Flowood Baptist Church's parsonage stayed dry, pastor Marcus Alexander's home, which he was about to move into, was flooded.

A number of church staffers had flooded homes and two employees of the Mississippi Baptist Building had flooding: Judd Allen of the Sunday School department and Jean Hastings of the Baptist Foundation.

Mississippi Baptists' disaster relief unit issued more than 3,000 hot meals a day, including about 2,200 that were carried to cities where homeowners and rescue workers were busy.

The SBC Home Mission Board, through its Christian Social Ministries department, has given the Mississippi Baptist Convention \$10,000 to aid flood victims.

Members of the North Columbia Baptist Church went to work in radio dispatched vans, moving furniture to the church from homes of members threatened with flooding.

The Columbia Floridian Nursing Home evacuated its patients to Calvary Baptist Church in Columbia. The children at the Baptist Children's Home in Jackson gave away colored Easter eggs to victims, a switch for the village, which usually is the recipient of gifts.

Other Baptist agencies, churches and centers immediately began taking in clothes and resources to aid flood victims.

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Vins Released, Allen Calls
For Special Day of Prayer

Baptist Press
4/30/79

NEW YORK (BP)--What one observer called "tough negotiations" by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist layman with a personal concern, resulted in the release from a Soviet prison of Georgi Vins, a Baptist pastor jailed for religious activities.

Vins, 51, was among five Soviet dissidents who arrived in New York, April 27, and will be joined shortly by their families. Others released in exchange for two Soviet spies are Alexander Ginzburg, Eduard Kuznetsov, Mark Dymshyts, and Valentyn Moroz.

Southern Baptist Convention President Jimmy Allen of San Antonio, Texas, who received a personal call from Carter to inform him of Vins's release, responded with a telegram to Southern Baptist state executive secretaries and state convention presidents urging a prayer of thanksgiving on Sunday, May 12, for Vins's release.

"President Carter called Friday afternoon (April 27) to rejoice with us that through his tough negotiations for months, our brother in Christ, pastor Georgi Vins, and his family have been released from the Soviet Union. The prayers of our people have been answered. I suggest you call Baptists of your state to a day of thanksgiving and intercession, Sunday, May 12. Let us pray for Christians under oppression around the world and thank God for the freedom of pastor Vins," the telegram said.

On the Sunday after he arrived in New York, Vins, secretary of the dissident Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB) in the Soviet Union, a group of about 100,000 who broke away from the officially-sanctioned All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB), attended church and Sunday School at Carter's church in Washington.

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Also in Washington, Baptist World Alliance Executive Director Robert Denny said, "We rejoice in the release of Georgi Vins and all other prisoners of conscience. Repeatedly since pastor Vins was arrested in 1974, the BWA, the European Baptist Federation and the Alliance's member body in the USSR (AUCECB) have interceded with Soviet officials in Moscow on behalf of Mr. Vins and an uncounted number of other Baptists in Soviet jails...The BWA is ever conscious of the restrictions under which many of our Baptist people work for their faith in many parts of the world. We daily pray for them and their witness under difficult circumstances."

At a New York news conference after his release, at which Elias Golonka, Southern Baptist missionary to the United Nations, served as his translator, Vins said, "I thank my Lord that I am free. I thank President Carter, the American Congress and all the Christians in the United States--and all the people of good will who have been interceding for the persecuted Christians in the Soviet Union."

Then Vins paused, smiled and added: "I was delighted that the first book I saw in this hotel in New York was the Bible. For five years I was deprived of this book. There is no book that I cherish more."

A background news release from the White House described Vins as "one of the leaders of a grass roots movement among Baptists in the USSR which accused the officially sanctioned All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of 'submitting to an atheist government' and of discouraging evangelism."

The decision of Christians in the Soviet Union has been difficult, observers have noted, in determining how to relate to the government. Some of the "Initiativniki", or dissident Baptists, have chosen a path of confrontation in many cases, while the AUCECB has attempted to continue its ministry within the limits of the law. The church in Kiev, where Vins formerly was pastor, finally registered with the government, a move dissident churches have resisted.

Vins, whom Time magazine has called "courageous and stubborn," has been in and out of jail since 1966. His father, also a Baptist minister, died in prison after three terms for missionary activity, the White House release said. His mother and son, Peter, have also been in Soviet prisons.

He was last arrested in 1974 and tried in Kiev in 1975 on charges of defaming the Soviet state and infringing on the rights of citizens under the guise of performing religious ceremonies. Vins, reportedly in poor health, was sentenced to five years of hard labor and five years of exile, plus confiscation of property.

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Just-Freed Georgi Vins
Worships With Carters

By Carol Franklin

WASHINGTON (BP)--Just two days after his dramatic release from internal Soviet exile, dissident Soviet Baptist pastor Georgi Vins worshipped at Washington's First Baptist Church, the invited guest of President Jimmy Carter.

Vins was waiting outside the church when President and Mrs. Carter arrived shortly before Sunday School April 29. Along with First Baptist pastor Charles A. Trentham, they walked into the church building, where Vins listened to an interpreter translate Carter's Sunday School lesson, dealing with the theme of justice.

During the worship service which followed, Trentham told the overflowing congregation: "We are in one of the great moments of history. Last summer I was privileged to travel in Russia with Olin Robison, visiting in the home of Mrs. Georgi Vins, praying with her and interceding for her husband. This is a high moment of triumph as we celebrate the release of Georgi Vins from a Soviet prison camp."

Robison, president of Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt., is a graduate of Baylor University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Oxford University. During the Johnson administration he served as special assistant to three successive undersecretaries of state. During that time he travelled extensively in Europe and Russia. He still serves as a consultant to the Department of State

Trentham told Baptist Press that Carter called him on Saturday after Vins had been in this country a few hours to ask his help since Vins was in tears and apparently deeply depressed. Robison was with Vins at the time and brought him to Washington at Carter and Trentham's invitation.

Robison described Vins's condition as one of emotional and physical exhaustion. "He has been without sleep for ages," Robison said. "The last week has been the most harrowing thing imaginable. It is almost more than a person could comprehend. Four or five days ago Vins was bumping across Siberia in a cattle car; this morning he was sitting beside the President of the United States."

Vins is staying temporarily with Robison in Vermont. "What I want," Robison emphasized, "is to get time for him to rest." Robison said Vins was not ready to make any final decisions about the future but would probably wait for his family to join him.

According to Robison, "our government has said the families of all five men exchanged (for convicted Soviet spies) last week are expected to follow but we have no more firm information than that. All we have is the hope that they will come."

Vins's family includes his mother Lydia, wife Nadzhada, a son Peter, who was released in March after serving a prison sentence for "parasitism", four other children, and a niece.

Robison said he felt it was unlikely that Vins would join his relatives in Canada. Vins was to talk with them Sunday night. "He is eager to meet them and get to know them," he said, "But I think it will be easier for them to come to him than for him to do any more travelling now."

Though Vins was tired from his ordeal, he appeared fit and healthy, unlike the most recent pictures of him available while he was imprisoned. He had appeared emaciated in the photographs but now seems well filled out. His iron gray hair was close cropped and he wore a goatee.

Trentham told Baptist Press that he, Robison, and Jimmy Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, have constituted themselves a committee to raise money to help the Vins family and to protect them from "the fanatics who would exploit them." "We've bitten off a big assignment," Trentham said, "But we must do all we can to help this family during the period of adjustment."

Allen sent a telegram which pledged the support of Southern Baptists as "your spiritual family."

The president's presence in the service was a surprise since he was expected to leave immediately following Sunday School to attend a service in memory of the victims of the Holocaust at the Washington Cathedral. Instead, he sent his wife and son, Chip, and remained with Vins. "I think that was an extraordinary gesture for the president of the United States to make," Robison said.

Robison told Baptist Press that it would be "premature to talk to (Vins) now" at any length. When this reporter met him, however, she asked the interpreter to tell Vins that she is a writer and had written about him while he was imprisoned. Vins's face lit up and he took her hands, saying in English, "Thank you, thank you."

Many dissidents from the Soviet Union have said the fact that the western press does not let them be forgotten keeps them from being executed by the Soviet government while they are in prison.

Vins led the benediction at First Baptist's morning service. Using an interpreter, he prayed, "Almighty Lord, I bring you my sincere gratitude for this moment, for your strength, for the miracle you have shown in our life. Our Lord, what happiness it is to belong to you, believe in you, love you, and, to one's full strength, bear witness to your love. You have imprinted in our hearts the desire for peace, teaching us not to be silent when we see injustice. My Jesus, all that I see is the highest and more than I ever could have imagined. In the name of our Lord, amen."