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Philadelphia Church is Reborn
Along with its Community

By Patti Stephenson

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--When Trinity American Baptist Church was born on the Fourth of July, 1880, Philadelphia's Bowery Town was booming.

The big brick brewery named the neighborhood and employed most of the people living in rowhouses that still march shoulder to shoulder along Bowery Town's constricted streets. At its peak, when the gray stone sanctuary was built at the turn of the century, the Trinity congregation swelled to 400 members.

But the boom went bad when the brewery shut down. In the '60s, when blacks drifted across Bowery Town's boundaries, many whites fled to the suburbs.

Trinity, too, seemed afflicted with terminal blight. Membership dwindled to seven by 1980, mostly elderly women who still clung stubbornly to their home and church. The question of what to do with a down-at-the-heels, drafty old church and its century-old tenure in a community gnawed at their minds.

Gaynor Yancey found an answer. Yancey, Christian social ministries director for Delaware Valley Baptist Association, dug deep into the community, searching for signs of life. What she uncovered convinced her Southern Baptists could bring Trinity back to life again.

"This is one of those rare opportunities when we've been able to move into a community when it's making a comeback instead of when it's on the decline," Yancey laughs. Bowery Town, which nudges a downtown park, the city art museum and library, is being rediscovered and salvaged by Philadelphia's middle class professionals. New townhomes selling for \$90,000 have sprung up in empty lots around the brewery's abandoned shell.

After a summer mission team held a successful vacation Bible school at Trinity in August, 1980, suburban Paoli Baptist Church purchased Trinity for \$15,000. Reborn as a Southern Baptist mission, the small band has now grown to a "faithful 30," according to pastor E.C. Sheridan.

Since Trinity's conversion, change has been subtle but strongly felt by Grace Ballentine, member since her baptism in 1913. "We have to be honest," she confesses, the feather in her navy felt hat enscribing exclamation marks in the air. "At Trinity, we weren't always the warmest church. Before, if you were sick, people would say, 'Well, that's too bad, come back when you get better.' But now there's just so much more love here."

That caring spirit has been carefully nurtured by Sheridan and Diane Griffin, weekday ministries director appointed by the Home Mission Board. Since coming to Trinity a year ago, Griffin has averaged 60 visits in the community a week--inviting working mothers to an evening ceramics class, corralling children for "Big A" club, coaxing older women to leave their homes for a morning outing.

One she visits often is Helen Green who remembers walking by "the church at the top of Penock Street" as a child and hearing hearty singing wafting outside. Now, she watches other children trudge up the hill to Trinity. "I can't believe there's singing and hand-clapping again at the top of Penock Street," Green says happily.

Attendance at weekday activities has doubled and tripled in recent months, Griffin says. "Ladies' night out" evolved into coed ceramics because "the men were hurt they couldn't come, too," she laughs. Activities are drawing an assortment of racially-mixed, lower- and upper-income families.

Some return on Sunday for Bible study. Children's classes cluster in the corners of a large downstairs hall; upstairs, adults study under the sanctuary's heavy wooden beams and cracked plaster ceiling. Cooking pots catch rainwater seeping through the roof. "That roof's always leaked," Ballentine declares indignantly as a steady drip pings above the class discussion.

Sheridan recently staggered the congregation by asking them to pray for \$18,000 to put on a new roof. Then "they surprised me by coming up with the money we needed," he tells. Their commitment has reinforced his own sense of call to this community.

Sheridan first considered "how few Southern Baptist pastors seem to be called to the cities" while still a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. After graduation, he and wife Lee Ann packed a rental truck and moved to Philadelphia, "determined to start a church." He found a job as an insurance underwriter and learned of Trinity's need for a pastor through Delaware Valley association. "We just seemed right for each other," he reflects.

"The work here is slow," he admits. "We have a large Catholic community and it takes time to win their trust. It's a different climate, too. In the South, you can start a new church and people will show up the first Sunday. That doesn't happen here."

One need is for more trained leaders. The church depends heavily on transplanted Southern Baptists such as Grady Cox, a former Woman's Missionary Union worker in Tennessee who moved to Philadelphia to teach school and be involved in missions "where I can do the most good."

Sheridan knows that Trinity might grow faster if he sought out more transplants. "That would be the easy way," he acknowledges. "The hard way is to win the people who live here."

Sheridan obviously intends for Trinity to grow the hard way. But grow it will. "Our slogan 'the little church with the big heart' is cute, but it implies we're satisfied with small," he explains. "Well, we want to reach a lot of people in this community. There's nothing wrong with being a big church with a big heart."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

Missionary McCard's Body
Found Dead in Lake Hartwell

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COLUMBUS, Ga. (BP)--R. Bennard McCard, director of Baptist mission work in the Columbus, Ga., area, was found in Lake Hartwell May 15, three days after he disappeared from Georgia Baptist Assembly at Toccoa.

McCard, 53, was missionary for four local associations--Columbus, Merritt, Pine Mountain and Summerhill.

McCard, a diabetic, was attending a missionaries' workshop at the Baptist assembly in northeast Georgia. He complained of not feeling well May 12 and left the assembly that evening alone. He left his diabetes insulin kit in his room.

Searchers found his car the following day on the South Carolina side of Lake Hartwell, about 15 miles from the assembly. Two days later fishermen found his body on the Georgia side of Lake Hartwell. Early police reports did not indicate any foul play. The family believes the death was related to his diabetic condition.

McCard had been area missionary seven years. Earlier he was pastor in four Georgia cities. He was a native of Thomaston, Ga.; and a graduate of Mercer University. He attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Columbia Presbyterian Seminary in Atlanta.

Survivors include his wife, Dorothy, three children, and brothers and sisters.

-30-

William Pinson Named
To Lead Texas Baptists

By Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)-- William M. Pinson Jr., president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, has been unanimously elected executive director of the 2.2 million member Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Pinson, 47, will succeed James H. Landes, 69, who retires this year after having been Texas Baptists' highest administrative leader since 1974. Pinson will be executive director-elect until Jan. 1. He will join the BGCT July 1.

In presenting Pinson's name, search committee chairman Dewey Presley said each of the 14 members of the committee "was furnished information on more than 100 individuals." The list was narrowed to 33 then to 16, later to seven. "We then moved on and the list was reduced to four, which the committee unanimously agreed should be invited for visit."

Presley, of Dallas, said three of the four agreed to visit, and on April 23, after the interviews were completed, the committee "came together with hopes of ranking the three."

Reading from the minutes taken by Bailey Stone, pastor of First Baptist Church of Odessa, Presley said: "Words are simply powerless to describe what happened.... Remarkably, one person, Bill Pinson, was on the heart and mind of each committee member. It was a deep spiritual experience for us to sense the unity of the committee. It was not a reluctant unity; it was an overwhelming spiritual oneness."

Committee member Jimmy Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, said the action is "not casual...but enthusiastic. Although Pinson and I have not always agreed in the past, I have always know him to be kind, considerate and fair; a visionary man who can lead us on."

Pinson said he accepted the post because it is "a continuation of my call to missions." He said among his goals for Texas Baptists is "the need to major on new church starts for reaching the cities. He also noted there is a need to reach out to all language groups and pledged that "in all things, I will stress the unity of the convention."

As executive, Pinson will be coordinator and liaison between the executive board and 23 colleges, hospitals and childrens' homes, plus state, home and foreign mission programs supported by the 4,500 Southern Baptist churches and missions through the Cooperative Program. The 1982 Texas Cooperative Program budget is \$45.4 million.

Pinson was named president of Golden Gate seminary in 1977, after two years as pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas. From 1963 to 1977, he was professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and was associate secretary of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission from 1957 to 1963.

He earned a bachelor of arts degree from North Texas State University, Denton, in 1955 and the bachelor of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southwestern seminary.

At Golden Gate, Pinson led in establishing the Baker James Cauthen Chair of Missions and the E. Hermond Westmoreland Chair of Evangelism. He also was instrumental in founding the Church Growth Institute, the World Missions Center and a multi-ethnic program of language studies that includes Spanish, Korean and Chinese.

He is author of 17 books and other publications and with Clyde E. Fant Jr., now president of Ruschlikon Baptist Theological Seminary in Switzerland, Pinson, in 1971, produced 13 volumes entitled "Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching."

Ministerial Students Sign
Statement On Peacemaking

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptist ministerial students from 19 nations have joined in a "call for peacemaking" which emphasizes the Bible as a "profound peace treatise."

The statement sprang from the concerns of doctoral students at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, who forwarded copies to friends on seminary campuses. In addition to graduate students at Baylor, more than 300 signatures have come in thus far from students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and Baptist Theological Seminary, Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

"What is important about the call is not the number of signatures but the commitments the signers have made," said Robert Parham, one of the Baylor ethics students involved in the effort.

Signers have committed themselves to "pray for peace" and to "study our Bibles for God's word on peace." Acknowledging that "peacemaking comes through evangelism" and that "changed people lead to changed nations," they pledged to spread the gospel of peace.

In addition, they agreed to seek understanding of the roots of war; to urge denominational and governmental leaders to work for peace through mutual agreements with other nations; to preach peace sermons; and maintain other peacemaking activity.

Paul Sadler, a Baylor graduate student and pastor of Meadowbrook Baptist Church in Waco, described the effort as a "grassroots action" and emphasized its nonpartisan nature.

"We commit ourselves to actions that lead to peacemaking without committing ourselves to any specific partisan proposals," Sadler said.

The Baylor students are hopeful that the commitment expressed by the participants will have a significant impact in the denomination and the country, but said that could not be judged immediately.

"What the call represents," Parham said, "is a mustard seed beginning for peacemaking among young ministers."

-30-

Scientist Spreads Light
As Golden Gate Student

By Mark Smith

Baptist Press
5/18/82

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Although scientist Everett Bens has spent much of his life developing artificial light, he will be the first to say it doesn't hold a candle to the "light of the world."

For 25 years he worked as a civilian scientist at the China Lake Naval Weapons Center in California and most of those years were spent inventing and perfecting the artificial light sources which have been applied in a number of areas, including sea rescue missions of downed pilots.

Since his retirement last year, he has been preparing for a new career in church religious education work. Bens will earn a master of religious education degree in December from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary with emphases in retirement home and convalescent hospital ministries.

The 62-year-old scholar holds 10 patents assigned to the United States Navy on inventions in chemical light, chemiluminescence, and although he looks with pride on his past accomplishments, modesty keeps him from talking freely about them.

A 1946 graduate of Iowa State University in Ames. Bens earned a degree in chemical technology, a cross between chemistry and chemical engineering. His first job was as a microanalyst in the research department of Shell Oil Co. in Illinois.

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"At Shell I primarily did elemental analysis on everything from engine deposits to lubricating oils," Bens recalls.

"I went to Los Angeles to go to work for Truesdail Laboratories in 1953 as a chemical consultant," he says. "I was there for over a year before I joined North American Engineering in Los Angeles for a short time."

Bens went into the Civil Service at the Naval Weapons Center at China Lake in 1955. He notes that the laboratories at China Lake, an extensive scientific research and development complex, were responsible for developing the sidewinder missiles that were used last year to shoot down two Libyan fighter jets.

In the area of chemiluminescence, he explains that certain chemicals emit light on exposure to air. "This chemical process was first discovered by DuPont Corporation," he relates, "and I was involved in developing new formulations and applications of it."

"DuPont initially tried to get the Navy interested in it thinking it would be useful as signals in rescue missions. Finally, when the Navy did accept it, I began to work with it in regard to how it could be used in various temperatures."

"We worked to extend its life, finally reaching a high-intensity emission of 45 minutes and a low-intensity emission of a couple of hours."

The seminarian's research and work was not limited to chemical light, but also included developing high-energy explosives and propellants used in rockets and missiles.

In addition to the patents he holds, Bens has 22 publications to his credit. He has presented a number of his projects to nine national and international professional conferences and societies.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Golden Gate Seminary

CORRECTION: In graph three of BP story mailed 5/13/82 entitled "Board Adopts Mandatory Insurance for Volunteers," please change the amount of coverage per accident from \$1,500 to \$2,500. Thanks, Baptist Press