



THEO SOMMERKAMP, editorial assistant

127 Ninth Avenue, North — Nashville, Tennessee

February 10, 1957

WASHINGTON--(BP)--"There is a diversity in church life in Washington that does not exist elsewhere," Caspar Nannes, religion editor of the Washington Star told Southern Baptist editors here.

Nannes, current president of Religious Newswriters Association, said this diversity influences the reporting of church news in the Nation's capital.

There are several elements to this different pattern of church life, he said, among them:

1. "There is an annual membership turnover in churches of 40 to 50 per cent, most pastors figure, because Washington is a city of temporary people."

2. "Many people attend church regularly and contribute to church support yet never move their church memberships from their former home towns," Nannes told the Southern Baptist Press Association.

3. "Washington is a city of tourists," he continued. "The pastor of a prominent Washington church said 40 per cent of his church budget comes from visitors to his church services."

4. "In other places, there are usually certain religious groups that are stronger than others and that predominate. In Washington not only are there many church groups but there are many church groups well-represented," according to Nannes.

5. Nearly every denomination has a "National" church in Washington, or its counterpart, to represent that denomination, Nannes added. He pointed out that the National Presbyterian Church conducts special Congressional service and represents its denomination in certain other special functions.

6. Nannes said there is a "flight to the suburbs" in Washington. "Some old line churches are pulling up stakes and moving to the suburbs because of business encroachment, parking problems, and changing residential patterns.

"Several downtown churches on the other hand decided they had an obligation to remain down town," Nannes reported. Several down town churches have built new places of worship.

He said that New York Ave. Presbyterian Church, a down town church faced with the question of whether it ought to move to the suburbs, put a map of the Washington area on the wall. It placed pins where its members lived and found them scattered
more

well into Maryland and Virginia, then decided the down town location was its best location and the center of its membership.

Nannes told the Association, which includes editors of 25 state Southern Baptist newspapers and editors of other Baptist periodicals, that the best religion reporter on a daily newspaper has come up through the ranks of general reporting. Not many have been ministers, he said.

Nannes described levels of religious news reporting in two categories. One category pertains to the geography of the news -- international religious news, national religious news, and local religious news.

The second category pertains to religious structure -- interdenominational news, denominational news, and news of the local church.

The Southern Baptist Press Association scheduled a visit to Capital Hill and tour of the city before adjourning its four-day session.