

April 9, 1959

Fields Elected Public
Relations Secretary

EDITORS: The following story must be held for re-
lease on Thursday, Apr. 16. Do not release prior
to this date.

NASHVILLE--(BP)--The Southern Baptist Executive Committee has elected W. C. Fields, editor of the Baptist Record, Jackson, Miss., as secretary of its public relations service.

Porter Routh of Nashville, executive secretary of the Executive Committee, said Fields will take the position in Nashville July 15. He succeeds Albert McClellan, who has held the office for 10 years.

McClellan remains with the Executive Committee but in a new position, that of program planning secretary.

The Baptist Record is the weekly publication of Mississippi Baptist Convention. Published in newspaper size format, it has a circulation of nearly 90,000.

Fields is a native of Saline, La., born Mar. 16, 1922. His boyhood home was in Gibsland, La., and he received his bachelor's degree from Louisiana College, Baptist school at Pineville, La., in 1943.

Ordained to the ministry at 18, Fields entered Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and completed his master's and doctor's programs in theology. In 1946 he married Miss Rebecca Elizabeth Hagan of Ft. Thomas, Ky., a graduate of Georgetown (Ky.) College, also a Baptist school.

They have three children.

Fields was pastor of First Baptist Church, Yazoo City, Miss., when called to succeed the late Dr. A. L. Goodrich as editor of the Baptist Record in 1956. He also has served two years as president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention board.

He has been active in religious journalism organizations, serving as secretary of the Southern Baptist Press Association, an organization of editors of Baptist newspapers and magazines. He also has represented the Baptist Record at meetings of the Evangelical Press Association and Associated Church Press, both organizations which include editors of religious periodicals.

Fields once opened the session of the United States Senate with prayer, the youngest person to do so. While in school, he was a member of the national champion men's debate squad.

Fields took up flying while in Louisiana College and obtained his private pilot's license in 1941. He has been chaplain and pilot with the rank of captain in the Civil Air Patrol.

He has also toured Baptist mission points in Alaska, Cuba, and South America, and covered the Baptist Youth World Conference in Toronto, Canada, last year for his paper. He is to visit mission points in Europe this summer prior to July 15.

The Baptist Record has adopted a reorganized page design under Fields' leadership, following recommendations of a nationally-recognized specialist in newspaper design and make-up.

In addition to being the only one of 26 Southern Baptist state papers to publish on a full-size newspaper page, it is characterized by use of "flush right" headlines, that is, headlines which are even with the right-hand margin of each column. The traditional newspaper design has been "flush left," having each line of the headline match the others on the left.

The Baptist Record also has made wide use of photographs.

In his new capacity, Fields will be press representative for the Southern Baptist Convention, editor of the Baptist Bulletin Service, director of the Baptist Press news agency, and editor of the monthly Baptist Program.

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"The unanimous vote of the Executive Committee, on all of the ballots we have received, for W. C. Fields as public relations secretary of the Executive Committee confirms my own conviction that God has led us to this man," Routh said.

"His training, his sense of dedication, his experience, his ability to work well with people without compromising convictions, qualifies him in an unusual way for this wider responsibility in Southern Baptist life."

Chester L. Quarles, Jackson, executive secretary of Mississippi Baptist Convention, said:

Wilmer C. Fields, editor of the Baptist Record, has rendered outstanding service. He has the admiration and respect of all Mississippi Baptists. While we regret his leaving our work, we rejoice in his expanded opportunity in the denomination and in kingdom service."

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