

On Sunday, November 17, 1963 the Rev. Dr. Charles Morton, Pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Detroit and the Rev. James D. Nixon, pastor of Grosse Pointe Methodist Church attempted to worship at Capitol Street Methodist Church in Jackson, Miss. We were driven to the church by two friends who observed from a distance what transpired.

We were let out of the car across the street from the church. A patrol wagon was double parked across from the church. A traffic policeman stopped traffic for us to cross the street as we had observed him doing for others. We observed between ten and fifteen men on the steps of the church as we approached. They were at various levels and locations. We approached the left side of the steps as we faced the church and were immediately confronted by a group of men.

~~I was standing~~

Nixon was standing to the left with Morton to the right as we faced the church, standing close together. One man stepped down on the sidewalk level at Nixon's left elbow while others were on the first row of steps immediately before us. A man in the middle asked "What do you want here?" to which Nixon replied "We have come to worship God." The man at the center identified himself simply as in charge of the ushers. He was about 55 to 60 year of age, gray hair combed straight back, thinning in front. Shortly after we began talking a man of about the same age, whiter hair, a bit heavier build, dressed in a blue suit raised his hand holding a sheet of folded paper or a long white envelope which appeared to be a signal to the waiting police across the street behind us. A man to Nixon's left started to say something about "Why don't you stay at home, etc" but was interrupted by the man in charge of the ushers who told him that "We will take care of this."

Nixon said that he held in his hand a copy of the recent statement of the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church but was told that they were not interested in that. The head usher said "Now you're not coming in here so why don't you just move along?" Nixon and Morton stood still silently for a few minutes. Nixon was opening his Prayer Book to read silently and the usher said "Now you are not going to hold any service out here." Nixon said, that is not our intention, we simply came to worship together. We would be happy to sit anywhere at all if you would just let us come in." Reply, "Well you are not going to come here." The only conversation held was a repetition of these words and ideas: "We have come to worship" met with the reply "Well, you're not coming in here."

After a few exchanges of this sort the head usher took hold of Nixon's arms to move, steer or wrestle him to one side, moving him to Nixon's left. At this point Nixon dropped to his knees to avoid any show of force, conflict or struggle. Morton dropped to his knees beside him. At this point the head usher motioned for the police. We heard the patrol wagon approach and then saw an officer step in front of us. He asked the head usher "Do you prefer charges?" and the usher nodded and replied "Yes." Another officer approached with two Negro prisoners from the patrol wagon and Nixon and Morton were escorted without resistance into the wagon.

At no time did either Nixon or Morton move from the sidewalk level, either standing or kneeling. Neither placed either foot or knee on a step. All conversation was in a quiet and restrained voice.

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