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Special Report

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Divided Flocks in Jackson

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† ON THE FRONT of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church across the street from the governor's mansion in Jackson, Miss., there is a mosaic showing Christ with people of all races gathered about him. The inscription reads: "There shall be one shepherd and one flock."

For several weeks a small band of students from nearby Tougaloo Southern Christian College have been forming integrated groups to visit the white churches of Jackson. The Roman Catholic, the Episcopal, one United Presbyterian and one Missouri Synod Lutheran Church have admitted them.

On Worldwide Communion Sunday (Oct. 6), with churches displaying posters showing red, white, yellow and black hands taking cups from one communion tray, Julie Zaugg, a white student, and Bette Poole and Ida Kate Hannah, both Negroes, were turned away from Capitol Street Methodist Church in Jackson. As they left they were arrested and taken to the city jail where they were charged with trespassing and disturbing public worship. The next day, after having had five minutes to confer with a lawyer by telephone, they pleaded *nolo contendere* (I will not contend). Each was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and fined \$500 on each of the two charges. Subsequently they were released on \$1,000 appeal bonds provided by two national Methodist agencies, the Board of Christian Social Concerns and the Woman's Division of Christian Service. After hearing Attorney William Kunstler, who had been retained by the National Council of Churches to defend the girls, argue that bail should not be punitive, Judge William Cox refused to lower the amount, adding, "It seems to me that they came down here looking for trouble and they found it."

After the *Chicago Daily News* had reported the incident, Methodist Bishop Charles Brashares of the Chicago area called the arrests and convictions "a tragedy which belittles American democracy and Christian witness around the world . . . totally contrary to Methodist discipline and the law established by our governing body." The next Sunday a Chicago Methodist minister, Stanley Hallet, accompanied the three students to the Capitol Street

church steps, where they were joined by two white students from Millsaps College in Jackson. There the group prayed and read from the Bible.

I

The third act of the drama was played out the following week, when five ministers and a layman from Chicago went to Jackson to join the visitation. They called on the pastors of Capitol Street and St. Luke's Methodist churches, but were unable to see either Bishop Marvin Franklin of the Jackson area or W. J. Cunningham, pastor of Galloway Memorial Church. Three members of the team did visit District Superintendent J. W. Leggett, who is to head the Mississippi delegation to next year's Methodist General Conference in Pittsburgh.

At 8:30 A.M. on Sunday three girls, one white and two Negro, were arrested as they attempted to attend Trinity Lutheran Church (Lutheran Church in America). At 9:20 A.M. John Garner, a white physics instructor at Tougaloo and a member of the Galloway Memorial church, arrived to attend his Sunday school class accompanied by Joseph Buckles and Elmer Dickson, two of the visiting white ministers, and Joyce Ladner, a Negro student. Before Sunday school began the four were arrested (inside the church) on charges of trespassing and disturbing public worship. At 11 the three girls who had been arrested on Oct. 6 were escorted to the Capitol Street church by two white ministers, Donald Walden and myself. We were arrested on church property as we were being turned away. At St. Luke's Methodist a fifth minister, James Reed, and a student were turned away but were not arrested.

The next Sunday, Oct. 27, two Methodist and two Evangelical United Brethren ministers from Chicago and two Negro students from Tougaloo, in separate teams of three members each, visited Galloway and Capitol Street churches. This time a new tactic was employed: after they were turned away the ministers escorted the students back to their cars, then returned to the church steps to pray. Preston Cole, Methodist, and Sheldon Trapp, E.U.B., were arrested while praying in front of the Capitol Street church.

II

The legal procedures employed in these cases are significant as guideposts in the racial struggle. Attorney Kunstler, who had defended the freedom riders arrested in Jackson last year and who is chief counsel for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, sought a federal injunction restraining the city of Jackson and the state of Mississippi from interfering with his clients' constitutional rights under the First amendment. He quickly added as party plaintiffs the others arrested during the third week—a legal maneuver that took their cases out of the city and state courts. To get the cases transferred Kunstler cited a little-used section of the U.S. Civil Rights act of 1866. When Judge Cox refused to sign a writ of habeas corpus, Kunstler went to Atlanta to have a higher court issue writ of mandamus instructing Cox to issue the writ and set bail for the

Earlier, on Oct. 25, Mayor A. Thompson of Jackson, who is a member of the Galloway church, had admitted in court that he used the police powers to enforce segregation. He said that if a church wanted to be mixed, that was all right with him; but if they wanted to be segregated, he would use police power to keep them segregated—whether it took one or 500 policemen.

The situation in Mississippi is undoubtedly fraught with extreme danger. In an informal conversation Marquis Childs, nationally syndicated columnist, said that the situation is frighteningly reminiscent of what he saw in Germany in the 1930s. In an opinion handed down in October the U.S. Fifth circuit court said that the state of Mississippi has a "steel hard, inflexible, undeviating policy of racial segregation." If he is to live comfortably in Mississippi, a white man must accept this policy or be subject to harassment, loss of credit, numerous traffic arrests, even threat of death.

While other southern states seem to be making some progress in freeing the moderate to speak his opinion, Mississippi remains regimented on the issue. The Democratic candidates for the governorship did not run against each other

but against Pres. Kennedy; Paul Johnson won the primary election because he "stood tall last fall"—a reference to the fact that he stood in the door of the University of Mississippi to bar Negro student James Meredith. The state has little industry and seems to be getting poorer, though Gov. Ross Barnett denies emphatically that such is the case. Negroes, who comprise 46 per cent of the population, seldom are able to vote, and they enjoy few job opportunities. Aaron Henry, Clarksdale druggist who is president of the state branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, says that the proposed law to give the franchise to all persons who have achieved a sixth-grade education would still leave more than half the Negroes disfranchised.

III

In the face of today's racial tension the Methodist Church finds itself in a difficult situation. Nearly one third of its members live in the deep south. Its administrative structure locates all executive power in the regional jurisdictions. Its nongeographical, segregated Central jurisdiction is totally out of touch with the geographical, white Southeastern jurisdiction which it overlaps. It was not until 1939 that the 1844 rift which split the church on the slavery question was healed. Now there are real fears that another rift will take place if the civil rights issue is pushed too hard. Just now there is a chance that the national Methodist Woman's Division of Christian Service may lose as much as \$100,000 in contributions to its missions program because it put

Church in Mississippi is hopelessly beholden to the culture. After the University of Mississippi riots 28 Mississippi Methodist ministers issued a statement saying that the pulpit must be free if the Word of God is to be preached, that they do not believe in discrimination on the basis of color or race, that the schools should not be closed to avoid integration, and that they are all anticommunists. Today only 12 of those ministers remain in Mississippi; the former pastors of the Galloway and Capitol Street churches, who supported but did not sign the statement, are no longer serving churches in the Mississippi conference.

The man who has directed the attack on racial segregation in the churches is the Rev. Edwin King, 27, a native white Mississippian who is dean of students and chaplain at Tougaloo. At the latest Mississippi annual conference he was ordained, yet by a vote of 89-85 he was refused admission to the conference, which means that he cannot be appointed to serve any of its churches or have access to its benefits. Dr. Leggett describes King as an "irresponsible troublemaker with mental problems"; another person, however, describes him as "Mississippi's Pastor Niemöller."

The arrest of Sheldon Trapp may have ramifications for the Methodist-Evangelical United Brethren merger, for there has been much E.U.B. dissatisfaction with Methodist foot-dragging on the racial issue. Many northern Methodists have sought to persuade their E.U.B. colleagues to hold out for dissolution of the Central jurisdiction and for modifications in the jurisdictional and episcopal systems before union is consum-

mated. Thirty Illinois E.U.B. pastors, including seven professors at their church's seminary in Naderville, recently issued a state issue is sufficient discussion of it delays or imperi

The problem tional system lo originally was (facilitating uni churchmen who its purpose, th the unity it sou fore should be against the arr dents one Mis that it is the function of the Central jurisdiction to keep the Negroes from joining white churches.

Seth Granberry, pastor of the Capitol Street church, has acknowledged that he has no control over the situation. He says that if he were to permit a Negro to enter his church the pews would be empty the next Sunday; further, that if a white and a Negro bishop were to present themselves together at the doors of his church they would be arrested. There is little likelihood of such a presentation occurring.

The theological issue was clearly stated by one policeman as he interrogated a visiting pastor: "I'm a Methodist and I paid for that church, and we'll run it the way we want to run it. It's our church." The question in Jackson today is, Who is Lord of the Church? On the front of St. Peter's Church there is an answer—the biblical one.

GERALD FORSHEY.

King
descriptors

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