



Associated Press

Southern and Northern white pastors have left their pulpits under pressure because of their stand against racial segregation. Here, last May, parishioners of the Calvary Baptist Church in Raleigh, N. C., blocked the entrance to several Negroes who tried to enter for morning worship.

Pastors' Race Stands Cause Resignations

By George W. Cornell

Associated Press Religion Writer

One evening last spring at a meeting of the board of deacons of the Baptist church in the community of Linden, Ala., someone asked a hypothetical question: What would happen if a Negro sought membership?

The Rev. Joe Patterson, then pastor, promptly replied that to bar a person because of color would "reduce the church, which was founded by Christ to be a universal and redemptive fellowship, to nothing more than a social club."

His viewpoint brought sharply conflicting reaction from the congregation. Rather than "tear up the church," Mr. Patterson resigned, effective June 29.

Such cases have become increasingly frequent.

...pastors in the

can be no color bar in Christian church," Dr. Sel said. He became vice president of Central Method College, Fayette, Mo., on July

The assistant pastor of Galloway Church, the Rev. J. Furr, also left to take appointment in the Southern California-Arizona Method Conference at the request of Bishop Gerald H. Kennedy of Los Angeles.

Could Not Serve

"I could not willingly serve a church that turns any people away," Mr. Furr said.

In Clemson, N. C., the Rev. Charles Webster, 29, a member of the staff of the First Baptist Church there and

Such cases have become increasingly frequent.

Numerous pastors in the South, and a few in the North, have left their pulpits under varying degrees of pressure because of their stands against racial segregation.

Total Is Unknown

The total number is unknown, since the reason for ministerial departures ordinarily is not specified when such conflicts are involved church officials say.

However, reports have turned up more than a score of clergymen who have left their pulpits since early spring under fire for their stands on race relations.

In some instances, there have been physical attacks, harassing telephone calls, tire-slashings. Usually, however, the objections are registered by chilly attitudes and thinning church attendance.

Largest Christian bodies in the South are the Methodist church and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Rev. Dr. Albert McLellan of Nashville, Tenn., a Southern Baptist executive, says he knows definitely of only three pastors "forced out" of their pulpits recently over the race question.

But he said "there could be many more," and that he knew of several others who resigned voluntarily because they felt they couldn't preach forthrightly on the racial problem.

While some have remained silent in order to continue what service they could in peace, Mr. McClellan said, still others "have spoken out in love for racial reconciliation."

In Mississippi Methodist Bishop Marvin Franklin said, "A little more than usual left last year.

"But we haven't had an enormous number leave," he added. "A lot of them found better positions. I think we've had others leave partly on account of the racial situation."

Of 28 Methodist pastors in Bishop Franklin's conference who last January signed a "statement of conviction" against racial discrimination, 19 have moved on to other posts.

In June, the Rev. W. B. Selah, pastor for 19 years of the Galloway Methodist Church of Jackson, Miss., left his church because five Negroes were refused admission.

The 4000-member church is the largest Methodist congregation in Mississippi.

"I know in conscience there

ber of the staff of the First Baptist Church there and an adviser to students at Clemson College, resigned last March at request of the board of deacons.

He said it was because his contacts with Harvey Gantt, Clemson's first Negro student. The chairman of the board of deacons said Mr. Webster's work had been surrounded with tension.

In New Orleans, a Roman Catholic pastor, the Rev. Frank Ecimovich, reported he was attacked by a parishioner after the man's young son participated in a racial mixed retreat.

Father Ecimovich filed an assault charge, but subsequently dropped it.

A recent nationwide survey of about 4000 ministers by Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Social Research showed that a third of the reported being criticized by members for preaching about controversial issues, such as race relations.

About a third also are unhappy enough about the situation to want to leave their parishes, though they have not done so, the study found.

In the midst of the heavy pressures on some pastors of some denominations, including the United Church of Christ, have set up special funds to aid those who lose their pulpits over the issue.