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Mixing Issue Causes Church To Withdraw

Rural Methodist Congregations In Rebellious Mood

BAILEY, Miss. (AP)—The Mississippi Methodist Conference faced the prospect today of more small rural congregations bolting in the wake of the Pine Springs Church here withdrawing on grounds the Methodist Church "is sponsoring integration of the races."

A reliable Methodist source said several small, rural churches have threatened withdrawal.

The north Lauderdale County congregation of 110 said Wednesday it is pulling out.

Rev. J. D. Slay of Meridian, district superintendent, said he would have no comment on the withdrawal. He said that things otherwise were "going along mighty smoothly" in his district.

Bishop Marvin A. Franklin of Jackson was unavailable for comment.

The pastor of the Pine Springs Church, the Rev. Delmar Dennis, said his church voted unanimously to join the Southern Methodist Church at a Feb. 17 meeting of the entire congregation.

The Rev. Mr. Dennis said the decision was not announced until Wednesday as the church was awaiting acceptance by the Southern Methodists, which he described as a "segregated church."

"The Methodist Church is extremely liberal . . . and . . . is affiliated with the National Council of Churches," the Rev. Mr. Dennis said in listing other reasons for the switch.

He said the Southern Methodists allow local congregations to call their own pastors and Pine Springs called him. He said he accepted.

Pine Springs is the first congregation in Mississippi to join the Southern Methodists, the Rev. Mr. Dennis said.