First Baptist Church Sets Annual Homecoming Service

Annual Homecoming Day Services will be held at the First Baptist Church of Newton this Sunday at the 11 o'clock worship hour. Following the service, lunch will be served on the church grounds.

The Rev. Ottis S. Ulmer, who was pastor of the church from 1938-44, will be the visiting speaker. He is now retired and living in Mountain Home, N. C. During his ministry at First Baptist Church several significant accomplishments were made, including the building of an additional educational plant in 1939, the adoption of the rotating system of the deaconship, and the beginning of the Unified Budget. During his ministry there were 345 additions to the church, the first vacation Bible school was conducted, and the first paid staff member was added to the church.

All members, former members, and friends of the church are cordially invited to attend these special services by the pastor, the Rev. William J. Furr. The church is located at the corner of Sixth Street and Northwest Boulevard, Newton.

Former Pastor

Rev. O. S. Ulmer
REVEREND OTTIS S. ULMER

The Reverend Ottis S. Ulmer, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel F. Ulmer, was one of five children. He was born in Orangeburg, South Carolina, August 23, 1899. Following his education in the public schools he entered the University of South Carolina where upon finishing, went on to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Upon completion of his studies on the postgraduate level, he returned to his native state and began his public ministry as pastor at Sycamore, South Carolina. Here he remained from 1926 through 1929. The year of 1930 he accepted the call as pastor of Varnville, South Carolina until 1938. Then he accepted the call to the Newton Church on October 1, 1938. He was ordained into the Gospel Ministry on August 6, 1925 at the age of twenty six.

At the time of his coming to Newton, he too was to find himself, as pastor, with a full time job. Added to this, there had already begun the beat of war drums in Europe which was ultimately to make its mark upon the ministry of Brother Ulmer and his church as well as the entire nation. With rapidity, the shadows of war were closing in fast, but the Baptists of Newton were in good hands. We feel the words of St. Francis DeSales are applicable to this man when he said, "The test of a preacher is that his congregation goes away saying, not what a lovely sermon, but, I will do something!" For this is exactly what the Newton Baptists did — they, under the leadership of a dedicated man of God, were to move forward at a pace hereetofore unknown.

With his good wife as a helpmate, a congregation at his side, and having had a man like John Roland Cantrell to pave a great deal of the way, Brother Ulmer was, as one member said, "to labor and lead as if the fight between himself and satan was purely personal."

With only seven months as pastor of the Newton Church under his belt, he led the people into building an additional educational plant on April 12, 1939. As evidenced by the records, it was the
proper action to take. Now, Brother Ulmer could broaden his educational labors and further the work begun by Brother Cantrell in departmentalizing the Sunday School which would ultimately result in a movement of wholesale evangelism. That year he baptized 54 into the fellowship upon profession of faith and received 53 by transfer of membership, making a grand total of 107 additions to the church in one year. The people said, “We’ve never seen anything like this before,” and they hadn’t. Thus, the church was soon to find out that these twenty additional classrooms, three assembly rooms, dining room and kitchen were to be filled to overflowing in a short while. The indebtedness accrued was paid in full during the ministry of Brother Ulmer which amounted to over $8,000.00.

Other undertakings during the pastorate of Brother Ulmer and his flock were, the beginning of the rotation system of the Deaconship and the Unified Budget was begun. At this moment, let us make mention of the man who made the motion to unify the budget. At the deacon’s meeting J. Y. Killian, “a pillar” in the church and association, made this motion which was accepted. Also, large groups were taken to Ridgecrest each year in order to learn new ways and means of reaching out for Christ.

The Reverend Ulmer was not, as some have said, “the most dynamic preacher”, but it seemed he could lead his flock wherever he wished. He had been characterized as a “great Sunday School man” and his wife, who served as president of the Woman’s Mis-

Church and Educational Plant
Aden his educator Cantrell in ultimately receiving 53 by 7 additions to church was soon three assembly overflowing in full during the $8,000.00.

Brother Ulmer system of the this moment, motion to unify a pillar” in the accepted. Also, order to learn said, “the most lock wherever Sunday School Woman’s Mis-

sionary Union, as “one who should have been a missionary”, in that she served as President of the W.M.U. for six years and was to lead them to an enrollment of 148.

Also, it is to be noted that during the pastorate of the Reverend Ulmer the first Vacation Bible School record is to be found in 1942 with 95 students enrolled.

So far as we can find, Brother Ulmer was the first pastor to have an office in the Church House. It was a small room on the top floor, but it was better than having the privacy of one’s home constantly invaded.

As mentioned before, several have implied he was not the orator that some of his predecessors had been, but, he preached as God had given him ability. Permit a personal observation here. We feel he must have had a message and that message was from God, for as we have searched the records, we find that during his ministry there were three hundred and forty five additions to the church.

On the other hand, he was a man who must have influenced people because he was known to all in the city. As one who knew him said, “he was jolly, happy and friendly”, and wherever he went, he left an atmosphere to be emulated. Another said, “he fitted in for his time”.

It is also to be noted that during his ministry the first paid staff member was added, that of an organist named Charles McCreight at $10.00 per month. Prior to this, others had been given token salaries to purchase music but, this, as far as we can ascertain from the records, was the first paid worker outside the pastor. Thus, by the very nature of this act, Brother Ulmer was “breaking the ice” towards getting an Educational Director.

Another first is recorded during his ministry. Brother Ulmer instituted the Sunday Bulletin. True, there had been weekly papers, etc., but not a Sunday bulletin. Thus, another progressive step was taken.

During Brother Ulmer’s ministry, World War II was begun on December 7, 1941 which added many to the obstacles already before him — yet, he urged his people forward in their contributions to missionary causes, reaching a peak of giving through the cooperative program, in the amount of $7,884.74. During the six years Brother Ulmer was pastor, the church grew from three hundred and forty nine to a total of five hundred and forty five. During that time the high attendance record for the Sunday School was three hundred and forty six.

On the associational level he was also active. At each gathering he was to be found speaking in behalf of Evangelism which resulted in his being chosen the first chairman of this newly formed
standing committee in 1938. The following is one of his reports to the association in 1940:

Our Lord in commissioning us to go into all the world and make disciples of every creature, has placed the responsibility of a lost world on our shoulders. However, He does not leave us alone nor dependent upon our own strength in this great task. He has promised to go with us all the way, “even unto the end of the world”. When we look around us and see the number of lost people all about us we must realize that this challenge of our Lord begins right at our doors. Your committee wonders if we in the South Fork Association are really as much concerned about it as we should be. From a study of the reports of the churches we find that there were only 364 baptisms in our entire Association during the past twelve months. This is 226 less than we had the year before. We also note that one-fifth of the churches in the Association reported no baptisms. Can it be that we are not aware of the fact, that there are hundreds, yea thousands, of lost souls all about us? Or is it that we just do not care? There are many people within the shadow of our churches who could with David say, “No man cares for my soul.”

Note further that we have an increase in our total membership of 631. This is 423 less than the increase reported last year. Many of our people are moving from place to place and they need to be lined up with the church in the community where they come to live.

Your committee recommends that we all go back to our respective places of service with the burden of the lost on our hearts. That we talk to God earnestly every day about it. And that we let Him use us to help Him do something about it.

This position, as chairman, he held throughout his ministry except one year.

On the whole Mrs. Ulmer did not project herself as do some preacher’s wives. She preferred to stay in the background and be a wife and helpmate to her husband and a mother to her two daughters and one son.

Now, let’s backtrack for a little. Brother Ulmer’s mother always wanted at least one of her sons to be a preacher, but never thought Ottis would be the one. Yet, God saw fit to choose one who would one day come this way, take the reigns of leadership and, throught thick and thin, lead to the dawn of a new day. I suppose Brother Ulmer wondered about many things as he discussed the possibility of becoming pastor with a pulpit committee of fifteen. At any rate, “thank God” he came.

Let us cite one other incident related to us about this man who so easily times when the project, Brot...
who so easily could win friends and influence people. There were times when the church took on projects to raise money. One such project, Brother Ulmer entered was to raise money for the church in a "subscription selling" of the Saturday Evening Post, which carried no liquor ads. As a result, the Reverend Ulmer sold so many subscriptions that they tried to hire him as one of their representatives. Needless to say, he declined.

Through trying years of war, rations, burdens, heartaches, and many other handicaps, Brother Ulmer led his people. However, on December 10, 1944 the pastor resigned his pastorate to accept the call of the Brunson Baptist Church, in Brunson, South Carolina. Here he remained until his retirement in 1964. Here, at the age of sixty-eight years, he still lives and preaches for his Lord, enjoying a "little rest from his labors".

In closing, one of his dearest friends summed up his ministry and we feel it fitting to close this sketch. He said, "He left the church in real good shape." Yes, spiritually sound, financially free of debt and with love everywhere.