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TRINIDAD

This month the Missionary Herald introduces you to people and churches in Trinidad. The 1975 president of the Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago, Rev. Allan J. Parkes writes:

1976 marks the 160th anniversary of the beginning of Baptist witness in Trinidad and Tobago.

When William Hamilton, that great humble pioneer, asked the B.M.S. for help to further the establishment of Baptist work in the "Companies" he stated: "For twenty-six years we have been looking up and holding on".

In 1966 we celebrated the 150th Anniversary, in co-operation with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, by making Cowen-Hamilton School a living memorial to the work of George Cowen, the first Baptist Missionary from London, and William Hamilton, the first local Baptist pioneer.

It is my unique joy that on the occasion of this Trinidad issue of the Missionary Herald I am serving in the dual capacity as President of the Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago, and also as Principal of Cowen-Hamilton Secondary School.

Not many years ago a well known and much loved Secretary of the B.M.S. visited us after examining our long history of co-operation in the Lord's work in this country, a history marked with struggle and sacrifice, Christian friendship and much blessing. He remarked that the time has come when the B.M.S. no longer looks on Trinidad or other areas, like Jamaica, as "heathen lands afar", where the B.M.S. dictates to and decides for the local church. Rather the word "reciprocity", a new partnership in which the B.M.S. seeks the help of West Indians who have now shared, grown and matured in the Gospel, to take back, with new vitality, the good news to England from which the first missionaries came. What a challenge and what a responsibility and opportunity.

It is with great thankfulness and gratitude to God that one of the sons of this great missionary venture can write this Foreword, for I have an unfading memory of many missionaries with whom I have served, and from whom I have gained much experience and help in serving God and my fellowmen.

May this issue of the Missionary Herald be used of God to further the Great Commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel".



Margaret Popham says,
“Let me introduce
you to
TRINIDAD”

TRINIDAD is the southernmost point of the West Indies, being at one place only seven miles from the South American continent. It is one of the two islands which make up the nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

The small, beautiful Tobago, lying off Trinidad's north coast, is beloved of the international “Jet Set”, and was made famous in recent years by the visits of Princess Margaret and her husband, and the Beatles, to name but six!

English readers, used maybe to thinking of their West Indian neighbours as all hailing from roughly the same smallish area of the world, may be astonished to learn that Trinidad, one of the larger islands of the Caribbean, is one thousand miles from Jamaica to the north-west, and 500 miles from the Equator, further south.

The population of Trinidad is multi-racial. It is made up of 44% of people of African descent, 36% East Indian, 16% of mixed extraction, 2% Europeans and 2% Chinese and other ethnic groups. As the capital is in the north, the population is mainly concentrated there, in a west-east belt of towns from Port-of-Spain to Sangre Grande. The second highest concentration is found in San Fernando, on the west coast, further south.

We are English-speaking, but there is a rich and colourful indigenous dialect. A “comesse” is a scandal, confusion, disturbance of some kind. “Don't mamaguy me”, means “don't flatter, deceive me”. If you wanted to describe someone as brazen, bold, the word used would be “brass-face!”. From French influence comes the strange sounding, “It have . . .”, instead of “There are . . .” So one could go on, almost endlessly.

Since this is a tropical region, the sun blazes, rather than shines, down from “January through December”. (I say “through” rather than “to” indicating the influence on the Trinidad language of near-by America.) There is a superabundance of luscious fruits, like water melon, pawpaw, mango, and wonderful grapefruits which need no sugar, exotic vegetables such as plantain (of the banana family), cassava and breadfruit.

Members of a stewardship conference held at Victory Heights (front row, l to r, Rev. P. Brewer, training director; Rev. D. Martin, stewardship director; Rev. R. Hill, evangelism director; Rev. L. Saunders, men's fellowship secretary).



Here too, are miles of rain forest in the mountainous north, and "bush" in the flatter south. Trinidad boasts gorgeous flowers like the flaming hibiscus and bougainvillea, the pink, yellow and green heliconia, the white frangipani and over 100 species of orchid; and also beautiful flowering trees such as the yellow and pink poui, the scarlet flamboyant and the orange immortelle.

This tropical isle also harbours unwelcome creatures, mosquitoes, cockroaches, tarantula spiders, snakes and alligators, as well as the welcome minute and famous humming bird. But, drive along the highway outside Port of Spain, and you will see the corbeaux (vultures) perched beside and around the municipal rubbish tip.

There are two seasons only, the dry from January to July, and the wet, from July to December. The planting of the sugar cane takes place annually, and is reaped before the rains come again. Other crops are cocoa, coffee and citrus. A minor industry is in bauxite, an earthy compound from which is manufactured, aluminium. The two main industries of oil and sugar are based in the south.

What of Trinidad at play? Largest of all looms Carnival, held just before the austerity of Lent each year. With its origins going back into both the history of the Roman Catholic Church and its Mass, and also to the bad old days of slavery, it is one huge block-buster of a "fête" which really has to be seen, and heard to be believed.

The famous Trinidadian steelbands parade, each with its own "presentation", often involving hundreds of "masqueraders", depicting anything

from an historical period to a geographical area of the world, from "Devils and Demons" to "Gods and Goddesses", you name it and you will probably find it, somewhere in Carnival. The costumes, the handicraft work, the range of materials used, the sheer scale of the thing, dazzles the eyes and takes one's breath away. Trinidad at play, and also strongly associated with Carnival, means also the Calypso, a spontaneous, topical song. Typical of the genre, a few years back was, "Cricket, Lovely Cricket" —remember?

Tourism is another aspect of Trinidad life. The tourists, many from the "States", come and go, and exclaim as they watch from their boat on the Caroni River, flocks of the beautiful bird, the scarlet ibis, winging home at dusk over the mangrove swamp. They stand amazed at the sight of the apparently inexhaustible ooze of the Pitch Lake, down south, from whence comes the asphalt for our roads. They enjoy the warm seas, white surf and golden, palm-fringed beaches of Maracas, Mayaro and elsewhere. They linger, tempted at the windows of Frederick Street's big stores in Port of Spain, and thrill at the spectacle of "your actual Queen's Park Savannah", home of West Indian Cricket.

There is, however, another Trinidad, of too many pupils crammed into too few schools, chronic unemployment, beggars on the streets, and the inadequate wooden shacks which, to the many poor, have to spell "home".

Trinidad is an endearing place, its people irrepressibly gay and friendly and overwhelmingly generous, once you have captured their hearts.

WE NOW INTRODUCE

Edna Marshall

Everyone in the country district of Hardbargain, where our Fourth Company church is situated, knows Miss Edna Marshall. She is the local Registrar of Births and Deaths, she holds a licence to sell stamps, and is a most faithful

member of the Baptist church, where she has been all her life.

As an only child, she was converted at fourteen years under the ministry of Rev. Sydney Payne. She has served as a lady deacon for 25-30 years, and teaches the adults in the All-Age Sunday School.

Her activities have also included Christian Endeavour work, and membership of the Women's League in the church.

Her visitation of sick members of the church and congregation is much appreciated.

She keeps busy at home raising chickens and a few pigs and grows her own vegetables. She has two pets, a cat and a rabbit. A deeply committed Christian, Miss Marshall is a great strength to the fellowship, and a sister in Christ whose wise and spiritual counsel is often sought.

Rev. Everest Gill of the Tabaquite Road Church, conducting a baptism.

Peter Brewer says

“Let me introduce you to the

BAPTISTS OF TRINIDAD (1815-1900)”

On the map of Trinidad you will see villages bearing ‘Company’ names: 3rd Company, 4th Company, 5th Company, 6th Company. These ‘Company’ or ‘American’ villages mark the presence of the earliest Baptist people in the island.

The Ex-Soldiers of the ‘Colonial Marine Corps’

These Baptists had acquired their faith while in slavery in the American Southern States, from which they had fled to freedom. They had been enrolled by the British for service against the U.S. in the war of 1812–14, and after that war had been disbanded. Since they could not go back to America, they were granted land, 16 acres a man, in Trinidad.

At that time the colony was largely covered with forest, and the need to provide a living for these ex-soldiers coincided happily with the desire of the Governor of Trinidad to open up the territory. The men were accordingly brought to the island, and they settled in the groupings they had known in the regiment, company by company. This explains the names of the villages.

Life in the Company Villages

Having put them on their land, and provided some tools and necessities, the government more or less forgot them. For many years these villages lived a life of their own, cut off from the rest of the community. They cleared the forest, planted their crops, it is said they introduced rice to Trinidad, hunted when necessary, and built their own roads, bridges and houses as they needed. They acquired a reputation as hard workers and became skilled as tree-fellers. A few left the villages to seek work outside.

The Religion of the Company Villages

The great majority of these settlers were Baptists, but they had adopted the ‘revivalist’



habits and customs of the Southern States, and had added to this their ancestral West African sense of rhythm and dance. ‘Their great festival was the camp meetings, which sometimes lasted a week’. Services were characterized by ‘jumping, shouting, and shaking’.

Traditions of these churches bewildered the English missionaries who visited the villages from 1843 on, but the settlers had ‘started a fashion in the religious life of Trinidad that has persisted, in spite of official disapproval, until the present day’. These customs have been sharply modified over the years, and taking a service in a Baptist church today is only a little different from taking a service in a British Baptist church.

William Hamilton

Outstanding among the leaders of the Company Village settlers was William Hamilton. He became pastor of the Fifth Company Church in 1816, on arrival in the island, and continued in office until his death in 1860. He was a ready speaker, and had the rare advantage of being able to read and write. When the government virtually abandoned the community he acted

for some time as its superintendent. He even trained other preachers.

He did not escape some censure from the missionaries when they began to make contact with the Companies, for 'he allowed some things to be done in, and some persons to be members of, the church, which he ought not to have done'. But the same missionary who made this criticism also recognized the limitations of the time:

'Still, considering the times of slavery, and the little knowledge he had, we would deal gently with Brother Hamilton. We trust and believe he has gone where there is no darkness, and no lack of spiritual knowledge and heavenly light'.

Baptist Work in Port of Spain

A generation after the establishment of the villages, Baptists began work in the capital of the island, in the north. Here the initiative came from George Cowen, who had come to Trinidad to be Principal of the Mico School for Teachers, and Superintendent of the Mico Schools. These institutions were intended to educate the ex-slaves, for slavery had been abolished in 1834.

Cowen, a Baptist, realized that more was needed than education, and he asked the B.M.S. for missionaries. His appeal was reinforced by Mrs. Revell. She had been baptized by Dr. Rippon in London, had moved to Nova Scotia, and later to Port of Spain with her husband, who died in 1825. Mrs. Revell returned to England but did not forget the needs of Trinidad. She made them known to the B.M.S. The B.M.S. Committee responded by appointing Cowen himself as its first missionary in Trinidad, when his period with the Mico Charity expired in 1843.

Cowen worked in Port of Spain for three years, 1843-46. He founded a small church of North American and Sierra Leone immigrants, and built a mission house, with money from the B.M.S. Jubilee Fund. In 1844 the membership in Port of Spain was 51.

George Cowen and the Company Villages

But Cowen had heard of the Company Villages, and wished to help them. He was able

to move South in 1846, following the arrival of another missionary, John Law, who took over the Port of Spain Church from then until 1870.

Cowen built a mission house near what is now Princes Town, and made contact with the Company Villages. He got the people of the villages to put up chapels. The wood and palm leaves for walls and roof were taken from the forests, the labour was given by the people, and the mission provided the nails. Cowen was the pioneer. He laboured unceasingly in very exhausting conditions, but he failed to change the many customs and practices 'which needed to be changed into others more consistent with the religion of Jesus'.

A Survey of Baptist Churches in the 1860's

Cowen died in 1853, and his place was not filled until 1856, when W. H. Gamble was appointed. In 1866 Gamble published a book on Trinidad, and included in it his account of the Baptist Churches. In 1862 the B.M.S. Secretary, Edward Underhill, had written a survey of the West Indies for the Society, and had included his impressions of visits to the churches in both North and South Trinidad. These works give us an opportunity to survey the work in the 1860's.

The Port of Spain Church

The church had 58 members in 1861. This included 15 Portuguese, Protestant refugees from Madeira, to whom Law preached in their own language after the morning service. There was a Sunday school of 30, and outreach work was carried on among the West Indian troops in the barracks, and in a settlement of negro labourers brought in recently from Sierra Leone.

The Southern Churches

The Company Village churches were not in a happy state at this time. There had been a brief period of prosperity in 1854, when many converts had been baptized in all the churches, but between then and 1861, when Underhill visited them, the churches had been disturbed by an American negro 'revivalist' who had caused dissension among them.

At First Company (now Mount Elvin) there had been a secession; at Sixth Company the

church had closed for several weeks following the disciplining of a leader; at Third Company there was a fear that the missionary would over ride the local leadership. Only one church had remained at peace.

Fourth Company Church and Pastor Charles Webb

This was the Fourth Company church. That it had continued on an even keel throughout the disturbance was attributed to its pastor, Charles Webb. He was better educated than many of the other pastors of the time, being the village schoolmaster as well as pastor, and had kept out the 'wild and fanatical notions' which had entered the other churches.

Although a disciplinarian, 14 members were under discipline at the time of Underhill's visit, Mr. Webb was loved and esteemed by his people and by the missionary. He died in 1902, and an article in this issue comes from his grandson, until recently Secretary of the Union.

The Baptist Union

The six churches of the Villages had been formed into a Union some time before 1866,

for 'the Union can better discharge some duties than individual churches can'. The pastors, preachers, and deacons of the churches met once a quarter. These Union meetings were needed, it seems, for the control of the 'unruly spirits' who would not submit to the discipline of their own church. The union also had sole power to license a preacher; it had proved necessary to exclude some from the pulpits 'who were in every way unfit to engage in such important work'.

At the end of the century

From this time until 1892 the pattern of the churches does not seem to have altered much. There were never more than a couple of missionaries, one in Port of Spain and one in the South, so far as is known. In 1892, the B.M.S. withdrew from Trinidad, returning in 1946.

In 1892, there were 15 churches, 6 evangelists, and about 700 church members. This compares with the present approximate figures of 24 churches, 10 tentmaking local pastors,* 2 trained pastors, and 1 deaconess, supported by missionaries of the Southern Baptist Convention (10 including wives) and the B.M.S. (2 ministers and wives, 1 deaconess).



** Men who obtain secular employment to support their own ministry in the church, based on St. Paul's example.*

Vacation Bible school at San Fernando Baptist Church.

W. F. Webb is 75 (the photo was taken just before his birthday). He has been secretary of the Baptist Union and in this article invites you to share in his

Reminiscences of

a

Trinidadian Baptist



I WAS born of a Baptist family at Hardbargain, Williamsville, on 16th September, 1900. I was dedicated at the Fourth Company Baptist Church where my grandfather, Pastor Charles Webb, served until his passing on in 1902.

My first recollection of that church was gained one day when, as a child of about six, I looked through a pair of binoculars at the congregation singing. Our house was situated only about two hundred yards from the building, and I could see the people through the window. Later, when I reached school age I walked past that building every day to attend the government school just about a hundred yards beyond it.

Sunday School at Fourth Company

I do not remember much about the activities of the church, though I remember attending Sunday school classes in that awe inspiring building. I remember, too, the number of bats that hung, heads downwards, from the roof, and the squeaking others made between the galvanized iron and the close boarding of the roof.

I remember much better the Bible classes conducted on Sunday afternoons by Miss Mille Edwards and her sister Delzima at the home of their father, Pastor Henry Edwards, a short distance from my home. There we learnt the rudiments of the Scriptures as well as the names of the books of both the Old and New Testaments.

How long these classes continued I do not remember, but I know that in January 1917 the Sunday school in the church was reorganized and I was appointed Secretary. I was provided with four small note books which I ruled up into quarters of thirteen Sundays each for the senior, intermediate, junior and primary classes. These were marked every Sunday by the class teachers and passed back to me with the attendance as well as the offering of each pupil entered. From these books quarterly attendance returns were compiled for submission to the Princes Town Sunday School Association to which our Sunday school belonged, and through which quarterly study literature was obtained. The churches participating in this association were Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Moravian. I remember that I never missed a day's attendance if I could help it.

The Pastorate

What I remember about this period of time was the difficulty of maintaining pastoral oversight of the church. The first minister I remember was called Pastor Nurse, but it seemed that he was not ordained, as the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and marriages, were administered by Rev. John Herbert Poole. Mr. Poole was pastor of St. John's Baptist Church, Port of Spain, and superintendent of the Baptist churches in the south, with Savanna Grande being the principal centre.

I also heard of a Baptist church at Chaguanas

in Central Trinidad. I remember a preacher named Mr. Edwin Lewis speaking on his experience there. Then there was another at Lambeau, Tobago, about which I heard through Mr. Peter Bontour who was once stationed there. This church no longer exists as a unit of the Baptist Union.

The next pastor I remember was Pastor Da Costa, a native of Jamaica, who seemed to be ordained as he performed all the functions of that office. Owing to a misunderstanding with the officers and members of the church he severed connection about 1916 and returned to Jamaica. When he left we had local preachers like Henry Edwards, David Joseph and Titus Dunmore giving pulpit assistance. These men had served under Pastor Charles Webb in such out-stations as Piparo and Iere Village.

Thomas Payne

Mr. Poole then found that there was need for an assistant superintendent, and obtained the assistance of Rev. Thomas Sydney Payne, a Methodist from Barbados, who arrived with his wife and two infant sons, Sydney Eric and William, in 1918. Mr. Payne took on the pastorate at Fourth Company and the supervision of the churches of the south until he retired in

1945 and returned to Barbados. Mr. Payne was a fine warm-hearted Christian and a thorough gentleman who was ably assisted by his wife, Gladys, who sat by her husband's side in the old Ford Sedan, along the rough country roads to stations as far apart as Marac in the south and Tabaquite in the east. At his home church his wife was organist and choir mistress, and how her choir delighted the congregation with their rendition of special music items. Rev. T. and Mrs. Payne endeared themselves to the pastors and members of every church in the south, and Mr. Payne preached at St. John's, Port of Spain, when Mr. Poole was incapacitated.

Mr. Payne's work in the south was a great success. I was converted under his ministry and baptized at Fourth Company by him. He also baptized the girl who was to be my wife. He subsequently married us. The Rev. T. and Mrs. Payne wanted me to take up the preaching ministry for, he said, the church needed educated young men. By that time I was well on my way to completing my training as a teacher. This was in 1922. I did not then feel called to this ministry. I completed my training as a teacher in 1923. I still did not wish to be a minister, but I thought quite a lot about it. I do not think that I prayed as much. I had always loved teaching and thought that was my calling.



A group at the Baptist Training Centre for Girls at Fifth Company.

The Baptist Community

During the period of this review there was a stigma attached to being a Baptist. In the first place it was a very small community. Secondly, our method of worship did not appeal to the uninitiated, and was thought to be coarse and undignified. This criticism was caused by the behaviour of certain people claiming to be Baptists, but whose behaviour was derived from an African cult that bore no relation to our form of worship.

Thirdly, and very significantly, our pastors were more or less untrained, and some of them were barely literate. The result was that members of other communions regarded us as inferior. We were not however unduly disturbed by this kind of attitude on the part of others. We are proud of our heritage, and people have grown to respect us for what we are.

We have suffered our disappointments as well as anyone else but we have been richly blessed by our Lord. I remember how Mr. Payne had a fine group of young people whom he started to train to assist in the pulpit as well as other departments of church service. Three of these, the seniors of the group, grew dissatisfied and left to join the Church of God which had started work near to our own, in fact in the very district.

Rev. J. H. Poole

These reminiscences would not be complete without mention of the Rev. J. H. Poole in greater detail, for the whole period of this review has been spanned by this remarkable character. Mr. Poole came to Trinidad either in 1907 or 1909 as a young man and soon became very popular with the Baptist community. He came, I suppose, in answer to a call from St. John's to be their pastor. Soon he was universally loved and respected. At the same time he took on the superintendence of the Baptist churches and for many years cemented the fragmented Baptist efforts.

I was puzzled when he resigned his office to accept a post as Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. based in the Bahamas, as I did not know the circumstances. During his absence St. John's was served by the Rev. Frederick Cawley who, I learnt, was a brilliant scholar. When the Rev.

F. Cawley returned to England Rev. J. H. Poole was received back at St. John's where he served until he retired.

Return of the B.M.S.

The B.M.S. returned to Trinidad in 1946 and we are grateful. To most Baptists it was a day of rejoicing. I remember with pleasure the arrival of Rev. Sydney J. and Mrs. Poupard, and Miss L. Waggott. Miss Waggott took the women by storm. The women rallied round her, and now they have so far outstripped the men in Baptist witness that the men despair of getting up with them. Not long after came Rev. J. P. Hickerton, a forthright English Baptist who saw what was needed and went forward to get it. Mr. Hickerton was succeeded by Rev. A. L. Suter at St. John's, while Rev. Cyril Nunn came to serve in the south.

One of the most intelligent missionaries to arrive here, to my knowledge, was Rev. William Cranston Bell. He was also one of the most modest. I remember the first visit he paid to Fourth Company. In welcoming him that day I told him that he had arrived not only to do missionary work, but pioneer work also. I wonder if he ever agreed with that statement.

He served for several terms, in every ministerial capacity, including District Superintendent, pastor, and educator, having served as Principal of the Cowen Hamilton Secondary School after the departure of the Rev. Eric Payne for the United Kingdom. It was during his term as Acting Principal that the school was selected for aid by Government as an Assisted Secondary School.

Among the missionaries from the United Kingdom was Rev. Sydney Eric Payne to whom reference has already been made. He was the son of the Rev. Thomas Sydney Payne who served so faithfully and so long as Pastor and Superintendent. Eric, as we called him, received his early education in San Fernando, won his Higher School Certificate at Naparima Boys' School and proceeded to Bristol, England, to be trained for the Christian ministry.

He returned here as missionary in the mid-fifties. Like his father before him, he received the support of the churches, and like his father served as Pastor of Fourth Company Baptist

Church along with his pastorate at Princes Town Baptist Centre, which afterwards came to be known as St. John's Baptist Church, Princes Town.

When in 1962 it was decided to establish a Baptist Secondary School in Trinidad, Mr. Payne was chosen to be its first principal. He continued to occupy that post till the circumstances of his son's health made it necessary for him to return to U.K. for specialist treatment.

Jamaican ministers in Trinidad

Jamaica, we see, has been figuring largely in the spiritual life of Trinidad, for in addition to the three already mentioned there has been Rev. S. Vernon who resigned in June 1975 to return to Jamaica where he has lived much of his life.

Mr. Vernon was a Panamanian by birth, who migrated to Jamaica, where he was trained for the Jamaican Christian ministry, married a Jamaican, pastored in Jamaica for some years, and answered the call to come on secondment by the B.M.S. He has been one of our most outstanding missionaries. He pastored two churches, and for a period, three churches, to fill a vacant pulpit.

There is another Jamaican, Rev. Allan J. Parkes, who married a Trinidadian, and settled in Trinidad, first as a master in a Secondary School administered by the Anglican Church. He soon threw in his lot with the Baptist Union and held every conceivable office including Pastor, District Superintendent, President of

the Union, and now Acting Principal of our Secondary School, which post he holds currently.

Trinidad Baptist Mission

Members of the Southern Baptist Convention (S.B.C.) of the United States came to Trinidad for exploratory work some time a few years ago and set up office at Abercromby Street, Port of Spain. They later agreed to work together with the Union in the northern part of the island, where they set up missions at Diego Martin, Monte Grande and other places. Later on, with the amendment of the Constitution of the Union, they agreed, with the co-operation of the Southern Baptist Convention to work under the umbrella of the Union. The result was the amalgamation of interests, and the missions they established became units of the Union. Today there are three churches, Valley, Monte Grande and Richplain Baptist Churches, and two missions, originally founded by the T.B.M.

The first of their personnel to arrive was Rev. Emit O. Ray, with his family, closely followed by Rev. J. Medares and family. Cordial relations were established and several missionaries, including Revs. Harold Lewis, David L. Martin, Reginal Hill, John Sanderson, Jim Spaulding, Don Snell, B. B. Moore, G. Hogg and a few others have served or are serving in the country.

The Foreign Mission Board contributes generously to the financial support of the work and they have served as pastors of any church that called them. One of them, Rev. R. Hill, served one year as President of the Union.

WE NOW INTRODUCE

Josephine Placide

Josephine Placide is a versatile young woman. Born in the tiny village of Cachipe, one of

a family of twelve, she was blessed with fine Christian parents whose example led her to Christian commitment at twelve years old. Nurtured from childhood in the warm fellowship of the Cachipe Baptist church, she became Sunday School Superintendent at fourteen!

A growing desire to do more for Christ and His church has had far reaching results over the years: a call to deaconess work, three years' training at

Calabar (the only female student!), and assignments within the Baptist Union of Trinidad & Tobago which have included Director of the Youth Department, Pastor of Mount Elvin church, membership of the Baptist Union Executive Council, and, more recently, the Principalship of the Girls' Training Centre.

She is vivacious, an enthusiastic housekeeper, and a gifted needlewoman who makes all her own dresses.



WE NOW INTRODUCE

Shirley Joseph

Shirley Joseph is twenty-eight, a lively "with-it" warm-hearted Trinidadian. Shirley was converted at a crusade held at the Princes Town Baptist church on the 12th March, 1963, and was baptized later that same year.

Since that time, Shirley told me, she had been "trying to keep good". Shirley is a very practical and honest person and has discovered that serving her Lord personally means a struggle, a getting up and falling down, but always a "going on". Shirley loves to sing and at present is the Vice-President of the Youth Group. She participates in the life of the church as a whole, has been involved in Girls' Brigade and takes an active part in the Sunday school.

Three years ago Barbara Vernon, (the daughter of Rev. Sam and Mrs. Vernon, who were our missionaries working with the folk in Princes Town) invited Shirley to stay for a

week-end. This stretched into three years as Shirley became part of their family. One of the aspects of being part of this family which she commented on was that once a week they would, as a family, have a special time of family prayers. On this occasion a different member of the family would lead, each week. Sometimes it would last a very short time, and sometimes as they shared their problems, joys, family needs and worshipped together, the time would stretch and no one would mind.

For the past year and a half Shirley has worked in the office of the Baptist Union, part-time, and since the Training Programme came into operation she has worked full-time. Shirley enjoys this work though it can be demanding. Sometimes people come in with stencils that need cutting "now for now", and other times there is little to do. However, she enjoys the work and meeting a lot of people.

Shirley's main interest is in the Youth Work of the Baptist

Union. I asked her how she felt about young people today. She said, 'young people today are thinking for themselves and trying to change some of the traditions of the older folks. They are taking a more active part in everything and especially in the life of the church'.

Shirley felt that the young people themselves had to be more committed and give of their time, talents and money. They had many advantages over their parents and grandparents, and sometimes it was easy to become frustrated when their elders did not understand or sympathize.

Shirley is convinced that the young people of today can overcome the barriers and must take a more and more active part in the life of the church. One of the ways she sees that these barriers of tradition could be broken down is by more and more families having prayer times together. Shirley asks for your encouragement through prayer for all the young people of the Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago.



The Vernon family checking in as they leave for Jamaica: Rev. Sam Vernon, Barbara, Frank, Mark and Mrs. Maeve Vernon.

Baptists are looking to the future

by Peter Brewer

THE growth and development of Baptist work in Trinidad has not been rapid and has sometimes been disappointing. What sort of future is there for this small group of churches.

The inherited situation

We must begin from what we have now. At present there are 24 churches, and 4 missions in the Baptist Union. This means an addition of 9 churches since 1892 and (at an optimistic estimate) of 1300 members.

More significant is the distribution of these churches. Most of them are still in the area in which Baptists first started, that is in the south. Only four churches and two branch churches are in the north. But the population of Trinidad is heavily concentrated in a belt of towns stretching from Port of Spain to the east coast. The Company Villages are small, rural, and probably getting smaller. In the south there are only one or two spots in which there is room for expansion.

Another point is that Baptists are very largely drawn from one segment of the population, the negroes. Nor does it help that Baptist is not a good word in Trinidad, and that Baptists have always been 'outsiders' tucked away in small villages. Part of the trouble has been that there has never been a trained ministry, to compare with that developed by other denominations.

Baptist are therefore a body of churches with a few resources, and a large number of advanced programmes, which rely on missionaries to carry them through. This little Baptist Union has to carry theological training, lay training, stewardship, music, mass media, youth work, day schools and Sunday Schools, by itself, all the committees and all the apparatus of a much bigger body have to function somehow

in a very small body. It is a local joke that we send for missionaries in order that they may sit on committees, all seventeen or so of them!

So what are we doing about it?

At the moment we are engaging in a major stock taking. This started over a year ago, and will not finish until July 1976. It is being carried out by the Union's Planning Committee. It is not an exciting operation. It is like most committees, dull and tedious at times. But it is thorough and searching, and if the committee can come up with an agreed programme at the end it may give the Union some clear objectives and means to attain them.

It may be objected that such planning is a purely human device which would have the effect of stifling the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We would not agree with that. The Spirit is capable of working through any group of Christians, whether they are in a Church Meeting, a Union Assembly, a departmental committee, or whatever it may be. We hope that we shall be led as a Union to discover the purpose of God for us.

The scope covered by our work is immense. Twelve writers, at least that is an apostolic number, are preparing sections of a planning manual which will be presented to the Assembly next year. These twelve sections ask questions ranging from the Biblical principles on which the Union ought to operate, through the historical background, and such general matters, through to a detailed plan of organization, finance, resources, and administrative control. And the end of it all, we hope that action will result.

What will it all lead to?

It would be wrong to try to reveal in advance what conclusions will be arrived at by a committee still deliberating and writing. It would be foolish to attempt any such guesswork. This article is not going to risk any prophecies! But certain things are emerging already with a wide measure of agreement.

It is agreed that reorganization is essential. The mass of committees which have grown up, unnoticed, in the last few years must be reduced to order and made to function. So a new

departmental organization has been sketched out. This should save time for actually doing the job by releasing us all from the hours we spend talking about it.

It is expected that education will play a large part in the final priorities that will be mapped out. In particular, it is being accepted that both a well trained ministry and a well trained lay leadership is now indispensable.

It is quite certain that evangelization will be prominent in the final sketch. We can no longer afford to be a denomination which is confined to a particular segment of the community.

We haven't finished yet

Although therefore, Baptists have been a very long time in Trinidad, they have not yet finished. They are unrepresented in large and populated parts of the island. They are not yet equipped to move out on their own. It is a fact that without missionary help the Baptist Union would be crippled by lack of personnel, particularly pastoral and specialist personnel. It would also be in a bad state financially without assistance from the two missionary bodies which now work alongside the local churches.

That is why we still ask for your thoughts, your intercessions, and your financial support, and from time to time, perhaps, your service, in Trinidad.



Kathleen, Alex, Morag and Fiona Robertson are now in Trinidad. They arrived just a few weeks ago. Kathleen and Alex were baptized and became members of the Ward Road Baptist Church, Dundee. Kathleen is a trained nurse and Alex trained for the ministry at the Baptist Theological College of Scotland. They settled at Wick Baptist Church in 1969 and Alex had been chaplain to the Wick branch of the R.N.L.I. since 1973. A visit from Miss Eva Waggott in early 1975 first set them thinking about the possibility of work in Trinidad. They have now joined the other B.M.S. missionaries in that island, Rev. Peter and Mrs Sheila Brewer, Miss Margaret Popham and Rev. Desmond and Mrs Bobsie Gordon.

WE NOW INTRODUCE

John Charles

John Charles is thirty-three years old. He was brought up in the circle of the St. Peter's Baptist Church, Rio Claro, and attended a Baptist School and Sunday School.

He was fourteen when he began to listen carefully to the message of the Gospel and when he asked for baptism. John is grateful for the fellow-

ship and help of the Rio Claro Church, but especially to Rev. Rodney Firmin (a B.M.S. missionary at that time pastor of the church). It was Mr. Firmin who encouraged John to begin as a preacher and without that help, John is sure he would not be around in the church today!

John has not had an easy life. He has for years worked in the Post Office, but that was not a regular job. Even that was at risk a few years ago when he had to have an operation, and could no longer ride his bike. At the same time,

his house was practically washed away. John is amazed at how he was helped in those days. There was no money, but John was so appreciated as an honest and upright man that people gave material and labour to mend the house. His wife, Elvira, quoted to him at the time, 'I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread'. John needed that provision. He has three children to support. He does his best to train them according to God's Word, and by his example.

He is now preacher in charge

WE NOW INTRODUCE

Sheldon Dewsbury

Sheldon does not come from a Baptist family, but became interested in the Baptists when his mother began to attend an inquirers' class to read the Gospel. His mother was eventually baptized at the Mount Elvin church. It is the custom in Trinidad to hold special services each night during the week preceding a baptism, and it was when he attended those services that Sheldon heard the call of God to him. There was nothing spectacular about it, no 'going up to the altar' as the phrase goes. He spoke to the minister (Rev. Allan Parkes) and asked for baptism.

The elders of the church discerned almost at once that he was a potential pastor, but it was a long while before he did anything about this.

He did well at primary school and studied at technical school

for two years before having to give up for lack of funds.

Mr. Parkes recommended him to study at the St. Andrew's College when he finally decided he had a call to the ministry. He was ready to enter the United Theological College of the West Indies in Jamaica in September 1969. Sheldon took the L.Th. Certificate in 1973, and accepted a call to be pastor at San Fernando (one of the few Trinidad churches capable of supporting a full time minister). In December the same year, he married, and (he says) has lived happily ever after.

Sheldon feels strongly about the need now of more full time and fully trained pastors for Trinidad, and says they can give greater depth of teaching. If tent-making ministers are necessary, they should, he thinks, be professionally trained in more than one direction, so that they can combine ministry with, say, teaching. He has a deep concern about Trinidad society, and especially about the serious lack of family life. He has a particular word for fathers, maybe because he

recently became one. Sheldon thinks they ought to be more responsible than they are.

He has a special word of thanks to the B.M.S. for the scholarship which enabled him to go to Jamaica, and special appreciation for the Rev. W. C. Bell who, as a missionary in charge of training at the time, took a personal interest in him.

TAILPIECE!

Wakened by a frog

Bobsie Gordon, who has been in Trinidad for about a year, recalls the occasion when they had a night time visit from a frog.

She and her husband were in bed when, at about 2 a.m. he woke her and said something cold had jumped on his face.

Bobsie beat a hasty retreat into the next room until her husband assured her with the words, "It's a jumping frog on the bed, it must have got in through the window".

(continued from p. 14)

at the little church in Dades Road, Rio Claro. He is a recognized preacher of the Baptist Union, and is studying hard to take the two-year course that will lead to ordination as a pastor. Brother John, as he is known to the whole community, would like to send special greetings to Rev. R. and Mrs. Firmin and to assure all those in Britain who support our missionaries of the prayers of himself and his people at Dades Road.

Acknowledgements

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(7th October, 1975 to 27th October, 1975)
General Work: Anon., £17.71; Anon., £5.00; Anon., £20; Anon., £9.98; Anon., £5.00; Anon., £1.00; Anon., £13.00; Anon., £25.00; Anon., £4.00; Anon. (Edinburgh), £2.00; Anon., £2.00; Anon., £1.40; Anon., £5.00; Anon. (A Friend), £1.00; Anon. (Doris), £1.00; Anon., £5.00; Anon., £20.00; Anon., £4.60.

LEGACIES

	£
Mrs. E. P. Bovett	1,250.00
Miss G. W. Davies	1,000.00
Mr. J. Dodkin	60.00
Franklin Trust	50.00
Miss M. Graham	200.00
Miss A. M. Hard	500.00
Mr. J. Hope	200.00
Mr. E. E. Parnell	100.00
Miss D. A. Weakley	821.96

Missionary Record

Arrivals

- 14 October. Miss S. Slade from Kathmandu, Nepal.
- 29 October. Miss. R. W. Page from Mbanza-Ngungu, Republic of Zaire.

Departures

- 9 October. Miss M. Kingsley for Pokhara, Nepal.
- 14 October. Miss J. E. Knapman for Calcutta, and Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Casebow and family for Driptipur, India.
- 20 October. Rev. A. and Mrs. Robertson and family for Trinidad. Mr. and Mrs. C. Foulkes and family, Miss S. Headlam, Rev. D. and Mrs. King and family, Miss P. Smart and Miss J. Wells for Barisal, Bangladesh for language study.

Deaths

- 22 October. In Edinburgh. Mrs. Joan Katherine Watson (née Williamson), aged 78, China Mission 1923-51.
- 25 October. In Kettering General Hospital, Rev. Kenneth Frank Weller, aged 72, India Mission 1929-65.

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