

# REGION

THE CLARION-LEDGER ■ JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1993

## CHARLOTTE GRAHAM

Religion Writer  
The Clarion-Ledger

### Women in pulpit face rejection, says Pratt's pastor

History was made at Jackson's Pratt Memorial United Methodist Church in June, when the Rev. Deborah Moses became pastor.

The 46-year-old minister became the first woman to serve as pastor of the 90-year-old west Jackson church. She was a woman who had been in the ministry only eight years, coming to one of the denomination's older churches.

"You are either called or ordained to take on this male-dominated task of ministering," said Moses. "You face a lot of rejection because of your gender."

"My first pastor, the people wanted a preacher," said Moses.

"The next two, what they wanted was a man."

"It is a blessing for me to be at Pratt. They just wanted a leader, someone who was willing to give of themselves and work for the good of the church."

Cleo McLemore, who has been a member of the church 31 years, said, "I have no qualms with a female as pastor of the church. She comes across as a warm and caring person. She demonstrates that you don't have to put your position first. She works with and beside us and is always open for suggestions."

Moses said this is something she has difficulty getting people to accept. "People tend to reject you regardless. But that ultimate rejection comes when you are not even accepted by your peers."

Moses recalls an incident in which ministers of one city handed tickets to keep her out of their pulpits. "They had a little meeting and voted not to let me enter their pulpits, only because I'm a woman."

"Incidents such as this only help to make me stronger. I learn a lot about patience and staying power. I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me."

Moses said she is encouraged by her sons Edward Charles, 13, and Mechelodek, "Mingy," 11. "It's little things that they do and say that encourage me from day to day. Many days I don't know what I would have done without them."

Despite the rejection and hardships she may encounter, Moses said she will continue her ministry. "This is what I was called to do. I was sent here to teach people's lives."

**Young choir debuts**

The recently organized Mississippi Pre-Adult Christian Community Choir (MPACC) will present its debut concert Sunday at 5:30 p.m. at Mirachi City Fellowship, 4404 Sagamore St., Jackson.

Featured guest at the concert will be Beatrice Gardner, former lead singer with Milton Brunson and the Thompson Community Choir.

MPACC, composed of members 13 to 22 years of age, was a dream of Louis Wright Jr., director of music for the choir. Wright said the goal of the group is obvious. "We want to make an impact throughout the city of Jackson. If the teens and young adults of this city can come together and make a stand for Christ, then surely we can make an impact."

For details, contact Wright at 989-7273; or Fred Williams, executive producer, at 352-7219.

Sports fans who remember last year's paralyzing injury to former New York Jets star Dennis Byrd may want to pick up a copy of the newly released  *Rise and Walk: The Trial and Triumph of Dennis Byrd* . The book, published by Zondervan, is available at local bookstores or by calling 1-800-727-3060.

Here's a memorable quote from the book: "I think a lot of why it happened, I know why. I'm a Christian. It has now given me a platform and an opportunity to share with people my views and beliefs as a Christian."

### Photography book focuses on Delta's 'Sacred Spaces'

Tom Rankin depicts the African-American church's influence in the region.

By Charlotte Graham  
Clarion-Ledger Religion Writer

What began as a photo exhibit of Mississippi Delta churches and adjoining churchyards and cemeteries has evolved into a book.

Tom Rankin, University of Mississippi professor of art and Southern studies, has selected 48 pictures from his thousands and placed them in a book called *Sacred Spaces: Photographs from the Mississippi Delta*. The book of compelling black-and-white photographs is published by University Press of Mississippi.

This is a book of the importance of the African-American church in the Delta, said Rankin. "I used the term sacred space to describe the way communities and congregations create places that are appropriate for worship. I am interested in the way that faith and belief can be seen in the landscape through churches and cemeteries, and ultimately, outdoor baptisms."

"Historically, the church has been a worship center and a social service center, and a center for education," said the 36-year-old photographer. "The church served many needs of the community with it very much a part of the community. It has gone beyond just being a place to go on Sunday morning."

Rankin said when he came to the state in 1984, he found himself drawn to the Delta's holy places. Serving as professor and then chair of Delta State University's department of art, he spent his spare time traveling the area, photographing old churches and graveyards.

"I photographed both white and black churches, interiors and exteriors, and those with cemeteries and without."

Rankin took thousands of pictures, but considered only about 150 successful; from those came the 48 in the book. The first half of the book depicts churches and old graveyards; the second shows African-American baptisms and outdoor baptisms.

Rankin, a native of Kentucky, said he has always been interested in how different traditional religions can be seen through the architecture and interior of churches.

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Cemetery, Mount Bayou, MS 1989 in from Tom Rankin's *Sacred Spaces*. Photographs from the Mississippi Delta. Rankin will autograph copies of the book at Lemura Book Store at noon today.

Tom Rankin: drawn to the Delta's holy places.

## PASSING THE STAFF

### The leadership of Mississippi's Episcopal diocese changes hands today.

By Charlotte Graham  
Clarion-Ledger Religion Writer

When Mississippi's Episcopal bishop, the Right Rev. Duncan M. Gray Jr., passes the bishop's staff to the bishop coadjutor today, it will be like a father passing the family business to a son.

Gray has known the Right Rev. Alfred Clark "Chip" Marble Jr. for years and has often advised him in his ministry. To Gray, Marble is as close as a son can get.

"I first met Chip when he was camping at Camp Bratton Green, the diocesan camp (near Canton)," said Gray. "He spent a lot of time on a camper and counselor during his teen years. I spent a lot of time as camp director."

"I watched him grow and mature," said Gray. "I was even there when he was ordained."

The two developed a close bond and often found themselves headed down the same road. Both were Episcopal priests. Both attended the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn. Both served as rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Oxford. Both served as the state's bishop coadjutor, or assistant. And now, both will have served as bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi.

When Gray retires Sept. 30 after 19 years of service, Marble will take over the leadership of the diocese. Today at 11 a.m., the diocese will have a special service in honor of the retirement of Gray and in recognition of the investiture of Marble.

Marble, who will become Mississippi's eighth Episcopal bishop, has served as bishop coadjutor since June 1991. Since that time he has shared leadership responsibilities with Gray.

"We worked together as fellow priests, and now we are working together as bishops," said Marble.

When their paths crossed years ago, the two couldn't foresee they would end up in the same place. "As we look back we can perhaps point to a number of things that have prepared us for this moment, but then you never really thought you would become bishop," said Gray.



The Right Rev. Alfred Clark Marble Jr. (left) will take over the crozier, or staff, of the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi from the Right Rev. Duncan M. Gray Jr. in a ceremony today at Municipal Auditorium. Gray is retiring after 19 years.

### CEREMONIES

Today's events in honor of the retirement of the Right Rev. Duncan M. Gray Jr. and the investiture of the Right Rev. Alfred Clark "Chip" Marble Jr. are:

**10:45 a.m.** — Procession begins from St. Andrew's Cathedral, 305 E. Capitol St., to Municipal Auditorium, corner of Pascagoula and West streets.

**11 a.m.** — Service of institution at the auditorium. Guest speaker: the Most Rev. Edmund Leo Browning, presiding bishop, primate and chief pastor of the Episcopal Church.

### ON GRAY

What people are saying about the Right Rev. Duncan Gray, outgoing bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi:

"I remember when a search committee was appointed to seek a rector for St. Paul's, Meridian, and they were instructed to go to Oxford and don't come back without Duncan Gray. Fortunately, they succeeded."

"I also remember when Duncan Gray used his considerable talents as a mediator and conciliator in helping form the Committee of Conscience, which brought together people from various churches with a mixture of ethnic background and did so much to heal the wounds caused by the burning and displacement of Meridian black churches and the synagogue."

— James V. LeAurum, Meridian

"Although I have been in Mississippi only a year, I have become aware of the remarkable life and ministry of Bishop Duncan Gray. When I arrived in August of last year, I experienced Bishop Gray's friendship. He was among the first to welcome me, and he graciously participated in the services of welcome sponsored by the United Methodistists of Mississippi. In his remarks on that occasion, I became aware of his commitment to Christ and the church and his concern to apply gospel values to society."

— the Rev. Marshall L. "Jack" Meadors Jr., bishop of the United Methodist Church, Mississippi area

"I take this occasion to salute you with admiration, respect and gratitude. I count it one of my special joys and blessings to have come to be so closely associated with you since I came to Jackson myself in 1979. It was easy to get to know you and a source of encouragement to become close, trusted colleagues in the ministry. I thank you for that and I will miss that same relationship as you move into official retirement."

— the Rev. William R. Houck, bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Jackson

"That was a hectic time for me," added Gray. "It was like jumping into the ocean to learn to swim."

"Everybody was understanding and supportive, though. My job was made a lot easier because of the support and cooperation of so many people in the diocese."

"The bishop doesn't operate by himself," Gray said. "There are a lot of people that support and help him."

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### MILESTONES

■ **Terence Mesoric** leads #3 of Roadside holds its 16th anniversary at 1 p.m. today at the Gospel Temple Missionary Baptist Church in Rosedale. Speaker: the Rev. John F. Johnson.

■ **Third Temple Church of Christ** (Holiness) U.S.A., 1409 Morehouse Ave., Jackson, celebrates its pastor's fourth anniversary at 3:30 p.m. Speaker: Bishop Maurice Bringham in the speaker; Elder Corneil Castilla is pastor.

■ **Mount Holton Missionary Baptist Church**, 643 Sweet Gum St., Pearl, will celebrate its pastor's fourth anniversary at 1:30 p.m. Sunday. Speaker: Brother Johnnie Robinson.

### DOMINATIONS

The International dominion guide, the Upper Room, has launched an edition in Bulgaria, the second to be introduced in eastern Europe less than a year. The interdenominational monthly, put out by the United Methodist Church, is published in 66 interdenominational editions in 44 languages.

Bernice Powell Jackson has been named executive director of the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ, succeeding the Rev. Benjamin F. Davis Jr., who has been named the new head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

The largest Southern Baptist congregation, the 28,000-member First Baptist Church of Dallas, has called the Rev. O.S. Hawkins to succeed their longtime, fundamentalist leader, the Rev. W.A. Criswell. Hawkins, pastor of First Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said he would assume the post Oct. 3. A previous replacement for Criswell, the Rev. Joel Gregory, resigned, citing differences with Criswell.

### ON THE ISSUES

The debate over gender of priests and cultural issues in the Roman Catholic Church are up for examination at a conference going on through Sunday on the church's future. Sponsored by the National Center for Pastoral Leadership, based in Annapolis, Md., the conference has scheduled several prominent speakers including Catholic Bishop Michael Kenny of Anchorage, Alaska, and Episcopalian Jane Dixon of Washington, D.C.

Among several social religious issues confronting Congress as it reconstitutes the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, it is expected to reach the Senate this month. A House version was passed last spring. The act would restore the requirement that the government demonstrate a "compelling interest" in order to restrict a person's free exercise of religion.

### IN THE NEWS

The National Council of Churches, which more than a decade ago had urged that the Palestine Liberation Organization be brought into the Middle East peace process, praised that step this week by the National Council. The agreement between them is "the beginning of a new era of relationships between Israel and the Palestinian people" in a region that has been plagued by war and injustice, said the council's general secretary.

The Rev. Joan S. Campbell, noting that the act "has for the first time recognized each other's political and human rights," said the council in 1980 urged such mutual recognition as "a precondition" for Middle East peace. This was done after a lengthy, on-the-spot inquiry by a delegation of the council that has been plagued by war and injustice, said the council's general secretary.

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