

The Role of St. Paul's Church As Cultural, Spiritual Center



MAMIE OLIVER, like many other ministers' wives, can be found at the piano providing music for Sunday worship services. Besides being a mother of two children, Sharon, 12 and Jon, 8, she is with the Boise State College Department of Urban and Societal Studies and holds a Masters Degree in Social Work.



REV. HENRY OLIVER, preaches from the pulpit of St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church. He attended Bible Institute of Los Angeles and received his theological training at Talbot Theological Seminary.

'... Ego-centered love keeps us from using our self-love to help others. We're cut off and a great gulf exists between us and our brothers.'

By PAT WYNN
Statesman Religious Writer

"I've never reached perfection — sometimes I've lost my connection. Oh, I've not lived free from sin but Lord, oh Lord, I've tried . . . I've tried . . ."

An attractive, young woman stands by a piano. Her body gently rocks from side to side. She tosses back her head and tears well in her eyes as she pours out her life into a gospel soul song.

It's Sunday morning at St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church. For 51 years, Sundays there have been like those you would expect in any other church in Boise. Fluctuating attendance over the years. Financial burdens coming and going, many times on the wings of prayer. Motivation problems.

But Sundays are getting better at St. Paul's. The white wooden frame church located across from Bronco Stadium on Broadway often is referred

to by passerbys as "the little black church." If they would venture inside the modest walls they would discover worship there isn't just black or white, rich or poor, large or small.

The church pastor, Rev. Henry Oliver and his wife Mamie, are newcomers to Boise. The church has suffered over the years because of a lack of pastoral leadership. Rev. Oliver received his theological and Bible training from Bible Institute of Los Angeles and Talbot Theological Seminary. His wife, a graduate of Cal State and holder of a masters degree in Social Work from Fresno State, is with the Department of Urban and Societal Studies at Boise State College.

The soft-spoken minister is optimistic about the future of St. Paul's and its role in becoming a center — culturally and spiritually — for the black community as well as fomenting understanding between Boise's relatively

small black populace and the rest of the city.

Rev. Oliver finds it somewhat uncomfortable to be questioned on black problems in church compared to white problems or visa versa. Such distinctions he finds deplorable.

"A number of people, I suppose, would expect a certain amount of militancy in a black church pastor. I'm not saying there shouldn't be a mutual respect between people, but I've always been disenchanted with certain types of church politics."

Rev. Oliver's goal at St. Paul's is to have a Bible-centered church where the precepts of Christ's teachings are taught and encouraged to be put to work in the lives of those on its church roster. At present, Rev. Oliver explained, there are 10 or 12 families actually supporting the church financially on a regular basis. However,

numbers don't seem to bother him much.

"We're a small group of people here at St. Paul's. In the past, we've had our ups and downs, periods of discouragement. But there is an element of independence here that I feel is very good."

When Rev. Oliver speaks of "independence," he is referring to plain old church pride. But without it, he believes, a church is destined to become stagnant and ineffective.

What about social injustices? Equality between the races? Hatred? Mistrust?

Rev. Oliver doesn't mix words. He believes in a simple, but perhaps the most difficult, solution of all — "The Golden Rule surpasses all formulas for justice." He paraphrases the ruling this way, "What is hateful to you, do not do it to your neighbor."

Wiping his face with his handker-

chief, he said "It would be a good world if everyone did this. Good for blacks and whites and good for those who have ego-centered hangups. We need to get out of ourselves and take a good look at other men."

Flattering one another with the motive of 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours' is not what Jesus meant when He talked about this unselfish love, Rev. Oliver continued. "Some people exist on this sort of thing," he added.

"This ego-centered love keeps us

from using our self-love to help others. We're cut off and a great gulf exists between us and our brothers. It stands between us and peace. We don't understand one another and gaps that cause distinctions between people result."

Rev. Oliver believes the reason for the trouble, unrest and distress in the world goes back to the old problem of dealing with one's neighbor.

"The criteria for human conduct we learn from infancy. To do my duty to my neighbor by loving him as myself. Obedience to this elementary precept as taught by Christ is the final achievement to all religion. God has given us the key to human understanding. True love works no evil but fulfills the law.

"It's as simple as that. It's the key word to all our endeavors in this age when we're seeking social equality and social justice. If we learned to master this one principle, all others would be easily done," Rev. Oliver says.

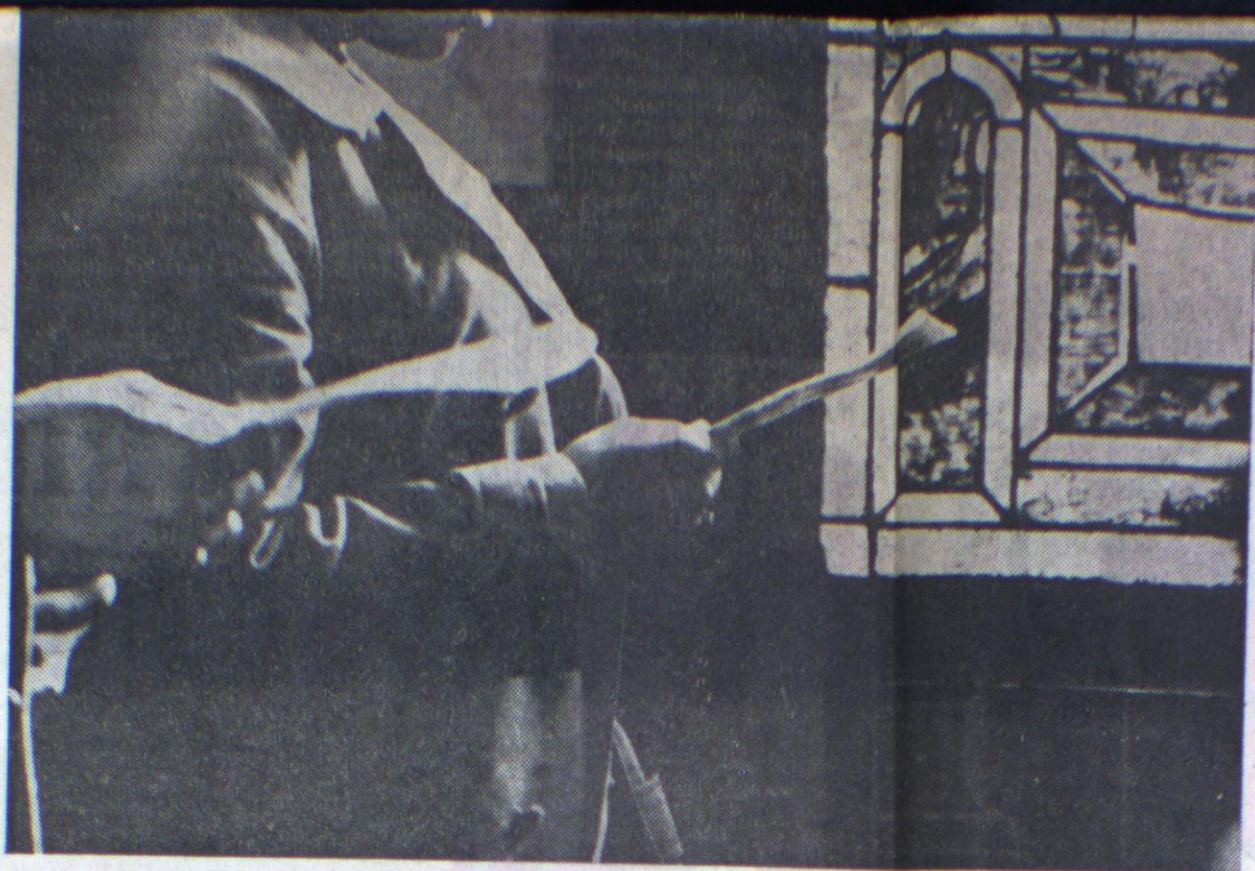


SANDRA BROWN, member of the St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church, joins congregation in hymn singing at recent Sunday morning worship service.





FOUR-YEAR-OLD Felicia Brown, sleeps peacefully in lap of her grandmother, Mrs. Louise Brown of Boise, who listens to sermon along with Mrs. Sims, a visitor from Milwaukee, Wis.



VI MILLER, 15-year-old daughter of Mrs. Ruth Miller, Mountain Home, participates in St. Paul's Baptist Church service.



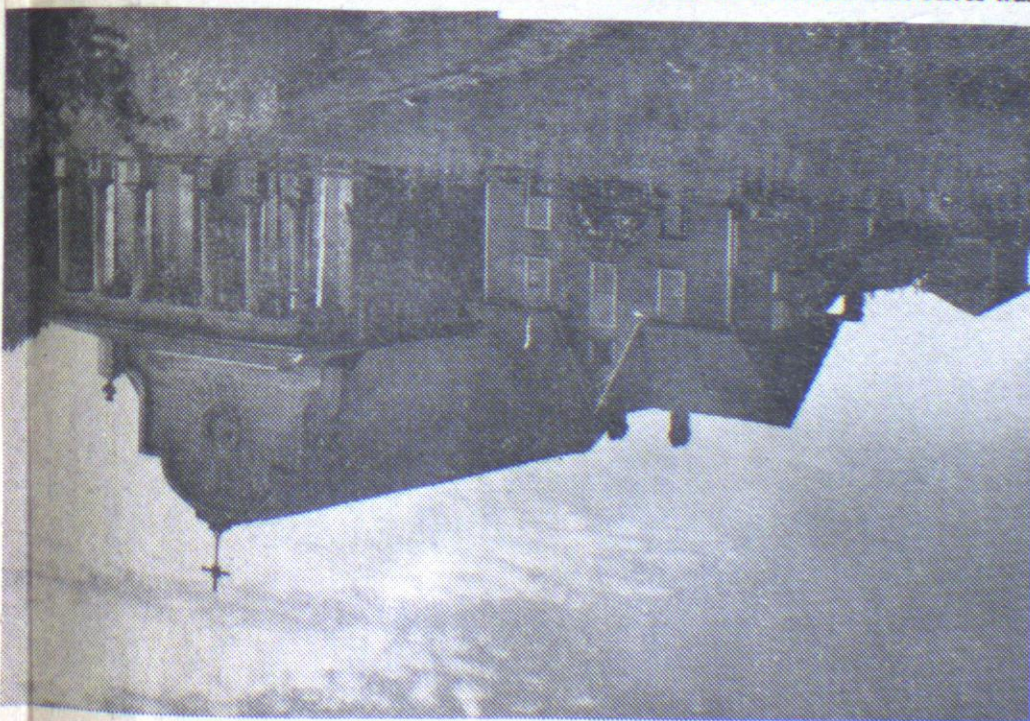
THE REVEREND OLIVER right, pastor of St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church, greets George Buck, 6513 Robertson, following worship service at Boise's First Baptist Church where Rev. Oliver was a guest preacher recently.



REV. AND MRS. Henry Oliver, St. Paul's Missionary Baptist Church, say hello to Mrs. Melba Turner, 518 South

Thirteenth, and other members following recent Sunday morning worship service at the Boise Church.

*(Statesman Staff Photos
By Henry Gabel)*



BY ELLEN WAKEFIELD
Statesman Staff Writer
More than 160 years ago, the fur traders began exploring and trapping in Idaho. Most of the state has changed a lot since then. Some of the remote wilderness areas have changed little. Idaho was a region of contrasts in the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805. Cities, farms and industries have added man-made contrasts to the natural ones. Among the natural wonders are the 52 mountain peaks higher than 10,000 feet. Mt. Borah, the highest, is 12,655 feet. In the fertile lowland valleys at the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake rivers, the elevation is only 700 feet above sea level. The Snake River originates in Yellowstone Park in

The Gem State: Contrasting Oil

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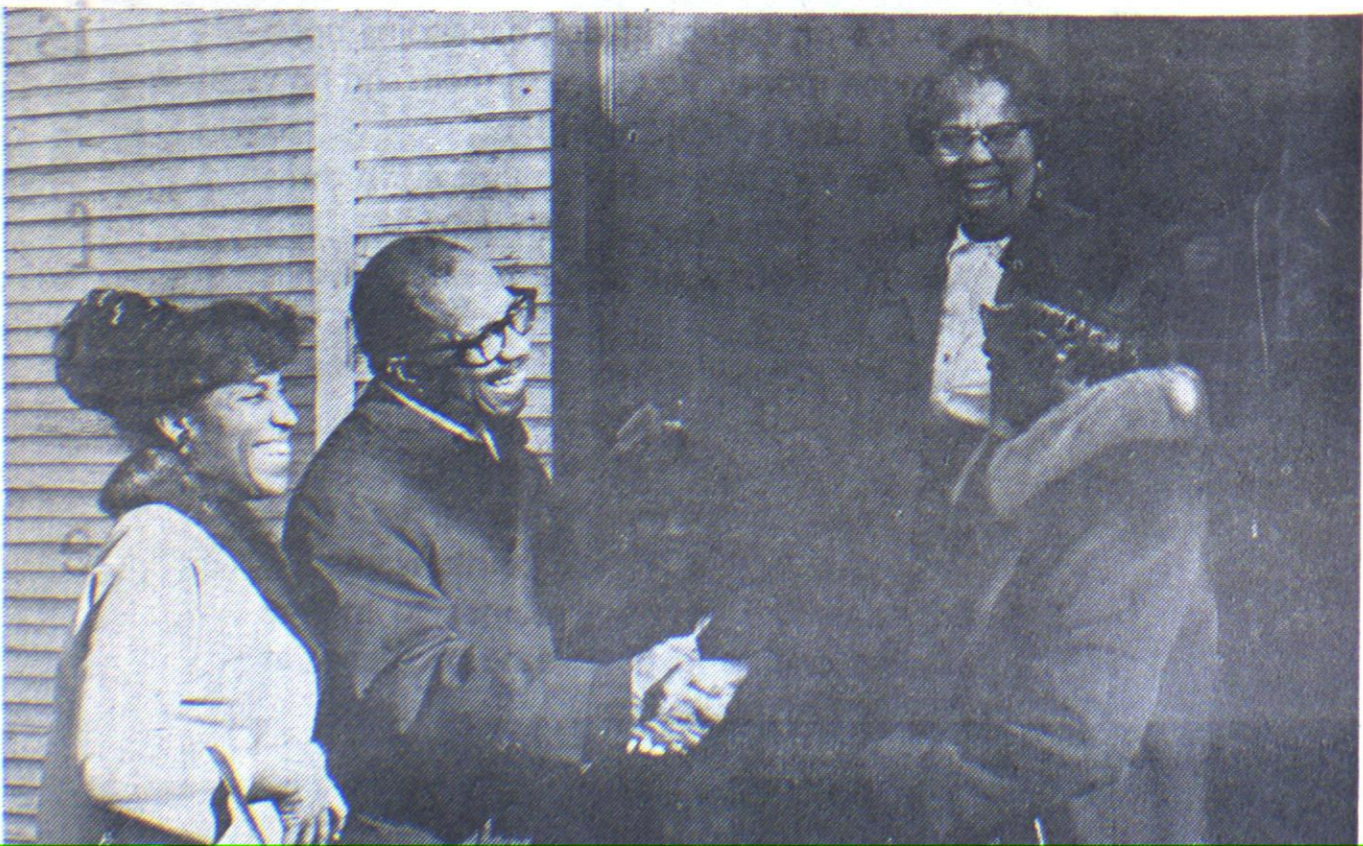
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