

## SPECIAL LIBRARY FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH LIBRARY, GREENSBORO, N. C.

*A corner of the reading room where "family groups" meet to select their week's reading. (Photo by Stan Easty, taken before Sunday night services.)*

A church library which is making public and school library programs take notice is that of First Baptist Church of Greensboro—a project which is leading Southern churches in the field and which demonstrates a great new potential.

In its short span of five years, First Baptist Church Library has set up a religious reference shelf more complete than any in the city—a city with four major colleges and a public institution as "competition."

It is drawing pastors and church workers from other congregations for religious reference work, and pioneering in a field which lays open to the public the great works of ecclesiastical history, books of faith and hope, and a vast collection of commentary on the Scriptures.

The church library movement started in Southern Baptist Convention around 25 years ago. However, First Baptist Church has gone ahead of the denomination in fulfilling the convention's fondest hopes.

When the First Baptist congregation moved November 30 into the new \$1,250,000 church, the library had earned its place. This "literary arm" of the Word was placed on the main floor, near the sanctuary, a room with 800 square feet of floor space on what a merchant would call the "busiest intersection." It was given four big "display windows."

The library did not grow like Topsy—it came from hard work of a skilled librarian and book merchant, Miss Alice Straughan, whose services were given, aided by volunteers who received denominational training in library work at Ridgecrest, the Baptist Assembly.

Opened December 7, 1947, the library began on donation of \$100 from Moseley Bible Class, \$150 by miscellaneous groups after the first impetus was given, and 400 books which were culled from an old circulating library and catalogued. The Dewey decimal system was installed. The library attracted 97 persons the first month, to a room 10 by 12 feet off a Sunday School room, open on Sundays and Wednesday nights.

In September, 1948, the budget committee granted \$100 a month allowance. Plans include increasing this to \$200 monthly in next year's budget.

The program is enthusiastically received. "I do not feel that a program of religious education in a church is 100 per cent complete without a library," stated S. C. Ray, educational director. "It is important that those who teach and work in a program of religious education read and study the right kind of books. Our church library serves as a source of supply for those who need reference books, program materials and books for inspirational and recreational reading."

Dr. Claud B. Bowen, pastor, is a strong backer of the library program.

Today, the library has space for 6,800 books of which 4,600 have been acquired. The circulation is between 800 and 1,000 monthly. The organization and equipment is based on standard library theories and methods. There are separate children's and adult areas, and a reference area, plus a pastor's study.

The facility is open on a varied schedule according to program in the church building.

The books now on the shelf include about 50 per cent of a religious or allied nature (with 20 per cent religious reference books and 30 per cent other religious books); 25 per cent children's books, and 25 per cent general material including biography and fiction.

Miss Straughan draws chiefly on her own experience in purchasing books for the church library. She has the advantage of advance reviews and notices, studies Sunday School materials, fills requests by church study groups, and follows some denominational lists in purchasing. She has the assistance of several school librarians and public librarians, members of the church, who give their professional services and guidance.

The emphasis placed on the library in the new church building serves as indication that new records will be made by this church library, and that this leadership will be strongly felt throughout the denomination. It points to a trend which some day may find church libraries mentioned in the same classifications with public and school libraries.

—MARVIN SYKES, *Member (layman)*,  
First Baptist Church Library Committee,  
Greensboro.

### HANDBOOK IS PUBLISHED

"NORTH CAROLINA AUTHORS: A SELECTIVE HANDBOOK," *has been published.* Copies may be purchased for \$1.50, paper, \$3.00, cloth, from the Library Extension Department, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.