

Progress, Pragmatism, and Power: Furman's Struggle Over Desegregation  
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By the early 1960s, years of conflict between Furman University and the South Carolina Baptist Convention had engendered widespread "resentment" to what students considered "repressive and restrictive" religious policies.<sup>1</sup> The few historians who have studied the desegregation of Furman have defined the process within the context of this conflict, portraying a progressive university confronting and then defying a conservative, segregationist Baptist Church. This approach, while insightful, is incomplete, because Furman's struggle over desegregation took place not only between the university and the Convention but also within the university itself. The desegregation of Furman was a contested, controversial issue on campus for over a decade—a nuanced negotiation between "sins" and "miracles," between frightened hesitation and "courageous action," between the avoidance of conflict and the "triumph of justice."<sup>2</sup> It was a struggle that forced the Furman community to debate and define not only the meaning of desegregation but the meaning and purpose of the university itself.

"NO WAY BACK"

Furman officials began collecting newspaper articles on desegregation as early as 1942, carefully monitoring the changing dynamics of race in America and segregation in the South. By 1950, Furman president John Plyler had begun actively requesting material, writing to the Carnegie Foundation, the Government Printing Office, and university presses for books about injustice and inequality in the American educational system.<sup>3</sup> The debate over desegregation reached the student body four years later, after the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*. In 1954, the student newspaper *The Furman Hornet* applauded the Virginia Baptist Convention for agreeing to abide by *Brown* decision. The Virginia Convention's actions, one student wrote, were "practical," "commendable," and "progressive;" though the decision "could not have been easy," it demonstrated "an admirable courage and foresight" that the South Carolina Baptist Convention would do well to emulate.<sup>4</sup> The following year, the *Hornet* praised the North Carolina Baptist Convention for recommending that its colleges admit "all qualified students regardless of race," and in 1956 the newspaper called upon the South to "stop licking its wounds" and accept the inevitable end of public school segregation.<sup>5</sup>

There were limits, however, to what students could express. The South Carolina Baptist Convention owned the university, elected its trustees, and provided part of its funding. Legally, only the Furman trustees could decide university policy, but the Convention exerted considerable influence over those decisions. In the 1950s, tensions between the university and the Convention steadily escalated over on-campus dancing, fraternities, and other "sinful" aspects of student life. As Charles King, editor of the *Hornet*, later recalled, the school and its students were "under constant attacks from radical Baptist ministers."<sup>6</sup> Though university officials defended their policies and the character of their students, they depended upon Baptist funding and support. They were in the process of constructing an expensive new campus six miles outside Greenville and, with Baptist ministers threatening to withhold funding, they were reluctant to provoke or defy the Convention.<sup>7</sup>

It was in this context that Joan Lipscomb and Huby Cooper, editors of the student literary magazine *The Echo*, chose "social consciousness" as the theme for the 1954-1955 school year. By confronting controversial issues and discussing society as it really was, they sought to develop realistic solutions to their nation's problems. To that end, their spring 1955 issue included articles condemning the hypocrisy and legalism of the Baptist Church and asserting the morality of the Civil Rights Movement. In "Perversion of the Baptist Heritage," Charles King observed that "[t]he Church has chosen to ignore the social obligation which its Founder left it... 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'" Instead, he wrote, Baptists, had become more obsessed with image and attendance than with pursuing justice and showing love.<sup>8</sup>

Even more controversial was editor Joan Lipscomb's reflection on the Civil Rights Movement. Her article, entitled "No Way Back," rationally responded to racial tension in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Children, she argued, were born without prejudice, and racial tension was therefore neither innate nor inevitable; evidence from across the country demonstrated that racial prejudice could—and must—be overcome. The Supreme Court's ruling, she concluded, "is a fact which all the emotionalism of southern politicians cannot alter with all their oratorical eloquence. It is up to the leaders of the day to lead the way, not backward, by adding to already existing prejudice, but forward by... adjusting to the situation as it stands. There is simply no way back to the way things once were."<sup>9</sup>

When *The Echo*'s faculty advisor received word of the controversial articles, she called a meeting of the faculty's Student Publications Committee and asked the editors to suspend their work. Instead, while the committee debated, the editors rushed the magazine to the printers. On May 18, the committee concluded that it was "in the best interests of the university that *The Echo* not be published," and Furman officials seized all 1500 copies of the

magazine from Hiott Press.<sup>10</sup> The editors resigned in protest, and writer Charles King salvaged page proofs from the trash and brought them to the *Greenville News*; the story gathered momentum and briefly received national attention. In response, university officials emphasized that the magazines had not been destroyed but were merely being held “for further consideration.”<sup>11</sup> Administrator Francis Bonner insisted that the university was neither expressing an ideological position nor censoring student opinion; it was merely observing the “usual procedure” by ensuring that all student publications were properly reviewed.<sup>12</sup>

George Tindall, who had co-edited the *Echo* a decade earlier and who later became one of the nation’s preeminent historians of the American South, disagreed. Though he recognized that the university was merely trying to protect itself from “hostile criticism,” he questioned the wisdom of basing university policy on outside opinion. He asked President Plyler to reconsider the university’s decision, insisting that the *Echo*’s articles had been an expression of the “Christian principles of equal justice and love for all men.”<sup>13</sup> Plyler dismissed his letter, writing that without all the facts Tindall was incapable of passing “mature judgment.” While Tindall’s arguments were “interesting,” Plyler wrote, they did not change his mind or his resolve: “I am fully convinced that the action was right and under . . . similar circumstances, would be taken again.”<sup>14</sup> To defend the university from “hostile criticism,” administrators chose to ignore the issues themselves and reduce the incident to a matter of university policy and “procedure.” In doing so, they ironically validated the very criticism they sought to suppress; at least in this instance, they—like the Baptists in King’s article—proved to be more obsessed with image than with justice.

#### “TO SEEK FOR THE TRUTH”

In November 1957, the *Hornet* asked students to take a stand on the issues confronting the university—including dancing, fraternities, and desegregation. Though the editor admitted that students were afraid to openly defy the Baptist Convention, their anonymous answers revealed a “liberal tone of thought” on almost every issue. A “relatively large number of students”—over thirty-seven percent of those polled—voted to desegregate the university.<sup>15</sup> One student wrote that “total integration” was “the only Christian attitude;” another wrote that it was hypocritical for a Christian institution to discriminate on the basis of race, and a third wrote that “Integration is a Christian thing and this is a Christian college.” Others, however, disagreed. Several students threatened to transfer if the university were desegregated, and one wrote that desegregation would be “an injustice . . . to both races.” Others simply wrote “No Negroes” and “Down with the Negroes.”<sup>16</sup>

In December 1961, four hundred college students gathered in Greenville for the state Baptist Student Union Convention. As early as 1948, the Baptist Student Union had encouraged its members to work for the legal, economic, and educational equality of all Americans.<sup>17</sup> Now, in 1961, a Winthrop student introduced a resolution asking the state Baptist Convention to consider desegregating its colleges; the resolution passed 117 to 25. Then, in direct defiance of the Baptist Convention, the Baptist Student Union passed a resolution opening its own membership to students of all races. In doing so, they said, they sought to fulfill their Christian responsibility and offer “courageous leadership in times of social change.”<sup>18</sup> That same autumn, at the 1961 South Carolina Baptist Convention, Baptists ordered Furman to amend its charter and abolish its “ungodly” fraternities. Incensed, Dr. David Wells of West Hartsville then took the floor and insisted that if the Convention wished to “become fully Christian” it must rid itself of inconsistencies and instruct its colleges to admit all qualified applicants regardless of race. Though the motion drew “a few scattered ‘ayes,’” it was “followed by a heavy thunder of ‘nays,’” and the motion was overwhelmingly defeated.<sup>19</sup>

A few weeks after the Convention, *The Furman Paladin*<sup>20</sup> reported that “the integration issue has become a focal point of discussion on our campus.”<sup>21</sup> That December, with the administration’s consent, several students polled the faculty and student body on the question of desegregation. At their monthly meeting on December 11, the Furman faculty voted 68 to 12 to “consider for admission all properly qualified applicants regardless of race or color.” At convocation the next day, the student body approved the same statement 512 to 432.<sup>22</sup>

Community and alumni responses were overwhelmingly negative. Several writers insisted that news of the straw poll would irreparably harm the university. John Wesner, a 1937 Furman graduate, warned President Plyler that the university must fight to remain free from the “liberalists” whose “communistic teachings” threatened to destroy the university’s character and traditions. Already, he wrote, Furman was leaning toward communism; the poll results revealed that the university was, if not already red, then “at least pink.”<sup>23</sup> Ralph Kolb, a Sumter salesman, called Furman the “soft underbelly of resistance to the communist-inspired mongrelization.”<sup>24</sup> Eric Hardy, a 1935 Furman graduate, feared the university was no longer safe for his daughter to attend. Desegregation, he wrote, would “betray the traditions, thinking, and conscience of at least ninety percent of the white people of the South” and “violate every lesson of history . . . it is un-Christian and basically atheistic.”<sup>25</sup> The straw poll was condemned in newspapers, radio broadcasts, and letters from across the state.

In response, Alumni President Sapp Funderburk argued that these protesters (like later historians) “attached far more significance to the incident than it deserve[d].” The Baptist Convention had voted to abolish the university’s fraternities only weeks before, and the decision was “fresh in the [students’] minds.” Funderburk believed the vote was simply an “expression of resentment” and “displeasure” with the Convention, and “had the polls been held prior to the Convention [he was] confident the results would have been different.” He assured the community that “the trustees of the University—not the Convention or the students or the faculty—decide the basic policies for admission of students,” and “as long as the present trustees and administrators are in control of Furman, we have no fear of that University’s going against our Southern traditions.”<sup>26</sup> President Plyler defended the poll and the Furman community, insisting that the university’s purpose was to provide an “atmosphere of intellectual inquiry and academic freedom.”<sup>27</sup> Still, rather than confront the issue of desegregation, he chose to frame the straw poll as an expression of Baptist individualism; true Baptists, he wrote, “permit each individual to seek for the truth and to express his opinions and convictions.”<sup>28</sup>

#### “THE ONLY RIGHT ACTION”

In December 1962, *The Southern Baptist Educator* reported that Baylor University—the largest Southern Baptist university in the nation—had created a committee to study the question of desegregation.<sup>29</sup> The following month, after reading the article, Furman professor Charles Burts persuaded his colleagues to create their own committee, and in February Professor Alfred Sandlin Reid wrote the first draft of a resolution demanding desegregation.<sup>30</sup> The issue, Reid told the committee, demanded immediate, “decisive action;” there would never be “a more appropriate time than now” to do what the faculty knew to be right.<sup>31</sup> On April 15, after a few minor revisions, the committee presented Reid’s resolution to the faculty.<sup>32</sup> With the semester almost over, they postponed discussion until the following year, but on September 7, 1963, the faculty unanimously approved the committee’s “Statement on Integration.”<sup>33</sup>

The resolution denounced segregation as “incompatible with basic Christian doctrine” and called for a non-discriminatory admission policy by the fall of 1964. It urged the university to consider “all aspects of student life” in order to insure that African-American students, once admitted, would “enjoy the dignity and respect” they deserve. A non-discriminatory admission policy, the resolution continued, would be “purely voluntary;” unlike Clemson and the University of South Carolina, Furman—as a private institution—could not be forced to desegregate.<sup>34</sup> As a voluntary decision, desegregation would therefore be an expression of “self-determination” and an affirmation of the university’s “principles” and “social responsibilities.”<sup>35</sup> The faculty presented the resolution to President Plyler, who promised to discuss it at the Board of Trustees meeting the following month.

Pressure for desegregation was building from other sources, as well. In 1960, the Board of Trustees had formed an Advisory Council to suggest policies and programs to improve the university. The council consisted of prominent, powerful men and women from across the country, chosen without regard for their denominational loyalties.<sup>36</sup> In August 1963, Board Chairman Wilbert Wood confessed to the council that “the time has arrived when sound advice is really needed.” While the “problem of integration” itself was “not decisive,” he wrote, the economic sanctions placed upon the university because of its discriminatory admissions policy were becoming a “serious problem.” “There must be an answer,” Wood wrote, and if the university failed to act it could lose the federal and corporate funding upon which it depended.<sup>37</sup> When the council met on September 27—with President Plyler and Vice President Francis Bonner present—it voted to recommend that the university open admission to all qualified applicants.<sup>38</sup>

At the Board of Trustees meeting on October 8, Chairman Wood read the faculty resolution and Advisory Council recommendation and then opened the floor to discussion. After the “majority” of the trustees had given “free and earnest expression” to their thoughts, Buck Marshall of Anderson introduced a motion to consider applications for admission from “all qualified applicants.” The motion passed with only a single dissenting vote.<sup>39</sup> In a series of letters that fall, Trustee Alester Furman, Jr., attempted to explain and justify the decision. Although the Supreme Court’s rulings on desegregation were “not in agreement with our training and thinking,” he wrote, the court was using the “power of the federal government” to force states and institutions to comply. When one alumnus called the decision inevitable but “entirely premature,” Alester Furman responded that it was better to change the admission policy calmly and deliberately than to wait and be forced to change the policy “under duress.”<sup>40</sup> He assured South Carolina Baptists that, to be “qualified,” an applicant had to pass College Board examinations, possess a reputation for good character and Christian devotion, and have the financial resources to afford tuition.<sup>41</sup> In light of these realities, he “doubt[ed] seriously” that the university would have a “qualified negro student... for many years.”<sup>42</sup>

The *Greenville News* declared the trustees’ decision a “smart,” “practical” response to an “inevitable” situation. With Clemson and USC desegregated, one reporter argued, the federal government would soon force

Furman to do the same. By acting when it did, the trustees reserved for themselves the power to decide the terms and the timeline of desegregation.<sup>43</sup> *The Furman Paladin*, however, dismissed these arguments. Student Jim Anderson believed that the trustees “simply felt that this was the only right action from the moral and social viewpoint of the Christian faith.”<sup>44</sup> The faculty and the Student Senate drafted resolutions commending the Board of Trustees, and in a poll conducted by the *Paladin* that November, the student body approved the new admission policy 264 to 50.<sup>45</sup>

The letters that poured in from across the country revealed deep divisions within the Baptist and Furman communities. Some writers responded with pride, joy, and relief; others, with sorrow and dismay. In letters to President Plyler, Roy Cantrell wrote that the trustees’ decision was “one of the greatest steps that could be taken” by the university,<sup>46</sup> and Lloyd Hughes, a 1938 graduate, wrote that desegregation would strengthen Furman’s “effectiveness...as a Christian influence.”<sup>47</sup> Several writers confessed they had never been prouder of Furman—or prouder to be a Baptist.<sup>48</sup> One woman told President Plyler that his administration had achieved many great things for Furman, “but surely none as nearly approaching a miracle as this; none more indicative of intelligence, integrity, and courage.”<sup>49</sup> Many, however, condemned the new policy. Several writers portrayed desegregation as a Catholic or a Communist conspiracy to destroy America from within.<sup>50</sup> Others insisted that desegregation defied God’s will—that God had “set a boundary for all races of men [and] did not intend for them to mix.”<sup>51</sup> Desegregation, one writer insisted, “can not be justified by scripture or any other means;” 98% of Baptists “do not want mixing at any level in society [with] the negro, who has done nothing at all” to deserve the privileges “that you surrender to him.”<sup>52</sup>

Eight South Carolina Baptist Associations and several individual churches passed resolutions opposing desegregation. Inverting a Biblical precept, the Screven Baptist Association declared that “What God has put asunder, let not man join together.”<sup>53</sup> The Santee Association believed desegregation would only exacerbate tensions between white and African-American Baptists, while the Marion Association declared that the university did not have the authority to decide matters of policy without the Baptist Convention’s consent.<sup>54</sup> Harleyville, Ridgeville, Manning, Cameron, and other churches across the state passed their own resolutions protesting the trustees’ “unwise” decision.

At the same time, however, seven Baptist Associations expressed varying degrees of support for desegregation, and four more voted to leave the matter to the trustees—implicitly accepting the university’s desegregation. The Laurens Association urged its members to face the issue with “Christian dignity” and work to insure “equal rights for all persons regardless of race.”<sup>55</sup> The Allendale Association, similarly, declared that Baptists must approach desegregation with “Christian justice, concern, and compassion” and guarantee equal opportunity for “every individual—regardless of race.”<sup>56</sup> Rev. Carle Christian, a Baptist minister and 1960 Furman graduate, wrote to congratulate the university,<sup>57</sup> and Rev. James Browder expressed his confidence that “many strong leaders in our state” would support Furman in its stand.<sup>58</sup> Though Cameron Baptist Church passed a resolution condemning desegregation, its pastor Ray Avant dissented and “prayerfully support[ed]” the Furman trustees. Reflecting on his church’s intolerance, he told the trustees that he “sadly regret[ed] such impulsive action based on such tragically unsound biblical...interpretation.”<sup>59</sup>

The Greenville Association declared that Baptists “must consent for Christian education to be education.” Furman, the association believed, must not be “shackle[d]” to the “formalisms” of the Baptist Church but rather be free to seek the truth for itself. Furthermore, the association declared that South Carolina Baptists must “learn the meaning of trusteeship.” If the university’s destiny were directed from the convention floor, it would “become the pawn of politically-inspired denominational forces” and be ruled by “demagogue[s], unhampered by either devotion to truth or knowledge of academic affairs.” The university’s heritage of Christian faith and academic excellence could only remain genuine if the trustees themselves controlled the university.<sup>60</sup>

#### “THE BROKENNESS OF OUR OWN SOCIETY”

When the South Carolina Baptist Convention met in Charleston in November 1963, the desegregation debate “all but overshadowed” the three-day event.<sup>61</sup> Dr. L.D. Johnson, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Greenville and a lifelong advocate of social justice, delivered the convention sermon. He spoke of the revolutionary challenges facing the nation and the world, urging his fellow Baptists not to “use the pulpit as a springboard for selfish, provincial, partisan, and un-Christian aims.” The intolerance—the “un-Christian attitudes and actions”—of Southern Baptists was threatening the work of missionaries around the world, and those missionaries were pleading with Baptists to “give a better witness here at home of the power of Christ to heal the brokenness of our own society.” For the Church to survive, he said, Baptists must acknowledge the realities of their changing world: “Things are not the same as they were a generation ago, and they never will be again. Yesterday’s answers are not always valid, because the questions are different today.” Change, he admitted, was never easy, but it was constant and inescapable, and much of it was good. He reminded the Convention that Christians “have not always decried

revolution. They once caused it.” Ultimately, he concluded, “[w]e may lovingly gain or meanly lose the last chance our denomination has to speak a saving and healing word to this generation.”<sup>62</sup>

The Convention, attended by over three thousand Baptists from across the state, was bitterly divided, and the “heated” desegregation debate reminded one reporter of a “rowdy national political convention.”<sup>63</sup> At stake, one *Paladin* reporter reflected, was not merely the issue of desegregation but control of Furman University itself.<sup>64</sup> The Florence Association moved that admissions policies be left to the trustees, while the Charleston Association moved that all S.C. Baptist institutions adhere to the same, exclusionary policy. Julian Cave, pastor of Greenville’s Mountain Creek Baptist Church, moved that the Convention formally oppose desegregation. Amid “bursts of secular applause and pious ‘amens,’” Cave argued that Jesus never spoke out against slavery or segregation and therefore implicitly approved them. Rev. Billy Beason argued that Furman and even the Convention had been infiltrated by Communists and NAACP extremists.<sup>65</sup> Rev. James Browder, however, believed Furman’s trustees had been guided by Christian conviction and individual integrity. Twenty-five Southern Baptist colleges had already been integrated, he said, and it was time for South Carolina’s colleges to do the same. The issue was too important to be put off: “If it is right for us to do this, it is right now!”<sup>66</sup> Dr. L.D. Johnson agreed. If “we believe in the principles of love of fellow man,” he argued, “we must begin acting that way... We must trust the trustees—we elected them.”<sup>67</sup> After a ninety-minute debate, the Convention voted to instruct the university to delay desegregation for at least a year. By then, the Convention hoped to develop a statewide policy for all Baptist colleges.<sup>68</sup> As one *Paladin* writer reported, the Convention was “highly anxious to do what was ‘right’ for Furman, but somehow neglected to ask administrative officials of the University what was, in reality, best for the intuition.”<sup>69</sup>

#### “FOUNDERING IN CHAOS AND UNCERTAINTY”

In the wake of the Convention’s request for a year-long postponement, Furman’s students and faculty urged the trustees to stand firm in their decision to desegregate. Writers filled the *Paladin* with articles denouncing the “zealous piety and passionate ignorance” of the Baptist Convention.<sup>70</sup> Legally, student Jim Anderson wrote, the Board of Trustees alone had the power to determine university policy. Thus, when the trustees decided to open admission to “all qualified students,” they were “simply exercising the rights given by the nature of the[ir] position.”<sup>71</sup> Another student, while admitting that the trustees were “basically conservative,” wrote that they had “proposed a course which is a part of the very core of Christianity—the love of a fellow man.” It was “disheartening,” he wrote, “to see that the Convention, which elected these representatives in the school’s affairs, cannot accept their decisions with the same maturity and foresight.” Furman’s future now depended upon the “strength” and “courage” of the trustees—in their ability to “take a firm stand, to resent the intimidation forced upon them and act in the position which they have been given the authority to hold.”<sup>72</sup>

By the spring of 1964, as the trustees considered the Convention’s vote to delay desegregation, Greenville’s African-American community began pressing for racial change at Furman. In May, eight students at Greenville’s all-black Sterling High School—including future NFL players Lawrence Acker and William Thompson—expressed interest in attending.<sup>73</sup> Soon after, seventeen-year-old LaBarbara Powell Sampson became the first African-American to apply to Furman. Her father Donald James Sampson was Greenville County’s first African-American lawyer; he had represented Harvey Gantt and Robert Anderson in their lawsuits for admission to Clemson University and the University of South Carolina and had played an important role in the court cases that desegregated Greenville’s libraries, hotels, and transportation systems.<sup>74</sup> When the trustees learned of Sampson’s application, they immediately voted to comply with the Convention’s request and delay desegregation until at least November 1964. Despite the support of the Admissions Committee, and despite the trustees’ promise to consider “all qualified applicants,” Sampson was denied admission.<sup>75</sup>

By desegregating voluntarily, Furman officials hoped to carefully control the pace and the extent of desegregation. Though they publically argued that desegregation was “the right thing to do,” many privately expressed ambivalence or outright hostility to racial change. Trustee Alester Furman, Jr., privately wrote that “men are not created equal” and believed it was necessary to educate African-Americans in order to teach “proper [racial] relationships” and prevent “miscegenation in any form.”<sup>76</sup> A few years later, a staff member in the Development Division, warned the administration of the dangers of enrolling too many “bright black students;” such students were more likely to be “liberal” and therefore “creat[e] disturbances” that would threaten the university’s image.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, though the decision was never fully explained, the university specifically wanted its first African-American student to be male.<sup>78</sup> Thus, rather than consider “all qualified applicants,” the university chose to reject its only African-American applicant and instead hand-select its own student.<sup>79</sup> The same month that the university rejected Sampson, Bonner asked civic leader and Alumni President Sapp Funderburk to find an African American high school male with a history of leadership and academic success and a “personality that could handle the pressures of desegregat[ion].”<sup>80</sup> Funderburk identified Joseph Vaughn, a senior at Greenville’s Sterling High School.

Vaughn was ranked third in his class of two hundred students, was Student Council President, and was a member of the National Honor Society. He hoped to study English and French and one day become a teacher; perhaps even more importantly, he was a Baptist.<sup>81</sup> In a letter to Vice President Bonner shortly after meeting Vaughn, Funderburk wrote simply, "In my judgment, this is 'him.'"<sup>82</sup>

That year, after twenty-five years as university president, Dr. John Plyler announced his retirement. The trustees chose Dr. Gordon Williams Blackwell—a 1932 Furman graduate, sociology professor, and president of Florida State University—as Plyler's successor.<sup>83</sup> He had desegregated FSU two years earlier, and when Furman offered him the presidency he made desegregation a condition of his acceptance; the trustees reluctantly agreed.<sup>84</sup>

On October 13, after completing its year-long study, the state's Baptist leaders—the General Board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention—decided it was impractical to create a comprehensive, state-wide admission policy. They argued that Furman owed a greater commitment to Christ and conscience than to the Convention and that by "impos[ing] its convictions" upon the university, the Convention was "violat[ing] Baptist principle and practice" and "negat[ing] the function of trustees."<sup>85</sup> The General Board therefore recommended that the Convention allow each university to set its own admissions policies.<sup>86</sup> The *Greenville News* "approve[d] and applaud[ed]" the General Board's decision, which it believed would save the university from "founder[ing] in chaos and uncertainty."<sup>87</sup> The *Baptist Courier* agreed; the recommendation, one writer argued, would avoid "bitterness" and "conflict" while affirming the autonomy of the trustees.<sup>88</sup> Almost immediately, however, lowcountry Baptists vowed to override the General Board's recommendation, and Rev. Julian Cave began drafting resolution to amend Furman's charter to exclude African-Americans.<sup>89</sup> Privately, Blackwell began considering what the university should do if it lost the struggle in the upcoming convention. Bonner assured him that only the trustees could amend the charter; the "key," therefore, was to keep the trustees in the "proper frame of mind." The trustees, Bonner wrote, "must be *convinced* that *they* must set the policies of Furman and refuse to be the puppets of the Convention."<sup>90</sup> Already, however, the trustees were beginning to waver. They had all been elected by the Convention and were reluctant to defy it; as they had again and again in the past, many of the trustees were ready to back down and defer to the Convention.

Almost 2300 messengers attended the 1964 South Carolina Baptist Convention, making it the second largest in state history.<sup>91</sup> Outside, the National Association for the Preservation of White People handed out segregationist literature proclaiming "You are white because your ancestors believed in segregation."<sup>92</sup> Inside, the General Board read its recommendation that each school set its own admissions policy and then prayed that "no one in the convention violate the conscience of another." By a margin of 28 votes (943 to 915), the messengers voted down the recommendation, the first time in history that the Convention had rejected a General Board recommendation. After the vote, a "large number" of messengers—apparently inspired more by controversy than by Christ—left the Convention. When Julian Cave called for a second vote directly addressing the issue of integration, nearly two thirds of the Convention (905 to 575) voted to keep the Baptist colleges segregated.<sup>93</sup> The Convention then passed a resolution protesting Furman's decision to integrate: "we view this action as a natural by-product of Furman's trend of liberalism and the social-gospel. We urge strongly a return to orthodoxy or fundamentalism because of the great harm liberalism is doing to the youth."<sup>94</sup>

#### "LIGHT THE WAY AND BANISH THE PREJUDICE"

The Furman community was galvanized in the wake of the Convention. At the statewide Baptist Student Union Convention the following month, Furman student Lamar King proposed a resolution to publically oppose the Baptist Convention's position on segregation. Though the resolution was defeated 132-32, a second resolution successfully desegregated the state BSU Convention; all nineteen Furman delegates voted in favor.<sup>95</sup> In the *Paladin*, student Buddy Pucket published the image of a cross being snapped in half by lightning bolts that read "1964 South Carolina Baptist Convention."<sup>96</sup> Editor Curtis Vanadore wrote that the nine hundred votes against desegregation were the "products of prejudice, hatred, power-hunger, and illiteracy." Jesus, he reminded his readers, "teaches us to love one another," and "[i]f you Baptists want this educational institution to be a Christian one... then for God's sake and Furman's let us be Christian, Christian as Jesus Christ would have us be, and not Christian as some of your ignorant backwoods laymen would have us be." Furman's faith, he wrote defiantly, now rested entirely with the trustees, and he "sincerely hope[d]" that they would "carry out what is truly Christian principle."<sup>97</sup>

In the days following the Baptist Convention, at least thirteen professors wrote to Vice President Bonner to defend the trustees and demand desegregation. On November 16, 1964, the faculty unanimously approved a resolution urging the trustees to open admission to all qualified applicants, writing that "judgment of human beings in terms of race alone is un-Christian."<sup>98</sup> Plyler himself wrote to urge the trustees to stand by their previous decision; if the trustees believed the decision was "right and Christian," he wrote, then they "should not be deterred from what [they] believe to be right because of any human pressure."<sup>99</sup> Student Body President Robert Schaible called upon

students to write letters supporting the trustees; within days, Board Chairman Wilbert Wood was overwhelmed by letters from over four hundred students—almost 28% of the student body.<sup>100</sup> In his own letter, Schaible acknowledged the difficulty of the trustees' situation, but he urged them to "stand firm...and assert yourself as the governing body of this institution." Desegregation, he wrote, was the "only policy permissible" for a liberal arts institution, and he urged the trustees to "set an example of which all Furman students can be proud."<sup>101</sup> In another letter, Schaible wrote that the Baptist Church had "failed miserably" to provide the state with the "leadership and example" it needed; now, it was up to Furman and its trustees to "light the way and banish the prejudice."<sup>102</sup> In a speech before the student body, another student explained "how we as students feel about an outside group attempting to set policy for Furman," expressing a desire to "publically consign" the Baptist Convention to "everlasting hell and damnation." Desegregation, he said, was "the right thing to do...if Christianity means anything, it means universal brotherhood of all mankind." "Most important[ly]," allowing the Convention to "dictate policy" would be "an extremely dangerous precedent" that would become "ever more difficult" to reverse. The speaker believed "without any reservation whatsoever" that the trustees alone "should be making the decisions for Furman," and he passionately asked the student body to stand by the trustees.<sup>103</sup>

The Executive Committee of Furman's Board of Trustees met on November 23, 1964, to review the university's admission policy. After a thoughtful and deliberate discussion, the committee approved a recommendation that the Board of Trustees reaffirm its open admission policy.<sup>104</sup> The trustees met two weeks later, on December 8—"quietly and without publicity."<sup>105</sup> After more than two hours of "full discussion," the trustees were leaning toward delay and deferment—apparently unconvinced by moral arguments. W.H. Orr, "a conservative member of the Board," made a motion that the trustees could not "go counter to the Convention's wishes," and the other trustees were ready to agree.<sup>106</sup> Before the vote was taken, however Vice President Francis Bonner asked permission to speak. With impassioned eloquence, he insisted that the university's academic and economic survival was at stake: "the welfare of the university depends upon your doing the right thing—now." If Furman allowed the Convention to dictate university policy, it could lose its accreditation, almost twenty percent of its faculty, and the federal and corporate funding upon which it depended.<sup>107</sup> The Civil Rights Act of 1964 denied federal funding to any institution that discriminated on the basis of race, and Furman was therefore in danger of losing over \$2 million in construction loans, research grants, and student aid.<sup>108</sup> Bonner believed Furman "could not recover from this calamity within two decades." "Don't let us down," Bonner concluded; "You should do this simply because it is the *right* thing to do."<sup>109</sup> In the "complete silence" that followed Bonner's speech, W.H. Orr—the man who minutes before had been ready to defer to the Convention—quietly admitted that he had been wrong. He moved to reaffirm the non-discriminatory admission policy, and the motion passed unanimously. The trustees had "decisively" and historically reaffirmed the desegregation of Furman University.<sup>110</sup>

The decision was questioned and analyzed in newspapers and letters from across the state. The *Greenville Piedmont* called the trustees' action a "logical," "soul-searching, studied attempt to face reality"—the action of "honorable men, acting honorably in what they considered the best interests of Furman."<sup>111</sup> *The Greenville News* argued that the trustees' decision was "the right thing," if only because it was "just about the only thing [they] could do." Desegregation, the editor wrote, was not a religious issue but an economic issue. If the university remained segregated, it could never receive the federal grants and loans it needed to expand and remain competitive. The "real issue," therefore, was not desegregation but rather the trustees' control over their university's future.<sup>112</sup> Greenville resident Buford Hodges, however, disagreed, telling the editor that desegregation was not only a moral issue but a moral imperative. *The Bible*, Hodges argued, taught its followers that "love to God is expressed through love to men." It demanded the cultivation of loving, prayerful relationships, and therefore "any issue involving human relations is of religious and moral significance."<sup>113</sup>

One evening soon after the trustees' decision to accept "all qualified applicants," the Ku Klux Klan came to campus, lit a torch on the fields near the men's dormitories, and ran.<sup>114</sup> Less violently, many people wrote letters vehemently opposing the decision. Eric Hardy drafted a list of nine key arguments protesting desegregation. Desegregation, he wrote, "violate[d] the customs and traditions" of the South and insulted the "sons and daughters of Furman." It suggested that "insidious and seductive influences" had infiltrated the university and was "both anti-God and anti-Christian." It lowered Furman's social and academic standards, "condone[d] a social situation which [was] unthinkable to most of us," and paved the way for "the intermarriage of the races."<sup>115</sup> Bob Stevens, whose family had attended Furman for four generations, reflected in despair that Furman had betrayed everything for which the Confederacy had fought.<sup>116</sup> One woman mailed Bonner a booklet entitled *God the Original Segregationist*, and Rev. Floyd Dukes wrote angrily that the Baptist Convention's will was inviolable: "the majority should rule right or wrong."<sup>117</sup>

## “TO BE A STUDENT”

In the fall of 1964, as the trustees and the Convention contested Furman’s future, Joseph Vaughn enrolled in Johnson C. Smith University, an historically-black university in Charlotte, North Carolina.<sup>118</sup> Furman officials monitored Vaughn’s progress throughout the semester. As he had in high school, Vaughn excelled both socially and academically, and in October, Sapp Funderburk wrote to commend him on his “excellent start.”<sup>119</sup> In 1964, before the trustees had even reaffirmed the admission policy, Vice President Francis Bonner secretly approved Vaughn’s application to transfer to Furman for the spring semester. On January 27, 1965, three African-American educators—Joseph Adair, William Bowling, and James Daniel Kibler—enrolled in the graduate program at Furman University. Furman officials told the press that the teachers’ enrollment went “smoothly” and caused “almost no stir.”<sup>120</sup> Two days later, on January 29, 1965, Joseph Vaughn became the first African-American undergraduate to enroll at Furman University; his enrollment, by all accounts, was peaceful and “routine.”<sup>121</sup>

Vaughn started classes the following week. While he admitted to having “a few qualms about the first day,” he quickly and uneventfully settled into student life.<sup>122</sup> Vaughn said his fellow students were “great” and accepted him as “just another regular guy;” thanks to their “friendl[iness],” adjusting to Furman was “surprisingly easy.”<sup>123</sup> In enrolling at Furman, Vaughn hoped to “set a favorable example for those that might follow,”<sup>124</sup> but he did not see himself as part of “any great movement” or “precedent.”<sup>125</sup> His “real goal,” he wrote, was to obtain “a quality education” that would enable him to “be of significant service to my people, my community, my state, and my country.”<sup>126</sup> When hounded by the press, he simply responded that he needed to study: “I came to Furman to be a student.”<sup>127</sup>

Though Vaughn encouraged his friends and neighbors to apply to Furman, a year and a half passed before the university enrolled another African-American student. By his senior year—four years after the trustees first passed the non-discriminatory admission policy—only eight of the university’s 1728 students were African American.<sup>128</sup> Vaughn supported and encouraged his younger classmates, who fifty years later recalled his leadership, intelligence, and sense of humor. Lillian Brock Flemming, one of the first African-American women to graduate from Furman, remembered that Vaughn “loved everybody...He loved life and enjoyed it to the fullest.”<sup>129</sup> Even so, Vaughn and his African-American classmates often felt alone and excluded. They faced what one of them later described as an “atmosphere of unfamiliarity,” and while white students rarely overtly excluded them from clubs or activities, they also rarely actively included them. While African Americans at Furman did not experience the violence and harassment that characterized the desegregation of other Southern universities, there were “enough problems” to force at least one of them to transfer schools.<sup>130</sup> Vaughn, who was the university’s only African-American student for almost two years, faced considerable stress at Furman, and friends suggest that he used “humor and silliness” to conceal and diffuse the tension. As African-American classmate June Manning Thomas explains, his exuberant sense of humor “was the way he survived and coped with being the first.”<sup>131</sup> Friend and classmate Jim Edwards remembered that Vaughn “fit in pretty well” at Furman and was “generally accepted” by the student body, but he commented on how “lonely” and “stressful” Vaughn’s time at Furman must have been: Vaughn “had to carry the responsibility of the African-American community. He *had* to be perfect. He *had* to succeed.” Vaughn wanted simply to be a student, but he became a symbol of the aspirations of Greenville’s African-American community, and with everyone watching him he “couldn’t allow himself to fail.”<sup>132</sup>

Writing from the Birmingham City Jail in April 1963, Martin Luther King argued that the greatest obstacle to racial equality was not the ardent segregationist but “the white moderate who is more devoted to ‘order’ than justice, who prefers the...absence of tension to...the presence of justice.”<sup>133</sup> The greatest obstacle to the desegregation of Furman, then, was not the resistance of men like Julian Cave and Eric Hardy but the reluctance of the Furman community itself. Furman University should be commended for peacefully and voluntarily—if belatedly—desegregating. The hundreds of students, faculty members, administrators, and Baptist churchgoers who wrote letters, cast ballots, and gave speeches in support of desegregation should be recognized and remembered. It should not be forgotten, however, that the desegregation of Furman was, in many ways, more an assertion of power and a pragmatic acceptance of national realities than it was a statement of principle or progress.<sup>134</sup> Throughout Furman’s struggle over desegregation, students, reporters, and administrators agreed that the “real issue” at stake was not desegregation but the university’s academic and economic survival. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the Furman community—just as much as the Baptist Convention—stood in the way of “progress,” and that nine years after *Echo* editor Joan Lipscomb first realized there was “no way back,” the university had yet to move forward.

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<sup>1</sup> Jim Edwards, interview with Brian Neumann, 18 July 2014.



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- <sup>2</sup> "Commendation for Courage," *The Messenger*, Vol. XIII, No. 50, 11 December 1964. Charles King, "King Says Possible Racial Integration of Gardner-Webb J.C. Courageous," *The Furman Hornet*, 21 January 1956, Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>3</sup> John Plyler to Columbia University Press, 16 January 1950, Baptist Controversies Collection, Box 3, Folder "Race Relations (1)," Furman University Archives. John Plyler to Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 16 January 1950, Baptist Controversies Collection, Box 3, Folder "Race Relations (1)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>4</sup> "Va. Baptists Vote to Abide by High Court School Ruling," *The Furman Hornet*, 3 December 1954, Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>5</sup> "A Tale of Two Conventions," *The Furman Hornet*, 19 November 1955, Furman University Digital Collections. Charles Busha, "Southerners Oppose Court Ruling, But Should 'Quit Licking Wounds,'" *The Furman Hornet*, 3 March 1956, Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>6</sup> Charles King to Jim Stewart, 7 April 2005, Student Publications and Media, 1955 *Echo* Controversy, Folder "Jim Stewart's Article, Notes and Correspondence," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>7</sup> Jim Stewart, "Echo of the Past," *Furman Magazine*, Vol. 48, Issue 1, Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>8</sup> Charles King, "Perversion of the Baptist Heritage (Book Review and Personal Commentary)," *The Echo*, edited by Joan Lipscomb and Huby Cooper, Spring 1955, Student Publications and Media, 1955 *Echo* Controversy, Folder "Copies of 1955 Echo," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>9</sup> Joan Lipscomb, "No Way Back," *The Echo*, edited by Joan Lipscomb and Huby Cooper, Spring 1955, Student Publications and Media, 1955 *Echo* Controversy, Folder "Copies of 1955 Echo," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>10</sup> Francis W. Bonner to Furman Student Body, 21 May 1955, Student Publications and Media, 1955 *Echo* Controversy, Folder "Letter to Student Body," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>11</sup> "Student Released Articles from Seized FU Echo," *Greenville Piedmont*, 19 May 1955, Student Publications and Media, Box "1955 Echo Controversy," Folder "Articles about 1955 Echo," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>12</sup> Francis W. Bonner to Furman Student Body, 21 May 1955, Student Publications and Media, 1955 *Echo* Controversy, Folder "Letter to Student Body," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>13</sup> George Tindall and Blossom McGarrity Tindall to John Plyler, 25 May 1955, Baptist Controversies Collection, Box 2, Folder "Furman Univ.-Integration, Federal Aid, 1955 Echo Incident (3)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>14</sup> John Plyler to George Tindall and Blossom Tindall, 27 May 1955, Baptist Controversies Collection, Box 2, Folder "Furman Univ.-Integration, Federal Aid, 1955 Echo Incident (3)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>15</sup> "Hornet Poll Tabulations Indicate Liberal Trend," *The Furman Hornet*, 15 November 1957, Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>16</sup> "Answers from Men, Women Indicate Varying Opinions," *The Furman Hornet*, 15 November 1957, Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>17</sup> Courtney Tollison, *Moral Imperative and Financial Practicality: Desegregation of South Carolina's Denominationally-Affiliated Colleges and Universities*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2003, 97.
- <sup>18</sup> "State BSU Convention Meets in Greenville, Delegates Pass Resolutions on Integration," *The Furman Paladin*, 8 December 1961, Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>19</sup> "Charter Change Ordered; Students Found Dazed," *The Furman Paladin*, 17 November 1961, Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>20</sup> The newspaper changed its name to *The Furman Paladin* in 1961 after the student body voted to make the Paladins the official mascot of all the university's sports teams.
- <sup>21</sup> "For What It's Worth." *The Furman Paladin*. 15 December 1961. "Furman Student Newspapers." Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>22</sup> "Student Opinion Mixed on Integration: Faculty Votes Indicate Heavy Support of Issue." *The Furman Paladin*. 15 December 1961. "Furman Student Newspapers." Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>23</sup> John O. Wesner, Jr. to John Plyler, 25 December 1961, Furmaniana, Box "I-Je," Folder "Integration," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>24</sup> Ralph Kolb to John Plyler, 14 December 1961, Furmaniana, Box "I-Je," Folder "Integration," Furman University Archives.

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- <sup>25</sup> Eric Hardy to John Plyler, 16 December 1961, Furmaniana, Box "I-Je," Folder "Integration," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>26</sup> Sapp Funderburk to Arthur Harry Burgess, 10 January 1962, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 102 "Correspondence," Folder "Funderburk, Sapp," Furman University Archives. Sapp Funderburk to Alex McIver, 23 March 1962, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 102 "Correspondence," Folder "Funderburk, Sapp," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>27</sup> John Plyler, "Report of President Plyler to the Board of Trustees of Furman University, Exhibit A," 23 January 1962, Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, Box "Minutes 1962-1963," Folder "January-May 1962," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>28</sup> John Plyler to Mrs. T. Adden Player, 20 December 1961, Furmaniana, Box "I-Je," Folder "Integration," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>29</sup> "Baylor Studies Integration," *The Southern Baptist Educator*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3, December 1962.
- <sup>30</sup> "Faculty Meeting," 14 January 1963, Faculty Minutes, Box "Feb. 1958-May 1966," Folder "Faculty Minutes, Sept. 1961-June 1963," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>31</sup> Alfred Sandlin Reid to Al. Sanders, 21 February 1963, Academic Departments: English, Alfred Sandlin Reid Collection, Box 12, Folder "Correspondence 1962-1963," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>32</sup> "Faculty Meeting," 15 April 1963, Faculty Minutes, Box "Feb. 1958-May 1966," Folder "Faculty Minutes, Sept. 1961-June 1963," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>33</sup> Martha Harrison to John Plyler, 24 September 1963, Faculty Minutes, Box "Feb. 1958-May 1966," Folder "Faculty Minutes, September 1963-Dec. 1964," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>34</sup> Clemson and the University of South Carolina, both public universities, desegregated under court order in 1963.
- <sup>35</sup> "Statement on Integration," 8 October 1963, Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, Box "Minutes 1962-1963," Folder "August-December 1963," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>36</sup> Courtney Tollison, "In Pursuit of Excellence: Desegregation and Southern Baptist Politics at Furman University," *History of Higher Education Annual: 2003-2004*, Vol. 23, ed. Roger L. Geiger, 31.
- <sup>37</sup> Wilbert Wood to Members of the Advisory Council, 22 August 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 156, Folder "Advisory Council (4 of 5), Furman University Archives.
- <sup>38</sup> "Minutes of the Meeting of Advisory Council to the Board of Trustees of Furman University," 27 September 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 156, Folder "Advisory Council (4 of 5)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>39</sup> "Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Furman University," 8 October 1963, Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, Box "Minutes 1962-1963," Folder "August-December 1963," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>40</sup> Alester G. Furman, Jr., to Harry M. Arthur, 26 November, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 102, Folder "Furman, Alester G.," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>41</sup> Alester G. Furman, Jr., to Harry M. Arthur, 26 November 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 102, Folder "Furman, Alester G.," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>42</sup> Alester G. Furman, Jr., to Horace G. Hammett, 5 November 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 102, Folder "Furman, Alester G.," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>43</sup> "Furman Prepares for the Inevitable," *The Greenville News*, 11 October 1963, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, "Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>44</sup> Jim Anderson, "'Who Makes School Policy?' A Question Still Undecided," *The Furman Paladin*, 23 November 1963, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>45</sup> "Students Accept Trustee Admission Policy 4 to 1," *The Furman Paladin*, 9 November 1963, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>46</sup> Roy Cantrell to John Plyler, 25 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (1 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>47</sup> Lloyd Hughes to John Plyler, 29 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (1 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>48</sup> Joe Sparks to John Plyler, 23 October 1963; D.H. Daniel to Wilbert Wood, 11 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (1 of 2)," Furman University Archives.

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- <sup>49</sup> Zula Barton to John Plyler, 28 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (2 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>50</sup> W.F. Burnett to John Plyler, 25 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (2 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>51</sup> Annie Gibson to John Plyler, 23 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (2 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>52</sup> E.G. Spencer to Wilbert Wood, 11 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (2 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>53</sup> *Minutes of the Screven Baptist Association: Fourteenth Annual Session, 1963.*
- <sup>54</sup> *Minutes of the Eighty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Santee Baptist Association, 1963, 18. Marion Baptist Association: Fortieth Annual Session, 1963, 8.*
- <sup>55</sup> *Minutes of the Laurens Baptist Association: Sixty-Sixth Annual Session, 1963, 25.*
- <sup>56</sup> *Allendale-Hampton Baptist Association: Fifth Annual Session, 1963, 19.*
- <sup>57</sup> Carle Christian to John Plyler, 21 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (1 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>58</sup> James W. Browder to Wilbert Wood, 9 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (1 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>59</sup> Ray Avant to Furman University Board of Trustees, 22 October 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (1 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>60</sup> *Minutes of the One Hundred and Third Annual Session of the Greenville Baptist Church, 1963, 64.*
- <sup>61</sup> "Baptists Tackling Leader, Furman," *Piedmont*, 13 November 1963, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965, Furman University Archives.
- <sup>62</sup> L.D. Johnson, "The Church in an Age of Revolution," Sermon, S.C. Baptist Convention, 12 November 1963, Office of the Chaplain, First Baptist Church Office Files: 1962-1968, Folder "SC Baptist Convention-Correspondence, 1962-1964," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>63</sup> Ethel Steadman, "Action Demands Delay of Furman Integration," *Greenville News*, 14 November 1963, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965, Furman University Archives.
- <sup>64</sup> "S.C. Baptists Adopt Wait-and-See Policy, Asks Integration Delay General Board's Motion," *The Furman Paladin*, 16 November 1963, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>65</sup> Jim Edwards, "Mystical Bride is Practical Divorcee," *The Furman Paladin*, 16 November 1963, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>66</sup> Steadman, "Action Demands Delay."
- <sup>67</sup> "S.C. Baptists Adopt Wait-and-See Policy."
- <sup>68</sup> Ethel Steadman, "Action Demands Delay of Furman Integration," *Greenville News*, 14 November 1963, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965, Furman University Archives.
- <sup>69</sup> Edwards, "Mystical."
- <sup>70</sup> Edwards, "Mystical."
- <sup>71</sup> Anderson, "School Policy."
- <sup>72</sup> "Final Decision is Trustees'," *The Furman Paladin*, 16 November 1963, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>73</sup> John Rouse, "Local Negro Prep Stars Show Interest in Furman," *The Furman Paladin*, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>74</sup> "A Concurrent Resolution," History of Legislative Actions, South Carolina General Assembly, 117<sup>th</sup> Session, 2007-2008.
- <sup>75</sup> "Minutes of Admissions Committee Meeting," 15 May 1964, Francis W. Bonner Collection, Box 212, Folder "Joseph Allen Vaughn (Furman's First Negro Student)," Furman University Archives. "Minutes of Meeting of the

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Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Furman University," 26 May 1964, Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, Box "1964," Folder "April-July 1964," Furman University Archives.

<sup>76</sup> Alester G. Furman, Jr., to Horace G. Hammett. 5 November 1963, Office of the Chaplain, L.D. Johnson, Office Files, 1965-67, Folder "Furman University Committees and Trustees, 1963-65," Furman University Archives. Alester G. Furman, Jr., to Harry M. Arthur, 26 November 1963, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 102, Folder "Furman, Alester G.," Furman University Archives.

<sup>77</sup> Richard Rieger, "File," 14 January 1970, Box 171, Folder "Negro Students Scholarship," Furman University Archives. This letter was written in 1970, in the context of the student rights movement and the Black Power Movement. Nonetheless, it speaks to broader, longer-lasting cultural fears, and its arguments were consistent with arguments being made—by Alester Furman and others—during the struggle for desegregation.

<sup>78</sup> Francis Bonner, "Why I Am Convinced That the Trustees of Furman University Must Not Alter the Present Policy on the Admission of Students," Furmaniana Collection, Box "Be-Bo," Folder "Bonner, Francis W.," Furman University Archives.

<sup>79</sup> Counseled by Sapp Funderburk, Joseph Vaughn had also begun an application in May 1964, but the application was incomplete at the time of the trustee vote. Sampson was therefore the only African American applicant in a position to be accepted to the university.

<sup>80</sup> Courtney Tollison, "A Majority of One," *Furman Magazine*, summer 2008, Furman University Digital Collections, 20.

<sup>81</sup> David Shi, "Joe Vaughn Fought His Own Crusade," *The Greenville News*, 10 February 2002, Furmaniana Collection, "U-War," Folder "Vaughn, Joe," Furman University Archives.

<sup>82</sup> Sapp Funderburk to Francis W. Bonner, 20 May 1964, Francis W. Bonner Collection, Box 212, Folder "Joseph Allen Vaughn," Furman University Archives.

<sup>83</sup> Curtis Vanadore, "Furman Names Eighth President," *The Furman Paladin*, 11 September 1964, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.

<sup>84</sup> Courtney Tollison, *Moral Imperative and Financial Practicality: Desegregation of South Carolina's Denominationally-Affiliated Colleges and Universities*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2003, 111.

<sup>85</sup> "Issued by the Executive Committee of the General Board," 4 May 1964, Baptist Controversies Collection, Box 2, "Furman Univ.-Integration, Federal Aid, 1955 Echo Incident (1)," Furman University Archives.

<sup>86</sup> "Board to Recommend 'Hands-Off' Policy to Baptist Convention," *The Furman University*, 23 October 1964, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.

<sup>87</sup> "Let Trustees Run Furman," *Greenville News*, 21 October 1964, Plyler Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965," Furman University Archives.

<sup>88</sup> "The Coming Convention," *The Baptist Courier*, 5 November 1964.

<sup>89</sup> "Lowstate Baptists To Fight Proposal," *Greenville News*, 7 November 1964, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965, Furman University Archives. Bonner, Francis, to Gordon W. Blackwell, 21 September 1964, Francis W. Bonner Papers, Box 154, Folder "Gordon W. Blackwell," Furman University Archives.

<sup>90</sup> Francis Bonner to Gordon W. Blackwell, 21 September 1964.

<sup>91</sup> "Convention Reflections," *The Baptist Courier*, 26 November 1964.

<sup>92</sup> "You are White Because Your Ancestors Believed in Segregation," Baptist Controversies Collection, Box 3, Folder "Race Relations (2)," Furman University Archives.

<sup>93</sup> *South Carolina Baptist Convention: 144<sup>th</sup> Annual Session Convention Annual*, 42-44

<sup>94</sup> "Baptist Group Records Protest," undated newspaper, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (1 of 2)," Furman University Archives.

<sup>95</sup> Mary Anne Bryant, "Baptist Students Refuse to Condemn State Convention," *The Furman Paladin*, 11 December 1964, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections. "The Resolution," *The Baptist Courier*, 24 December 1964, 16.

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- <sup>96</sup> Buddy Pucket, "The Irony of the Cross," *The Furman Paladin*, 20 November 1964, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>97</sup> Chris Vanadore, "Editorial," *The Furman Paladin*, 20 November 1964, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>98</sup> "Resolution to the Board of Trustees," 16 November 1964, Francis W. Bonner Collection, Box 206, Folder "Trustees—Admission Policy," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>99</sup> John Plyler to Wilbert Wood, 23 November 1964, John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (1 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>100</sup> "Faculty Meeting," 14 December 1964, Faculty Minutes, Box "Feb. 1958-May 1966," Folder "Faculty Minutes, September 1963-Dec. 1964," Furman University Archives. "Exhibit A," 16 October 1964, Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, Box "Minutes 1964," Folder "Board Minutes, October 16, 1964," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>101</sup> Robert Schaible to J. Wilbert Wood, 17 November 1964, Association of Furman Students Collection: Student Government, Box 6: 1964-1965, "Folder C," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>102</sup> Robert Schaible to S. George Lovell, 21 November 1964, Francis W. Bonner Collection, Box 206, Folder "Trustees—Admission Policy," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>103</sup> "Speech Delivered Nov. 17, 1964, at Student Body Meeting on the subject of the Convention's (Baptist) Refusal to Allow Furman to Integrate," Association of Furman Students: Student Government, Box 6: 1964-1965, Folder "C," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>104</sup> "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Furman University," 23 November 1964, Office of the Chaplain, L.D. Johnson, Office Files: 1965-1967, Folder "Furman University Committees and Trustees, 1963-1965," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>105</sup> Francis Bonner to Gordon W. Blackwell, 24 November 1964, Francis W. Bonner Papers, Box 154, Folder "Gordon W. Blackwell," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>106</sup> Matt Martin, "The Force Behind Furman's Progress," *The Furman Paladin*, 8 February 1985, Furman University Digital Collections.
- <sup>107</sup> Bonner, "Why I Am Convinced."
- <sup>108</sup> "Building Program Projects," Board of Trustees and Executive Committee," Box "Minutes 1965," Folder "Executive Committee Minutes, April 2, 1965," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>109</sup> Bonner, "Why I Am Convinced."
- <sup>110</sup> "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Furman University," 8 December 1964, Office of the Chaplain, L.D. Johnson, Office Files: 1965-1967, Folder "Furman University Committees and Trustees, 1963-1967," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>111</sup> "Furman's Reaffirmation of Racial Policy Logical," *Piedmont*, 11 December 1964, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965, Furman University Archives.
- <sup>112</sup> "FU Trustees Take Long View," *Greenville News*, 13 December 1964, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965, Furman University Archives.
- <sup>113</sup> Buford B. Hodges, "Furman and the Christian Way," *Greenville News*, 20 December 1964, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965, Furman University Archives.
- <sup>114</sup> Tollison, *Moral Imperative*, 116.
- <sup>115</sup> Eric Hardy, "Furman Alumnus Protests Integration," John Plyler Presidential Papers, Box 11, Folder "Letters: re-Trustees' action on integration (1 of 2)," Furman University Archives.
- <sup>116</sup> Bob Stevens to Francis W. Bonner, 8 February 1965, Francis W. Bonner Collection, Box 206, Folder "Integration," Furman University Archives.

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<sup>117</sup> Gladys Thompson to Francis W. Bonner, 5 February 1965, Francis W. Bonner Collection, Box 206, Folder "Integration," Furman University Archives. D. Floyd Dukes to J. Wilbert Wood, 10 December 1964, Francis W. Bonner Collection, Box 206, Folder "Trustees—Admission Policy," Furman University Archives.

<sup>118</sup> Tollison, "Majority," 20.

<sup>119</sup> Sapp Funderburk to Joseph Vaughn, 27 October 1964, Francis W. Bonner Collection, Box 212, Folder "Joseph Allen Vaughn," Furman University Archives.

<sup>120</sup> "3 Negro Teachers Enroll at Furman," *Greenville News*, 27 January 1965, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965, Furman University Archives.

<sup>121</sup> "Furman Enrolls First Negro Undergraduate," *Greenville News*, 30 January 1965, Plyler Presidential Scrapbooks, Scrapbook 7: 1962-1965, Furman University Archives.

<sup>122</sup> "Furman Enrolls First Negro Undergraduate."

<sup>123</sup> Larry Estridge, "New Student Notes Furman's Friendliness, Scholarship," *The Furman Paladin*, 19 February 1965, "Furman Student Newspapers," Furman University Digital Collections.

<sup>124</sup> "Report on Joseph Vaughn."

<sup>125</sup> Estridge, "New Student."

<sup>126</sup> "Report on Joseph Vaughn."

<sup>127</sup> Tollison, "Majority," 19.

<sup>128</sup> *Bonhomie*, Vol. 68, 1968.

<sup>129</sup> Lillian Brock Flemming to Brian Neumann, email, 4 May 2014.

<sup>130</sup> June Manning Thomas, interview by Brian Neumann, phone, 7 May 2014.

<sup>131</sup> Thomas Interview.

<sup>132</sup> Jim Edwards, interview with Brian Neumann, 18 July 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," 16 April 1963, The King Center, <http://www.thekingcenter.org>.

<sup>134</sup> Many at Furman, including Schaible and Reid, made passionate pleas of principle. The faculty, in particular, seem particularly attuned to the moral dimension of the issue. 1965 graduate Jim Edwards remembers faculty in the early 1960s using literature, scripture, and philosophical texts to challenge students to question the morality of segregation. Nonetheless, trustees and administrators almost always defined the need for desegregation in practical terms, suggesting that the desegregation of Furman was primarily a practical, pragmatic decision. Bonner's influential speech, for example, took 11 pages to argue that desegregation was necessary but only 2 sentences to argue that it was right. Moral arguments, furthermore, appear to have convinced neither the Baptist Convention nor the trustees. The trustees delayed implementing the new admission policy in May 1964 and were ready to do so again in December 1964 until Bonner convinced them of the practical necessities of desegregation.