

In the last five tries on the half-mile oval. Not even a mysterious engine problem could keep Busch from winning Sunday./A7



long-delayed demands for services and voters who've proven unwilling to support new taxes./A3



Daily



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JASPER, ALA

Baptist pastor gets baptized in own church

By **ED HOWELL**
Eagle News Editor

It's not every day that the pastor of a church gets baptized, but First Baptist Church of Jasper got to see it at the end of the Sunday morning service yesterday.

"This is an unusual day in the life of First Baptist Church," said the pastor of the church, Dr. James Newell, on Sunday.

Newell, who just marked his second anniversary with the church, explained his decision the previous Sunday at a countywide Southern Baptist praise service held at the church, when he walked down the aisle of the church to essen-

tially be baptized 20 years after he felt for sure he had accepted Jesus Christ as his savior.

Southern Baptist procedure dictates one first professes belief in Jesus Christ before becoming baptized. Some later say they made their move prematurely as a child and want to be baptized again after making sure of their faith as an adult.

However, it is rare to hear that from a church pastor — in this case, a pastor with a \$4 million, 22,639-square-foot sanctuary. The church has nearly 2,000 members enrolled in Sunday School and nearly 900 attending classes.

At the end of the service he was baptized by Rev. Lucky Teague, the associational director of

See **NEWELL, A14** ▶



Dr. James Newell

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— Dr. James Newell

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In an accident in Winston County, the 21-year-old daughter of state Rep. Mike Millican was killed Saturday

No one else was injured in the wreck. Troopers said she was wearing her seat belt.

A Nauvoo man died Saturday afternoon when the

In a separate accident in Jasper Saturday night, a passenger in a vehicle was critically injured when he was thrown from the vehicle after crashing on Airport

The driver of the vehicle, who was not identified, was taken into custody by Jasper police and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol, Cain said.

Newell

From A1

the Walker County Baptist Association, before then baptizing Nell Dotson, who came to Newell Wednesday. She said like Newell she had felt she had accepted Christ, gotten baptized and then realized only later that she had not been saved at the time. Now certain of her faith, she wanted to be baptized again — noting she would not have had the courage to do it had Newell not have walked down the aisle.

Both received applause from the congregation at the conclusion of their baptisms.

Newell had first announced in the church bulletin last week he would discuss the matter at the April 4 evening service, but postcards went out a day later to announce he would move up that discussion to Sunday morning's service.

Dorman Grace, the chairman of deacons for the church, gave his support to Newell in speaking before the congregation Sunday, saying Newell's decision had been a blessing.

"Let's not be embarrassed about the fire about to start. Our pastor should not be embarrassed about it," Grace said. "Let us start a fire at First Baptist that goes through this town and this county."

Newell said that during the praise service, he came down the aisle and officially made a profession of faith and requested believer's baptism. However, he said the profession related to one he

made 20 years ago, when he settled his faith once and for all.

Newell said he had first made a profession at the age of 9. However, as he grew older and his faith became more certain, he began to ask, "Did I do what I thought I had done? Did I ask God to live in my heart?"

What followed was a period of uncertainty until 20 years ago.

"I got to settle this once and for all," he said. "I did it right there and then and it nailed my relationship with the Lord...The salvation process is signed, sealed and delivered when we ask God to deliver us from our sins."

However, he said he never followed up with the next step which he feels God would expect him to do to demonstrate his faith, as well as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and a desire of fellowship with God. Citing verses in Matthew 28 and Mark 1, he said that inaction put him in the position of being disobedient to God.

"Then it would have been appropriate for me at that time to be baptized. But I didn't," he said. "We could spend a lot of time asking, 'James, why didn't you do it?'"

He didn't go into reasons, but said the important thing was to finally go ahead with baptism, noting the matter had become a cloud over his head that he had kept from others. In that respect he could relate to Jacob in the Bible.

"Would you ever have thought there

would have been an issue of disobedience in my life?" he asked. "I came to the place this past Sunday night where I said, 'I'm not going to be disobedient any more.'"

"So I made the decision simply as a way of guaranteeing there is nothing in my life that is hindering God's work," Newell said. "I am convinced God has worked in great ways in my life. At the same time I have to recognize the Scriptures say if there is any disobedience in my life, that will cause God to withhold His full blessing. I have to wonder what might I have missed."

Newell, who gave no hint of stepping down from his post, said by pleasing God he hopes to be more purified to be a greater instrument God can use.

"I've been in better shape spiritually than I ever have in my life," he said.

However, he added that he was coming before the church humbly about the matter, adding, "Don't look at me saying how great I am."

Instead, he hoped to challenge others to take similar actions concerning their spiritual lives, whether it was accepting Jesus Christ or to take actions such as joining a church or accepting God's call to take some action.

At an invitation at the conclusion of his remarks, about a dozen people came to either kneel at the altar in prayer or to ask for baptism or church membership. Some people in the congregation were seen wiping away tears.