

PORTRAITS OF COURAGE



STORIES OF
BAPTIST HEROES




Julie Whidden Long



INTRODUCTION
**WHAT
MAKES A
BAPTIST
HERO?**



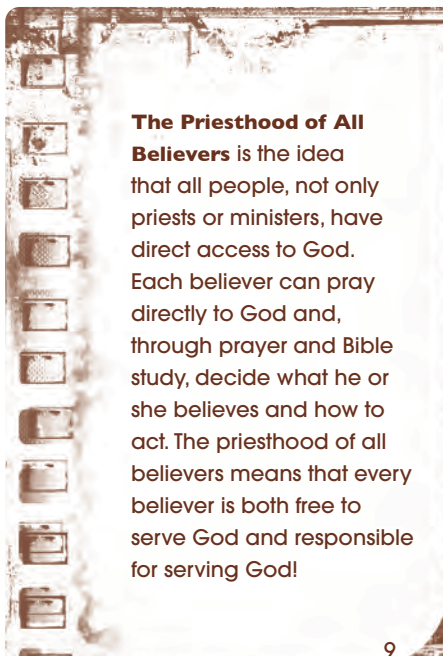


Baptists have been around for four hundred years. We began in Holland and England and traveled across the Atlantic Ocean to America. Baptists have since spread all over the world.

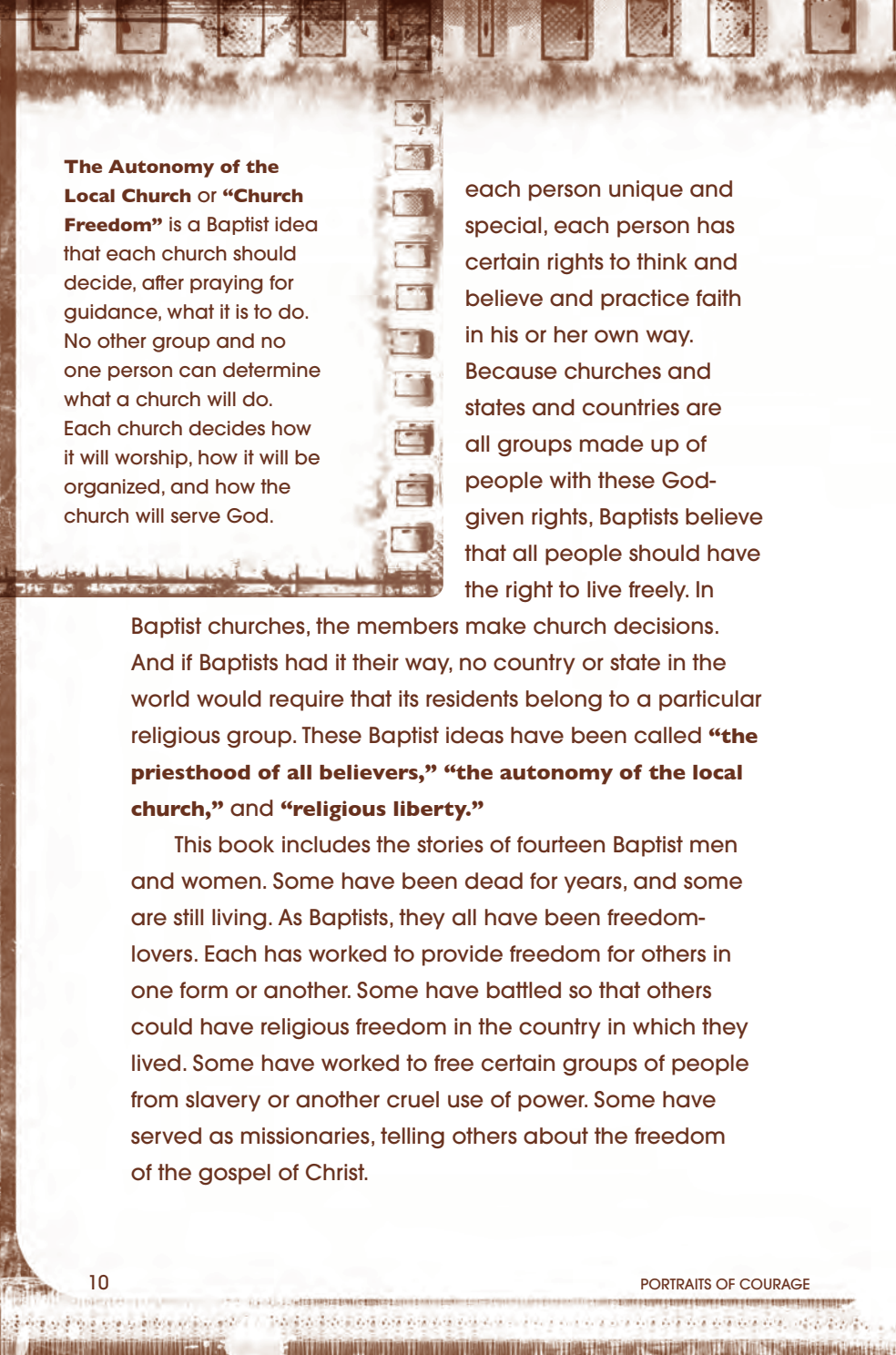
Baptists are a mixed group of people. Some are light-skinned Baptists, and some are dark-skinned Baptists. Some speak English, while others speak Spanish or French or Japanese or Korean or one of many African languages. Some Baptists worship with only a few others in someone's home, and some worship with thousands of other people in large churches. Some listen to a pipe organ as they sing hymns that are hundreds of years old, and some beat drums and dance and chant about the love of their God. Baptists are different all over the world. So what holds all these diverse Baptists together?

Baptists are Baptists because they believe in freedom. Baptists believe that every person is free to worship, pray, read the scriptures, and believe in the way that God leads him or her. Baptists believe that our lives are accountable to God.

Because God created



The Priesthood of All Believers is the idea that all people, not only priests or ministers, have direct access to God. Each believer can pray directly to God and, through prayer and Bible study, decide what he or she believes and how to act. The priesthood of all believers means that every believer is both free to serve God and responsible for serving God!



The Autonomy of the Local Church or “Church Freedom” is a Baptist idea that each church should decide, after praying for guidance, what it is to do. No other group and no one person can determine what a church will do. Each church decides how it will worship, how it will be organized, and how the church will serve God.

each person unique and special, each person has certain rights to think and believe and practice faith in his or her own way. Because churches and states and countries are all groups made up of people with these God-given rights, Baptists believe that all people should have the right to live freely. In

Baptist churches, the members make church decisions. And if Baptists had it their way, no country or state in the world would require that its residents belong to a particular religious group. These Baptist ideas have been called **“the priesthood of all believers,” “the autonomy of the local church,”** and **“religious liberty.”**

This book includes the stories of fourteen Baptist men and women. Some have been dead for years, and some are still living. As Baptists, they all have been freedom-lovers. Each has worked to provide freedom for others in one form or another. Some have battled so that others could have religious freedom in the country in which they lived. Some have worked to free certain groups of people from slavery or another cruel use of power. Some have served as missionaries, telling others about the freedom of the gospel of Christ.



Olu Menjay at Rick's Institute

Each of these persons is Baptist. But what makes them Baptist heroes? Let a story from one of our present heroes, Olu Menjay, paint a picture.

Olu Menjay is currently the principal of Ricks Institute School in Liberia, Africa. After coming to the United States for his education in 1991, Olu returned to Liberia to help rebuild his nation after it was destroyed by a civil war. Olu explains why his ministry and leadership in Liberia have been so important. He says,

In Liberia, when people have the opportunity to study in the United States or other Western countries, they typically go back to Liberia to serve the government, not schools like Ricks. They serve the government and become a "big shot" But people see me at Ricks with my students painting, or with volunteers out working in the community. That is a new portrait in Liberia, because to be a "big shot" you cannot volunteer. You just sit in your big car and drive around and have people drive you around. Teaching students to volunteer and serve is one of our big things at Ricks, which I am very proud of.

Religious Liberty or

Religious Freedom is the belief that every person has the right to worship God as the person pleases or the choice not to worship God at all. Baptists believe that religious liberty is a right given by God because God created people with the freedom to make their own choices.



Olu is painting a new portrait in Liberia. Instead of looking for success or fame or money, he has listened to God's calling to do a new good work in achieving freedom in Liberia.

Olu and these other Baptist heroes have painted new portraits in their parts of the world. They have encouraged new ideas. They have worked for change in their societies. They have stood up against the crowd when they believed strongly about a cause. They are heroes because they have listened to God's calling to make a difference in their own parts of the world.

As you read these stories, I hope that you will be challenged to become a Baptist hero, finding a way in your own part of the world to make a difference and to work for freedom!

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STORIES OF BAPTIST HEROES

Written by Julie Whidden Long, this 128-page book, designed especially for younger youth and older children, presents the stories of Baptist heroes. These heroes lived in various countries and centuries and represent many phases of Baptist life. By highlighting the biographical dimension of the Baptist past, these inspiring stories help readers appreciate the personal contributions of heroic Baptist men and women.



Rev. Julie Whidden Long is the pastor of First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, Georgia. She previously served as minister of children and families (2005–2013) and associate pastor (2013–2018) at FBCX Macon. Additionally, Rev. Long was the associate director of Baptist Women in Ministry (2018–2019) and launched a coaching and consulting practice in 2020. A native of Fitzgerald, Georgia, she is a two-time graduate of Mercer University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Christianity and History from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 2002 and a Master of Divinity from McAfee School of Theology in 2005. She is married to Jody Long, executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia, and they have two children.