

May 16, 1976

POOL REPORT #14

(Ford Family's visit to church and visit to Barbara Ford, the President's ailing sister-in-law in Grand Rapids.)

President and Mrs. Ford, Susan and Jack left the Welch residence by limousine shortly before 11 a.m. for a 10 minute ride to the Grace Episcopal Church. The President has been a member of the congregation since 1939.

The church building is modernistic, made of brown brick with stained glass windows and light wooden interior. It seats 540 persons and was full today, something that the local church officials said is a rare occurrence.

There were several hundred persons along the motorcade route across from the church and on the church lawn when the Fords arrived. They were greeted by the Reverend Roy Ostenson, the Rector. The President shook hands and posed for pictures and the family went inside. They were greeted by standing applause. The Ford Family took seats about three-quarters of the way forward of the church on the right side. The President had an aisle seat next to Susan. Mr. Ostenson told the President that it was a "marvelous occasion to have you here." He said it was a tribute not only to the office of the Presidency but to Gerald Ford personally. The service included standard prayers for those in civil authority, including the President.

The first scriptural reading was from the book of Amos, and Mr. Ostenson commented that it was a statement of "powerful social concern registered in the lives of those who lived centuries ago."

The next scriptural reading was from Luke's gospel and it was the parable of the rich man who ordered his steward to put his account books in order. The steward, not much of a bookkeeper, thereupon went out and made adjustments with other debtors of the master. He said it was an example of worldly, wise people using their wealth to win friends for themselves.

In his subsequent homily on the same scriptural passage Mr. Ostenson said that it is time for the church, the Nation and individuals to rediscover "soul", which he defined as ambiguity, passion and imagination that makes man vulnerable and open to understanding and suffering. He said that the passage also helps "to remind ourselves that we don't need the approval and love of everybody around us all the time." When the collection plate was passed the President was seen to make a donation. The service ended a few minutes later. As the Ford Family came down the center aisle after the blue-hatted choir, many members of the congregation produced previously hidden cameras and took pictures of the First Family.

The President shook hands for a few minutes outside the church and the family got inside the limousine for a 5 minute ride to the home of Jim and Barbara Ford. Jim is the President's half-brother and is a Grand Rapids optometrist.

Barbara Ford, dressed in a long red robe, greeted the First Family. The pool was advised that she has been recovering from surgery for an intestinal disturbance. After kisses and embraces, the two families went inside the house, a two-story frame, unpretentious structure somewhat in need of paint. They visited for about 10 minutes and then the Ford Family left the house for a 3 minute return trip to the Welch residence on Reed's Lake.

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