

November 4, 1959

Statistics Reported
By American Baptists

NEW YORK--(BP)--A summary of American Baptist Convention statistics shows 117 fewer churches than in 1958. However, there is a Conventionwide membership gain of 8,233 over 1958, for a total of 1,563,593, as reported by state conventions.

Sunday school enrollment increased by 16,051, to a total 1,028,630. Church property value rose \$28,740,706 in 1959 to a total value of \$487,935,192.

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American Convention
Eyes South's Churches

GREEN LAKE, Wis. --(BP)--Machinery was set in motion here to accept Baptist churches in the southern area of the country wishing to affiliate with the American Baptist Convention. The action came by vote of the Convention's General Council.

An increasing number of churches in the southern area of the country have been seeking fellowship with the American Baptist Convention, the Council reported. In addition, a large number of American Baptists now living in the South fail to find fellowship within local Baptist organization in the South, according to reports given to the General Council.

The American Baptist Home Mission Society was approved by the General Council as the denominational agency to "provide for adequate investigation and possible affiliation of such churches."

At the same meeting, College Heights Baptist Church of Port Neches, Tex., was accepted into the American Baptist Convention by the General Council. The Texas church had petitioned earlier for permission to affiliate, and registered a willingness to comply with the by-laws of the American Baptist Convention and to co-operate with its program.

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BAPTIST FEATURES

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Five States Tackling
Touchy Liberty Issues

By the Baptist Press

Interest among Southern Baptists centered perhaps more on religious liberty than on any one other subject in October as the denomination entered its period when state Baptist bodies are meeting.

As the Baptist General Convention of Texas girded for anticipated lengthy discussion of a church-state issue, Baptists elsewhere busied themselves on other religious liberty matters.

Missouri Baptist Convention, assembled at Kansas City, drafted a resolution of protest over Spain's jailing of a Baptist pastor and the continued closing of the Baptist church he serves.

It donated, direct from the convention, \$3000 to Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (POAU) to be used in legal counsel on the Spanish pastor's behalf.

On the home front, Baptists' position on the sensitive church-state question, too, made major news copy in Colorado, Virginia, and North Carolina.

Texas Baptists prepared to gather for the 1959 convention, facing a close-vote recommendation from their executive board that the convention accept for operation a hospital in Texarkana, Tex.

Hill-Burton Act federal funds were used in the hospital's construction before it was offered for denominational operation.

The Texas executive board voted by the slim margin of 74 to 71 to recommend leasing the hospital, offered by Texarkana citizens. Those who favored its acceptance saw no encroachment on the Baptist position of church and state. Opponents pointed later to an editorial in a Roman Catholic newspaper recognizing the possible conflict of principle.

During October, Wayland Baptist College at Plainview, Tex., announced it would reject a \$668,000 federal loan originally sought for three new buildings, and would "depend on God" rather than government for future capital improvements.

College trustees said their change of heart came after reconsidering the principle of separation of church and state.

In Franklin, Tex., a district court (state) ruled that a group of citizen-taxpayers, including leading Baptists, had not "exhausted all administrative remedies" before taking a religious liberty test case to court.

Plaintiffs contend that St. Mary's Elementary School at Bremond, Tex., "is using state taxes to support an illegal Catholic school, a violation of both the federal and state constitutions." They planned to appeal the district court ruling to a higher court.

A religious liberty committee of the Baptist General Association of Virginia published the report it would present before the association during November.

It called for Virginia Baptists to withdraw from programs of Bible teaching in the public schools of the state. The general association has discouraged the practice, but individual churches have nevertheless maintained their programs.

Next door, North Carolina Baptists in their November convention were to be greeted by the report of their public affairs committee.

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Within the framework of "separation" and "independence" three possible areas of co-operation between church and state were pointed out by the committee. These include aid to the needy, higher education, and medical and scientific research.

Released-time religious education of public school pupils was advocated. Such instruction would take place in church buildings by qualified teachers. It would require no tax money and yet recognize the place of religion in a child's education, North Carolina committeemen said.

The Colorado Baptist General Convention at Colorado Springs urged members of affiliated churches in six states to consider whether religious affiliations of any candidates for United States President in 1960 will affect their service to the country as a whole.

A convention observed said that the resolution, without mentioning a denomination by name, was drafted with the fact in mind that there might be candidates who attended the Roman Catholic Church.

Former Southern Baptist Convention President Brooks Hays visited United Nations as the Convention's first permanent observer. Later in October, A. C. Miller of Nashville, executive secretary of the Convention's Christian Life Commission, visited UN as the alternate observer.

Both reported on contacts with UN leaders. Miller outlined preliminary plans for Commission-sponsored conferences on the United Nations at UN offices in 1960.

Other news notes for October were:

TV: National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission announced that Russia apparently will permit televising of services conducted in the famous Moscow Baptist Church.

EDITOR: J. Marse Grant of Thomasville, N. C., was elected editor of the North Carolina Baptist weekly newspaper, Biblical Recorder, effective Jan. 1. He succeeds Dr. L. L. Carpenter, who retires.

CANADA: William Fleming, Baptist benefactor of Fort Worth, Tex., offered \$1000 a month for establishment of missions in western Canada, provided the Baptist General Convention of Oregon-Washington matched it with \$500 a month. The Oregon-Washington convention accepted the offer, good for calendar year 1960.

SEAWAY: Southern Baptists entered a key city on the new and booming St. Lawrence River seaway. A pastoral missionary was appointed to serve at Massena, N. Y.

COLLEGE: Missouri Baptists adopted further plans looking toward establishment of a Southern Baptist college in the St. Louis metropolitan area.