



-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Art Toalston, Editor
Fax (615) 782-8736
CompuServe ID # 70420.17

November 14, 1996

96-200

NORTH CAROLINA--Schoolteacher uses gifts to teach missions firsthand; photos.

WASHINGTON--Zairian doctor serves refugees, putting his life on the line.

OKLAHOMA--Elliff seeks recommendations for members of SBC committees.

WASHINGTON--CLC, Clinton, others decry end of liquor advertising ban.

TENNESSEE--Former HMB interfaith director says he's entered Freemasonry.

LOUISIANA--La. Baptists meet new exec; Bible stance misses 2/3 vote.

SOUTH CAROLINA--S.C. Baptists mark 175 years; first state convention in 1821.

VIRGINIA--Virginia Baptists retain more money inside state.

HAWAII--Hawaii Baptists elect layman, uphold traditional marriage.

OHIO--Ohio Baptists name Jack Kwok, launch partnership with Israel.

TEXAS--Jewelry-making becomes ministry for talented duo.

**Schoolteacher uses gifts
to teach missions firsthand**

By Norman Miller

**Baptist Press
11/14/96**

LOW GAP, N.C. (BP)--Carole Dowell cradled the struggling ebony bundle, a Kenyan baby born prematurely. His mother lay unconscious, stricken with malaria.

Nurturing a "preemie" wasn't what Dowell envisioned for her first volunteer mission trip in 1981, but it was a first step in a new ministry for her: missions education.

"My deep love for missions was born as I held that black baby in my arms. Instantly, I loved him," she recalls. A month after the trip, Dowell learned death had stolen the infant she tended.

Fifteen years later, she still gets misty-eyed about that. She rejoices anyway. "God didn't send me to Kenya to save that child, but to save me -- in a way -- to mark me and call me to missions."

When a newspaper in nearby Mount Airy, N.C., featured Dowell's trip, Baptist readers showed a keen interest. They called constantly, asking Dowell to visit their churches and talk about missions. She quickly booked dates for presentations two years in advance.

After two trips to Bolivia, the light went on as Dowell sat in church one Sunday: "It was like a flash of lightning. The Lord said, 'Why don't you go to the field that will be featured in the annual Foreign Mission Study? Then you can prepare to teach a real mission study next fall.'"

A schoolteacher whose spiritual gift of teaching complements her formal training in elementary education, Dowell accepted God's challenge.

From 1984-91, she personalized the Foreign Mission Study, a program taught in Southern Baptist churches every fall. In 10 countries -- Brazil, Egypt, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, South Korea, Uruguay, Venezuela and Yemen -- she gathered timely, intimate information about missionaries.

Through the years, she taught almost 500 mission studies in North Carolina and Virginia churches. Each year, from September through December, her narrated slide presentations absorbed her weekends, Wednesday nights and other nights, too.

Financially, her ministry has been a struggle. But she quilts and sells baby blankets. She banks the honoraria from churches where she speaks. At her request, her husband gives her money for trips that he would use for her anniversary, Christmas and birthday gifts.

"One year, I didn't have money to buy film or to develop it," she says. But some Vacation Bible School children gave her their week's missions offering, enough to buy film. Within the week, another donation arrived in her mailbox -- the amount needed to pay for film processing.

"The Lord works like that sometimes. You're willing -- available, but you don't know exactly what's going to happen."

--more--

Although Dowell retired from teaching school in 1989, she kept busy in church and with associational and state convention responsibilities between trips. But soon her strenuous "retirement" aggravated a long-time medical problem: an irregular heartbeat. In 1991, her many activities ended.

Summers came and went. She ached for the world's mission fields. The picturesque Blue Ridge Parkway couldn't equate to east Africa's beauty. An active church life couldn't fill the void she felt thinking about the joyful singing of lepers in Nigeria. Dowell longed for the innocent glow of love from the eyes of Bolivian children. She wanted to get on her knees and waddle again into the cramped quarters of a prayer closet in South Korea.

The FMB's "superb videos on the Foreign Mission Study" created bittersweet thoughts. They reminded Dowell her travel for missions education really was finished.

But God wasn't finished with her. A few years of relaxation in the country -- along with improved medication -- and Dowell is on the road again. In September she taught quilting to Muslim women in Africa. There were opportunities to share the gospel. Bible studies preceded the sewing lessons.

The trip continues Dowell's pre-empted worldwide travel and ministry. And a hunger born 15 years ago -- when a frail Kenyan baby won her heart -- will be sated once again.

--30--

Adapted from October 1996 issue of The Commission, the Foreign Mission Board's monthly magazine. (BP) photo (horizontal) and cutline mailed 11/14/96 to state Baptist newspapers and posted in SBCNet News Room by Richmond bureau of Baptist press.

**Zairian doctor serves refugees,
putting his life on the line**

By Wendy Ryan

**Baptist Press
11/14/96**

WASHINGTON (BP)--If it is at all possible to find a ray of hope in the daily unfolding tragedy in Zaire, it can be found in the story of Joe Lusi, a Zairian Baptist doctor who daily risks his life to serve refugees in the Virunga Baptist hospital in Goma, supported in part by Baptist World Aid (BWAid).

Goma is at the center of fierce fighting between rebels, Zairian soldiers and Rwandans, in a region with an estimated 1 million Rwandan refugees and displaced Zairians.

On Saturday, Nov. 9, Lusi was interviewed on the ABC evening news pleading for medicines for the refugees at the hospital.

What Lusi did not say was how he was almost killed serving the refugees.

In a report to BWAid Nov. 13, Lusi's wife, Lyn, said he, a hospital driver and a handyman hid together during the Thursday night, Oct. 31, battle for Goma as the battle raged for the army camp next door to the hospital.

"Helpless, terrified patients prayed all night for God's mercy on them," she quoted her husband as reporting. By midday that Friday, the army camp was taken, but the hospital was spared. "The screams of the women and children are an unforgettable memory for those who heard them," Lyn Lusi recounted.

As relative calm returned to the area, Joe Lusi called the few remaining hospital personnel together. "If I am going to die, I want to die doing my work," he said. "Let's get ready for the wounded."

The wounded already were arriving at the hospital door, but there was no electricity for sterilizing or water to wash wounds.

"Tell every family member they have to bring water with their patient," Lusi ordered. Because he could not use the pressure cookers to sterilize the water, Lusi ordered people to take the doors from the operating room block and burn them for firewood.

When that was still not enough, Lusi ordered them to go to the church next door and bring back the benches to burn them, but the personnel drew the line at burning the church benches.

On Monday, both water and electricity had returned to the hospital and for seven days Virunga was the only hospital functioning in the town.

After that, the General Hospital opened again and both hospitals agreed to work together to treat the wounded free of charge and the townspeople for a minimal fee.

But all of this hangs on medicines getting in and peace restored.

--more--

Everyone fears the outbreak of an uncontrollable epidemic because people are drinking untreated water and eating raw whatever food they find, the Lusis reported.

On Nov. 12, Joe and Lyn Lusi accompanied a small Cessna Caravan plane of the Africa Inland Mission which took some supplies to the hospital.

Lyn Lusi described Goma as "bedraggled beyond belief," but their reception at the hospital was "a joyful reunion with the 12 remaining staff."

"Those who stayed in Goma fared much better than those who fled," they reported.

One hour after they took the medical supplies, a convoy of rebel soldiers arrived and unloaded 32 seriously injured Goma residents who were ambushed as they tried to return.

"The nurses worked with speed and compassion, but they worked without anesthetics," Lyn Lusi reported.

More medical supplies are urgently needed, and for Joe Lusi, much prayer that God will sustain him through the horror of another war that now threatens to engulf his country of Zaire.

A member of the Nairobi Baptist Church in Goma, Lusi has been serving Hutu refugees in the camps at Goma since 1994, after the Rwandan genocide sent tens of thousands fleeing to the Rwanda/Zaire border. During this time, Lusi visited Rwanda several times and reported to Baptist World Aid on the horror of the war in that country.

BWAid has an Africa Refugee Assistance Fund to help the hospital and other places as soon as the international community works to help open access to the refugees.

Donations may be sent to Baptist World Aid, 6733 Curran Street, McLean, VA 22101.

--30--

Elliff seeks recommendations for members of SBC committees

**Baptist Press
11/14/96**

DEL CITY, Okla. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Tom Elliff has issued a request for Baptists' input in the selection of four key SBC committees he is responsible for appointing.

"We are experiencing our greatest days of growth and ministry through the Cooperative Program," Elliff noted in a letter to state Baptist convention presidents, executive directors and editors. "Southern Baptists will expect, and rightly so, that our committee members be men and woman of fervent spirit who endorse and appreciate with all their heart our SBC work, as supported through the Cooperative Program."

Elliff invited the leaders to "encourage the people in your state conventions to assist us in this process" by submitting recommendations on a form available from his office. His address is: Tom Elliff, First Southern Baptist Church, P.O. Box 15039, Del City, OK 73155.

The SBC committees to be appointed by Elliff are 1) the Committee on Committees, 2) the Resolutions Committee, 3) the Credentials Committee and 4) the Tellers Committee.

Elliff said individuals recommended for service should possess the following qualities:

"1) A personal relationship with Christ illustrated by a consistent daily walk with him.

"2) A clear commitment to the view that the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God.

"3) A Christian walk and commitment acknowledged by his or her peers.

"4) A deep and unequivocal commitment to the work of our Southern Baptist Convention as supported through the Cooperative Program and our annual SBC offerings.

"5) An understanding that any responsibility with our SBC is a place of service rather than 'positional glory.'"

Elliff wrote, "I assure you that each name submitted will receive prayerful consideration. It is understandable, of course, that with the great number of names submitted, there will be those who, though imminently qualified, may not be chosen to serve this year but may very well be considered for subsequent appointment."

--30--

**CLC, Clinton, others decry
end of liquor advertising ban**

By Tom Strode

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist ethics agency has joined President Clinton and alcohol watchdog groups in criticizing the American hard liquor industry for dropping its longtime voluntary ban on television and radio advertising.

The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States recently announced it no longer would abide by a ban on broadcast advertising, in place on radio since 1936 and on television since 1948. DISCUS, a trade association representing producers and marketers of hard liquor, said it had adopted a code governing broadcast advertising by its members which has two core principles:

-- "To ensure responsible, tasteful and dignified advertising and marketing of distilled spirits to adult consumers who choose to drink, and

-- "To avoid targeting advertising and marketing of distilled spirits to individuals below the legal purchase age."

Such a code did nothing to allay the concerns of opponents of lifting the ban.

"The decision to drop hard liquor advertising demonstrates what we already knew about the alcohol industry," said Will Dodson, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of government relations. "They are definitely more concerned about profits than they are concerned about the welfare of society."

President Clinton called the liquor industry's decision "simply irresponsible."

In his weekly radio address Nov. 9, the president said Americans' message to liquor companies should be: "You were right for the last 50 years when you didn't advertise on television; you're wrong to change your policy now. This is no time to turn back. Get back on the ban. That's the best way to protect all our families."

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R.-Miss., agreed with the president on NBC's "Meet the Press" Nov. 10. According to The Washington Post, Lott said, "You can't be running around saying, you know, 'Don't smoke. Oh, and by the way, here is this nice hard alcohol that you can take as an alternative.'"

In its 26-point code, DISCUS says advertising and marketing of distilled spirits, which includes such drinks as whiskey, vodka, gin and rum, should be excluded from college and university campuses and newspapers. The guidelines also say such advertising "should not depict a child or portray objects, images or cartoon figures that are popular predominantly with children." Such ads "should not contain the name of or depict Santa Claus or any religious figure," the guidelines say.

Opponents of DISCUS' Nov. 7 action found little assurance in its code.

Lifting the ban "marks the beginning of an open liquor-marketing season on America's children and teens," said George Hacker, director of the alcohol policies project for Center for Science in the Public Interest, in a written statement. "DISCUS has given the green light to its members to put profit above social responsibility. We urge responsible distillers to continue to reject advertising in the broadcast media. We encourage broadcasters to maintain the standards that have been set by the major networks, which have just said 'no' to liquor ads."

The major television networks -- ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox -- have said they will reject hard liquor ads. Some cable networks have followed suit.

The CLC's Dodson said, "The decision to drop the ban on hard liquor advertising is definitely a step backwards in dealing with the problem of alcohol abuse in our society, particularly among young people, at whom many of these advertisements are targeted. All of the alcohol advertising that I have seen advances the myth that alcohol is a gateway to good times. We have to combat this lie.

"We must seek to do everything we can to oppose the lifting of the ban and to increase public awareness of the dangers of abusing alcohol. Public service announcements may be one of our most useful weapons in this battle. If we could convince broadcasters to give us just a fraction of the time that the alcohol industry has to spread its lies, we could counter the effects of much of the advertising even with far less air time."

The DISCUS action came shortly after Hacker, Dodson and others from the Coalition for the Prevention of Alcohol Problems met with Reed Hundt, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, to express support for his efforts to prevent the liquor industry from dropping its ban.

--more--

The battle over hard liquor advertising began earlier this year when Seagram rejected the ban and began advertising whiskey on local TV stations and cable channels. While Seagram said it would not advertise at times frequented by underage viewers, it has placed ads during prime-time shows and after football games in markets such as Boston and Corpus Christi, Texas, The Post reported.

The hard liquor industry's share of alcohol sales nationally has been decreasing for the last 30 years. Distilled spirits had more than 50 percent of alcohol retail sales in the mid-1960s but had only 28 percent in 1995, according to The Post. In 1995, 60 percent of alcohol sales were for beer and 11 percent for wine, according to The Post.

--30--

**Former HMB interfaith director
says he's entered Freemasonry**

By Art Toalston

**Baptist Press
11/14/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Gary Leazer, a former Home Mission Board official who led a 1992-93 study of Freemasonry, has announced he has become a Mason.

Leazer, formerly director of the board's interfaith witness department, was asked to resign from the HMB staff by President Larry Lewis in October 1993 after delivering a speech sympathetic to Masons and critical of the HMB to a regional Masonic convention in Atlanta.

Leazer initially became a point of controversy in early 1993 over a sympathetic letter he had written to a Mason while the study, commissioned at the 1992 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Indianapolis, was under way. He was removed from further involvement in developing the HMB report and then removed as department director.

In announcing he had become a Freemason, Leazer stated "catalysts" for his decision included Lewis and Texas physician Larry Holly, who initiated the challenge of Freemasonry in SBC life in the spring of 1992.

"I had no interest at all in becoming a Mason until after I studied the fraternity during the controversy and after leaving the HMB," Leazer wrote in a letter circulated on the SBCNet computer network. He stated he conducted the HMB study "like I did every other study" during his 14 years on the HMB staff. "I have always called it as I saw it."

Holly responded to Leazer over the network, stating: "When you stand before God to give an answer for your betrayal of the Gospel through joining affinity with the anti-Christ in the Masonic Lodge, you will not be able to excuse yourself because of Larry Lewis or Holly. I pray that God will enable you to repent and to renounce your evil association. If not, then I am willing to leave it to God as to your judgment."

The HMB report's recommended stance on Freemasonry was adopted at the 1993 annual meeting in Houston, noting:

"In light of the fact that many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine, while others are compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine, we therefore recommend that consistent with our denomination's deep convictions regarding the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church, membership in a Masonic Order be a matter of personal conscience. Therefore, we exhort Southern Baptists to prayerfully and carefully evaluate Freemasonry in light of the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of the Scripture, and the findings of this report, as led by the Holy Spirit of God."

The HMB interfaith witness department recently has released an examination of a primary Masonic text, "A Bridge to Light." The study concludes that "many of the religious teachings presented in a Bridge to Light are incompatible with biblical Christianity." The pamphlet is available from HMB customer services, 1-800-634-2462.

--30--

**La. Baptists meet new exec;
Bible stance misses 2/3 vote**

By Mike Trice

PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--A record number of messengers to the 149th annual session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in Pineville welcomed the state convention's new executive director, Dean Doster, and re-elected Michael Claunch to a second term as president during the Nov. 11-12 meeting.

A record 2,600 messengers registered for the annual session, exceeding the previous record of 2,537 set in 1993. This marks the fourth time since 1991 that the meeting has drawn over 2,000 messengers.

Claunch, pastor of First Baptist Church, Slidell, was re-elected as convention president. Larry Baker, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pineville, also was nominated for the post, although Louisiana Baptist tradition has been for presidents to be unopposed for a second term. The vote electing Claunch was 1,491-934.

Louisiana Baptists were introduced to Doster, 52, who will take over for Mark Short when he retires in February after 10 years in the post. Doster is coming to Louisiana from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, where he has been a staff member since 1984, most recently as a regional coordinator. Doster was unanimously approved by both the 16-member executive director search committee, which began its work in January, and the convention's executive board on Nov. 11.

As a regional coordinator with the HMB, Doster represents the national mission organization to 10 state conventions. That work includes negotiating how the HMB relates to various mission ministries and projects in each state. Louisiana is one of his states.

"Dean Doster has been intimately familiar with Louisiana Baptists and Louisiana Baptist work for the eight years he has been in this vital working relationship with us," said search committee chairman John Alley, an Alexandria pastor, in a news article before the convention. "He stays current on our mission work and has made several tours of the entire state, so he understands the diversity of our people. "

Doster is tentatively scheduled to begin work with the state convention on March 31, 1997, although he and the committee said they also are working toward a possible February 28 start.

Alley described Doster as "a mainline, middle-of-the-road Southern Baptist," with "a marvelous grasp of what the priorities of our state convention are, and a strong commitment to work toward them. He has the gift not only of seeing the vision, but he is also gifted in conveying that vision and inspiring you by it, and inspiring you to be part of it."

"We're excited and we're honored," Doster told executive board members during the special pre-convention meeting Nov. 11. "We pledge to do our very best under the leadership of the Lord and with the Holy Spirit guiding us to reach Louisiana together with the gospel."

The state convention adopted a record \$18 million Cooperative Program budget for 1997, an increase of \$400,000, or 2.3 percent, over the current budget goal. The budget increase is the first in four years for the state convention. The allocation to Southern Baptist Convention national and international ministries remains at 35 percent of gifts received.

In other action, an amendment to the Louisiana Baptist Convention constitution failed to receive the two-thirds majority required for passage. The amendment called for the convention to do "its work in accordance with the principles that the Bible is the Word of God and is truth without mixture of error in every area of which it speaks, and that the confession of faith of the Louisiana Baptist Convention shall be the Baptist Faith and Message statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on May 9, 1963." The amendment drew 55 percent approval from messengers, falling short of the 67 percent required for passage.

Several resolutions were passed by messengers, each of which, save one, received little or no debate. The exception was an amendment brought from the floor by Joe Kite, retired pastor of Parkview Baptist Church, Alexandria. That resolution on religious liberty required a ballot vote but received approval by a narrow 491-459 vote. The resolution referred to a lawsuit brought by four Louisiana College professors against Leon Hyatt, a leader in a Louisiana conservative group known as Louisiana Baptists Speaking the Truth In Love. The resolution affirmed the right of Hyatt and all Baptists to "speak in public or in private concerning his or her religious convictions or about any Baptist convention, institution, agency, policy, practice, decision or belief ..."

The other resolutions approved during the convention:

-- expressed appreciation for the service of Mark Short upon his retirement as executive director.

--more--

-- expressed appreciation for the service of Robert Lynn as he nears his retirement as president of Louisiana College.

-- affirmed the belief that gambling is immoral and called on governing bodies to do all within their power to rid the state of all forms of gambling.

-- expressed deep concern for the nation's media and entertainment industry and urged churches to call for decency in programming and fairness in reporting.

-- reaffirmed prior conventions' stands against abortion, assisted suicide and child abuse and called on government to prohibit these practices.

-- affirmed the opposition of the use of illegal drugs and alcohol and any legalization of drugs.

In other elections, messengers elected Stan Allcorn, pastor of First Baptist Church, DeRidder, as first vice president and Bill Ichter, a staff member at First Baptist Church, Minden, as second vice president.

Doster, a native of Gleason, Tenn., joined the HMB staff as director of personal evangelism in 1984 and was named associate vice president for evangelism in 1988 and regional coordinator in 1989.

His previous positions included: associate executive director of Tennessee Baptist Children's Home and pastor of Baptist churches in Ripley, Brownsville and Granfield, Tenn., and Louisville and Paducah, Ky.

After his undergraduate education at Bethel College, McKenzie, Tenn., Doster earned a master of religious education degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, and a Ph.D., from Trinity Theological Seminary, Newburg, Ind.

He and his wife, Peggy, have a grown son and daughter.

Next year the convention will return to Louisiana College in Pineville, Nov. 10-11, for its 150th annual session.

--30--

**S.C. Baptists mark 175 years;
first state convention in 1821**

By Amanda Phifer

**Baptist Press
11/14/96**

FLORENCE, S.C. (BP)--South Carolina Baptists mixed celebration with business at their 176th annual meeting Nov. 12-13 at the Florence County Civic Center.

More than 2,000 messengers registered for the meeting, where they elected Mike Hamlet of Spartanburg as president and passed resolutions on marriage, abortion and homosexuality.

They did more than business, though. Tuesday evening was a celebration, as a full house of messengers highlighted the 175th anniversary of the state convention, opened new partnerships with West Virginia and Romania, and marked the close of partnerships with Kenya and New England.

The South Carolina Baptist Convention is the oldest of the 37 state Baptist conventions, formed in 1821 in Columbia.

Hamlet, pastor of First Baptist Church, North Spartanburg, was elected president, winning over Rudy Gray of Utica Baptist Church, Seneca. Keith Kelly, pastor of Jackson Baptist Church, Lyman, was elected first vice president in a three-nominee initial ballot and subsequent runoff. Ross Robinson, minister of education at Northside Baptist Church, West Columbia, was elected second vice president by acclamation.

A 1997 budget of \$24.3 million was approved, representing a \$600,000 increase over the 1996 budget. Southern Baptist Convention national and international ministries will receive 40 percent of the budget, the same percentage as recent years.

Messengers approved four resolutions Tuesday afternoon on: affirming the marriage covenant as established by God; the sanctity of human life; persecution of Christians; and homosexuality.

Saying that "the family ... is an essential element in the foundation of a healthy society" and that "government ... has a duty to preserve the foundation of a healthy society," the first resolution called for South Carolina Baptists to urge state and federal legislators to join them in affirming "the marriage covenant and the family as established by God."

The resolution on the sanctity of human life was passed, with a strongly worded paragraph on partial-birth abortion. The paragraph read: "Be it further resolved, that we particularly detest the practice of partial-birth abortion and that we call on our governor and state legislators to pass a law banning this abominable procedure."

--more--

"This procedure is particularly heinous," said Tony Beam, pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Laurens, "because of when it's performed. It represents a new step in the abortion industry. When Roe v. Wade was passed in the early 1970s, it was with the understanding that abortion would not be performed any later than the first trimester. Now we've come this far, and it is a sign of approaching infanticide."

The resolution on homosexuality also passed after an amendment, with wording of part of the resolution changed from "we do not condone hatred or violence toward any person," to "we condemn hatred or violence toward any person."

Messengers closed a four-year missions partnership with Baptists of Kenya, a unique partnership carried out with the predominately black Baptist convention, the Baptist Educational and Missionary Convention of South Carolina. They also closed a six-year missions partnership with New England. Partnerships with West Virginia and Romania are scheduled to begin in 1997 and 1998, respectively.

A large-scale 175th birthday party was held after the Tuesday evening session, complete with cake, ice cream, punch, and old-fashioned music from a bluegrass band.

The South Carolina Baptist Convention was organized in 1821 at First Baptist Church, Columbia, by nine men from three Baptist associations. Those associations now number 43. As the state's largest religious organization, the South Carolina Baptist Convention now consists of more than 730,000 members in 1,880 churches.

Several changes to the bylaws of the convention's constitution were approved during the meeting, including the creation of a history committee responsible for preserving and maintaining records of the convention's history.

The annual meeting had not been held in Florence since 1901.

Next year's meeting will be Nov. 11-12 at the Carolina Coliseum, Columbia.

--30--

Virginia Baptists retain more money inside state

By Robert Dilday

Baptist Press
11/14/96

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Virginia Baptists approved a budget Nov. 12 that allocates more money next year for ministries in their state.

The \$15.5 million budget for 1997 adopted during the Nov. 12-13 annual meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia retains a higher percentage of church financial contributions in the state and sends less money to support ministries beyond Virginia's borders.

As a result, two of the BGAV's main recipients for national and world mission causes will get fewer funds next year: the Southern Baptist Convention about \$360,000 less, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship about \$135,000 less.

Almost all the increased revenues for Virginia -- about \$1 million -- will be allocated to the Virginia Baptist General Board, which is undertaking a sweeping reorganization to change the way it offers ministries to churches. The board, whose name was changed at the BGAV meeting to the Virginia Baptist Mission Board, is given \$5,613,549, compared to \$4,689,549 in the current budget.

BGAV-affiliated churches either contribute money through one of three pre-set "giving tracks" or create their own track. Each of the pre-set tracks support Virginia ministries on an equal basis, but employ different channels for national and world causes. World Mission 1 funds ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention; World Mission 2 a combination of SBC and other Baptist causes; and World Mission 3 the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Although allocations between Virginia and other causes has been the same in each of the tracks, the 1997 budget shifts percentages in World Mission 2 and 3, allocating 68 percent to Virginia causes, 2 percent to partnership missions and 30 percent to national and international ministries.

World Mission 1's percentages are unchanged at 62 percent for Virginia, 2 percent for partnership missions and 36 percent for SBC national and international causes.

BGAV leaders have candidly admitted they left the percentages in World Mission 1 untouched because they say its churches strongly support the Southern Baptist Convention.

--more--

In September a number of BGAV churches formed a separate state convention, charging the BGAV with liberalism and lack of loyalty to the Southern Baptist Convention. A few congregations have dropped their BGAV membership to align with the new convention, which sends 50 percent of its receipts to the SBC.

But some of the 2,000 messengers at the BGAV meeting said the budget changes disproportionately impacted the national and international mission gifts of churches in World Mission 2 and 3, which represent about 66 percent of the BGAV's 1,564 congregations. About 18 percent of the churches give through World Mission 1 and another 16 percent craft their own giving plans.

"It's unfair to ask some churches to give more and sacrifice more than others," said Gary Dalton, pastor of Belmont Baptist Church, Charlottesville.

However, two attempts to alter the budget failed. One amendment would have retained percentages in all three tracks at their current level; and another would have decreased percentages in World Mission 1 as well as 2 and 3.

The 1997 budget also eliminates funding for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, ending a 45-year relationship with the Washington advocacy group. The \$2,100 was reallocated to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

BGAV budget committee member R.G. Rowland Jr. of Gretna, told messengers the committee believes Americans United has become "anti-church" and seems uninterested in its relationship with the BGAV.

"Virginia Baptists are not leaving Americans United; Americans United has left us," said Rowland, pastor of Greenfield Baptist Church. "We felt the Baptist Joint Committee would do a better job of representing Virginia Baptists on matters of separation of church and state."

But Norfolk pastor Don Dunlap, who offered an amendment to restore the money to AU, urged Virginia Baptist leaders to negotiate problems with the agency.

"I recognize some problems with AU, but on balance they have done a good job," said Dunlap, pastor of Freemason Street Baptist Church. "There are more attacks than ever on the separation of church and state. ... We need to bear witness that we can work together."

Dunlap's amendment failed.

In other action, messengers:

-- elected a slate of candidates endorsed by moderates, only one with opposition. New BGAV president is Mary Wilson, a real estate agent in the Washington suburbs and member of Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church.

Other officers are Keith Harris, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church in Richmond, first vice president and James Baucom Jr., pastor of Rivermont Avenue Baptist Church in Lynchburg.

Harris was challenged by Gray Smith, pastor of Pearisburg (Va.) Baptist Church, who nominated himself as a non-aligned candidate. Harris received 827 votes to Smith's 158.

-- adopted resolutions to pray for American leaders elected in November and expressing regret over the recent formation of a separate conservative state convention in Virginia and promising "to remain in relationship as brothers and sisters in Christ."

-- added the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's Global Missions Offering to the list of approved annual offerings to be taken in the BGAV's affiliated churches. Other offerings are the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, the State Missions Offering, the World Hunger Offering and the Mother's Day Benevolent Offering, which provides funds for indigent patients at Virginia Baptist Hospital.

--30--

Hawaii Baptists elect layman, uphold traditional marriage

**Baptist Press
11/14/96**

KAHULUI, Hawaii (BP)--A layman was elected president of the Hawaii Baptist Convention and messengers adopted a resolution upholding marriage during 54th annual meeting sessions Nov. 7-8 at Maui Beach Hotel, Kahului, Maui.

A \$2,209,866 budget was adopted for 1997, up 4.3 percent from the current budget.

--more--

The budget includes \$906,636 in anticipated Cooperative Program giving from the convention's 96 churches and missions, encompassing nearly 20,000 members. Southern Baptist national and international ministries will receive 31.5 percent of the CP giving, the same percent of budget as the current year.

All officers were elected by acclamation: president, George Moyer, a layman from Hawaii Kai Baptist Church, Honolulu; first vice president, Steve Irvin, pastor of Pali View Baptist Church, Kaneohe; second vice president, Dan Van Alstine, associate pastor of Mililani Baptist Church, Mililani; and recording secretary Lilly Sumida, administrative coordinator at Waialae Baptist Church, Honolulu.

The resolution on marriage noted: "as private citizens we exercise our freedom to speak out in opposition to those who promote same-sex marriages as acceptable lifestyles." Messengers affirmed "the biblical mandate for heterosexual marriages as they fulfill God's intent, follow the historical perspective, and continue the procreation of humankind."

Hawaii is the site of a potentially ground-breaking decision by the Hawaii Supreme Court that could legalize same-sex marriage in the state. That possibility prompted the U.S. Congress to pass the "Defense of Marriage Act" earlier this year barring federal recognition of same-sex marriages and allowing other states to do the same.

Noting Hawaii Baptists "firmly believe that the Bible teaches that God ordained marriage as the uniting of male and female," the resolution cited Christ's words in Matthew 19:4-6: "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh?' Consequently, they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

The resolution is to be sent to the state's governor and members of the legislature.

Messengers also approved resolutions citing "the biblical prohibition against euthanasia and assisted suicide" and voicing opposition to any form of legalized gambling. Those resolutions also will be forwarded to state officials.

A change approved to the convention's bylaws will allow service on the executive board by family members of the Hawaii Baptist Convention and Hawaii Baptist Foundation.

Next year's meeting will be Nov. 6-7 at a site yet to be determined.

--30--

Ohio Baptists name Jack Kwok, launch partnership with Israel

**Baptist Press
11/14/96**

PARMA, Ohio (BP)--Messengers to the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio met their new executive director, Jack Kwok of Arkansas, and approved a two-year evangelistic partnership in Israel through the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board during their Nov. 5-7 annual meeting.

Jack Kwok, 46, was unanimously elected by the Ohio convention's 50-member executive board Nov. 5 and presented to messengers in a reception the evening of Nov. 6.

A total of 460 messengers attended the annual meeting at Parma Baptist Church in the Cleveland area, representing the 637 Southern Baptist-related congregations in the state, encompassing 148,000 members.

Kwok has been director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's department of cooperative ministries with National Baptists since 1988. He will succeed Orville H. Griffin, executive director the past four years. Kwok will join the convention staff Nov. 21 and work alongside Griffin until his Jan. 10 retirement. Griffin announced his retirement at last year's convention and a 15-member search committee was named by the executive board.

Kwok delivered the convention's final sermon, issuing a challenge to the convention to expand their numbers to "1 million Southern Baptists in Ohio by the year 2020."

Messengers adopted a resolution of appreciation for Griffin, noting he has "faithfully served Ohio Baptists since 1954, serving as pastor, director of missions, director of evangelism/stewardship, associate executive director-treasurer, and executive director-treasurer"

The resolution also noted Griffin had "helped lead Baptists in Ohio to their greatest level of Cooperative Program giving," as well as in "astute financial planning" and reorganization, while exhibiting "with grace and courage, a heart for evangelism and missions in Ohio."

--more--

In other resolutions, messengers voiced thanks to Ohio Gov. George Voinovich and other state leaders for "a valiant campaign in opposition to casino gambling," noting Issue One on the Nov. 5 ballot was "soundly defeated." Messengers committed to pray for state leaders and "their continued moral leadership." Messengers also adopted a resolution opposing partial-birth abortion, a late-term abortion procedure which, with President Clinton's veto of congressional legislation banning it, continues to be legal across the country.

In starting a partnership with Israel in January, to include the West Bank and Gaza, the Ohio convention concluded a three-year partnership with Baptists in Uganda, which also was conducted through the Foreign Mission Board.

In addition to evangelistic efforts, the partnership with Israel will include a range of ministries, including drama, sports and prayerwalk teams; nursing; art and music mentoring; curriculum development; carpentry; sign language; and audiology.

Steve Hopkins, pastor of Whitehall Baptist Church, Columbus, was elected convention president in a two-nominee ballot. Also elected: first vice president, Ron Mitchell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Huber Heights, in the Dayton area; second vice president, Denny McKenzie, pastor of Austintown Baptist Church, Youngstown; and recording secretary, Dorothy Thorpe of Far Hills Baptist Church, Dayton.

A 1997 budget of \$6,495,924 was adopted, an increase of 6.1 percent over the current budget.

The budget includes an anticipated \$5,002,999 in Cooperative Program giving from the churches, 40 percent of which will be designated for Southern Baptist Convention international and national missions and ministries, the same percent of budget as the current year.

The 1997 meeting will be Nov. 5-7 at Far Hills Baptist Church, Dayton.

--30--

Reported by Will Pollard.

Jewelry-making becomes ministry for talented duo

By Dena Dyer

**Baptist Press
11/14/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--They don't wave Bibles or hymnals. They don't employ drama or puppets. Instead, they use antique African beads, watch faces and other jewelry items to open doors of opportunity. Edie Wells and Kari Utley own Colors of Africa, a business that sells African jewelry and note cards.

"We use it as a way to share our faith, as well as support missions," Wells said.

Both Utley and Wells had been short-term missionaries in Africa through the journeyman program of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Utley served in Gambia; Wells served in Liberia. But they met while studying at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. As their friendship grew, they discovered a shared love for Africa's culture and its people.

While at seminary, Wells, a 1994 master of arts in missiology graduate, enjoyed trading African beads and incorporating them into unique pieces of jewelry. She also was fascinated with the history of the beads, which originated in Venice, Italy, and were taken into Africa by Europeans who traded the beads for natural resources.

Utley, a 1993 master of divinity graduate, encouraged her to do more. "All of her friends loved her jewelry. We told her she needed to have her own business," Utley said.

Wells started by setting up jewelry shows in homes. "The shows are like a come-and-go fellowship, rather than a Tupperware party with a set program."

The venture soon caught on and she was making enough money to go into business full time.

In May 1995, Utley -- who had begun investing in the business a year earlier -- came on board as a full partner. They haven't looked back since.

"I went to seminary thinking I would go back to Africa as a missionary, but my experience has confirmed my creative gifts," Wells said.

She worked as a graphic artist for Women's Missionary Union in Birmingham, Ala., before coming to seminary.

"The WMU has been a big supporter of our ministry," she said. "They've asked us to come speak and show our jewelry at their regional meetings, which really helped us to get 'off the ground.'"

--more--

"They know what we've found -- that there is a huge open door for marketplace ministry and evangelism," Utley added. "We get our beads from Islamic Africans, buy findings (small parts used to make the jewelry) from secular businesses and purchase our watch faces from a family in India. Our suppliers are always curious about two white girls making and selling African jewelry. They ask us why we got into this, and suddenly we're talking about Jesus."

Other ministry opportunities have occurred on their trips to Africa. On a recent tour through South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana, they met a young girl making and selling silver jewelry in a Botswanan marketplace.

"We bought all the silver pieces from her we could afford," Wells recalled, "not only because they were unique and beautiful, but also because we believe part of our calling is to financially support people in Africa who struggle to make a decent living."

The pair sells jewelry through homes, as well as through local businesses. Because they see their business as a ministry, they keep their products affordable. "We want everyone to have an opportunity to support missions," Wells stressed.

They often combine their travels with speaking engagements.

"We go to a lot of bead and jewelry shows around the country," Utley said, "and many times friends will ask us to speak to their churches about what we're doing, and how people can use their own talents in missions."

Another of Wells' talents is painting -- for her master's thesis, she painted seven canvasses on the theme "The Colors of God." Last December, Colors of Africa merchandise branched out to include her paintings reproduced on greeting cards. Through the process of exploring her talents, she discovered that "God can use Christians in many creative ways. He needs believers in all kinds of places."

The pair has met few Christians in the two years they have been in business. Wells, the daughter of missionaries to Indonesia, finds the experience deeply fulfilling.

"This answers our questions about how can we use our gifts and still maintain our missions calling. Our calling from God is not just about overseas experience."

However, overseas work is involved in their long-term vision: They want to help Africans out of poverty by developing community centers and artist cooperatives in Africa. They also want to teach vocational skills and marketing of jewelry and handicrafts -- thereby strengthening the socioeconomic condition of each community while sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

During a recent trip to Zimbabwe, Wells and Utley met with local church leaders and artisans interested in selling African artwork and jewelry. For the past two years, the nationals had met periodically to pray about the need for someone to help develop their ideas and business skills.

"God led us through this trip and confirmed where we are headed," Utley said.

Wherever business leads them, their priority is to "see God glorified," Wells emphasized. "We always pray that God will bring people our way who we need to talk to. So many doors are open. The possibilities are endless!"

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37234

**F
I
R
S
T

C
L
A
S
S**

**Southern Baptist Library
and Archives**