

August 30, 1962

Kansas Board Acts  
To Save Autonomy

WICHITA (BP)--Reacting to a recent Kansas Supreme Court judgment, the executive board of Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists here has recommended to churches a clause to help protect their autonomy.

It reads:

"This church shall determine its convention relationship and control its property by simple majority vote."

By placing the statement in their charter bylaws, Baptist churches will help insure their own future choice by majority vote, the Kansas Baptist board feels.

"We believe the courts will honor this statement," N. J. Westmoreland of Wichita, convention executive secretary, declared.

The Kansas Supreme Court, in a case involving First Baptist Church of Wichita, held that a minority faithful to its affiliation with the American Baptist Convention held the rights to the property and building. The majority--which withdrew from the American Convention over its continued membership in the National Council of Churches--has since formed a new church.

Kansas Baptist leaders said this is the third time the state supreme court has prevented churches from withdrawing from the American Baptist Convention. They added that since 1942, four churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist organization have withdrawn to join other groups.

"While we regretted to lose their fellowship," Westmoreland said, "we recognized their right to exercise the principle of church autonomy, and to make their own decisions."

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Geren Toasts Queen  
With Drink Of Coke

(8-30-62)

SALISBURY, Rhodesia (BP)--Diplomat Paul F. Geren drank a Coke toast to the British queen when he arrived here to assume his new post for the United States government.

A Southern Baptist layman and former vice-president of Baylor University (Baptist) in Waco, Tex., Geren is the new U. S. consul general for the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Africa.

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Nature Of Muskogee  
Hospital To Change

(8-30-62)

MUSKOGEE, Okla. (BP)--Oklahoma Baptist Hospital here will be converted from a general hospital to a chronic and convalescent hospital Sept. 15, according to its administrator.

Earlier in the year, directors of the sponsoring Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma authorized a study to determine how the hospital could best serve the community. This is the outcome of the survey.

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"The new operation is intended for use by individuals in need of care over a long duration of time. It will serve as an intermediate assistance between a nursing home and a general hospital," Administrator W. G. Kersh said.

The capacity of the hospital will be increased from 86 to 100 beds through remodeling already in progress. Chartered in 1909, the Muskogee hospital has served eastern Oklahoma for over 50 years.

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Albany Church Supports  
Pastor Amid Race Issue

(8-30-62)

ALBANY, Ga. (BP)--Albany First Baptist Church leadership has given a unanimous vote of confidence to its pastor who pleads for peace in the south Georgia town torn by racial strife.

Brooks Ramsey describes himself as a moderate but segregationists have centered their attacks upon him for his mediation efforts since Negroes launched their campaign last December to break down racial barriers.

Ramsey's future as pastor of the church had been uncertain since he expressed regret for the arrest of three Negroes who tried to enter a Sunday morning worship service. An usher summoned a police officer and preferred charges which resulted in \$200 fines or 60-day jail sentences.

The 40-year-old minister, who knew nothing of the arrests until after the service, said, "I had hoped that this could be avoided above all things." He added, "This is Christ's church and I can't build any walls around it that Christ did not build, and Christ did not build any racial walls."

Ramsey has given himself freely to efforts toward "channels of communication" between Negro leadership and city officials who are determined to retain racial barriers. His sermons have included appeals for "the underprivileged, the down-trodden" and for "Christian love" without being devoted exclusively to the tense local situation.

The vote of confidence in a resolution from the church leadership, given one week after arrest of the Negroes, declared "the right of our pastor to exercise a free pulpit according to his own sincere Christian convictions even if, at times, such conviction differs from that of some members of the church."

It added: "One of the great strengths of our Baptist faith from its very beginning has been the right of each individual to arrive sincerely at his own Christian convictions on all spiritual matters."

Ramsey said of the resolution, adopted by deacons and the church advisory committee in a special session:

"A free pulpit has been one of the mightiest forces in history for the elevation of society. As long as men can stand under the authority of Christ and Christ alone in delivering the truth, I do not fear for the future of the world."

Ramsey came to the Albany church in July, 1959, from Fort Worth where he had been pastor of the Ridglea Baptist Church and a teaching fellow while doing graduate study at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He previously had been a pastor in Augusta, Ga., and Houston, Tex. His college education was at Union University, Jackson, Tenn., and Baylor University, Waco, Tex., both Baptist schools.

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812

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518

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