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Fellow Baptists' care upholds
 grief-stricken missionaries

By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
 11/18/96

CHERRY VALLEY, Ark. (BP)--Andrew Nicholson's headstone in Tyre Cemetery near Cherry Valley, Ark., stands as a silent tribute to the brief life of the 14-year-old missionary kid. It also is a lasting reminder of Southern Baptists' commitment to rally around missionary families in times of overwhelming crisis.

Andrew died early last year from stings by a swarm of bees that drove him over a cliff in Panama's Chame Mountains. As his parents and siblings struggled with Andrew's tragic death, Baptists from Arkansas to Panama ministered to the grieving family.

Glenn and Pauline Nicholson relied heavily on the emotional support of missionary colleagues even before their son's body was recovered from the area's dense jungle.

Glenn hiked up the mountain to the accident site while Pauline, unable to make the rugged climb because of recent surgery, was forced to remain behind. Friends prayed with them through the night after the first day's search was suspended with no word on whether their son was still alive. Once the search resumed the next morning, word came quickly that Andrew's body had been located and recovered.

"The doctors came to me and told me they had found Andrew and he wasn't alive," Glenn reflected. "I realized I couldn't do anything more for Andrew so I went back down the mountain" to join Pauline and their 16-year-old son Nathan.

"It's very hard to accept. It's your worst nightmare," Pauline recounted as she fought back tears. "I remember looking at the mountain and saying, 'I won't accept this.' I've always hated death."

Pauline said she was immediately comforted by a vision of her son's smiling face assuring her that he was OK. "That's what got me going again. That's what I needed at the time," she said. "I had a real sense of comfort and peace at that point. God knows what we need to survive whatever happens.

"It was hard to face reality, but when it's your child, you have to accept it," she shared.

"You don't think you can survive it, but when you need the strength, God gives it to you."

Acknowledging such a crisis stretches one's faith to the limit, Glenn emphasized, "Circumstances do not change the character of God. God is good no matter what the circumstances. Through the circumstances, he is there to encourage us and strengthen us."

Seeking to cope with the numbing details of travel plans and funeral arrangements, the Nicholsons said co-workers stepped in to handle everything from polishing their shoes and packing their luggage to arranging their flight to Arkansas.

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By the time they arrived in Pauline's hometown of Cherry Valley, "we were receiving telephone calls, cards and letters from all over the United States," Glenn said.

Financial donations to cover the cost of travel and funeral expenses began pouring in from churches and associations where the family had served in previous years.

A congregation in Georgia where Andrew's older sister, Jennifer, is a member paid the expenses for her to fly to Arkansas to be with her family. Among the most tangible responses since the funeral, members of Cherry Valley Baptist Church purchased the headstone for Andrew's grave.

"The spirit things were given in was so overwhelming," Glenn said. "I don't think you realize the support system is there until a crisis comes and you discover how vast that support system is. You realize you do not stand alone in this moment."

Even more vital than the financial support was the personal ministry the Nicholsons received. "Hugs mean a lot," Pauline affirmed. "I can't imagine getting through something like this without encouragement, without someone being with you."

Andrew's funeral service at Cherry Valley Baptist Church was attended by people from every church Glenn has ever served as pastor. "It's not so much what they said," Glenn pointed out, "but simply that they were there."

A few weeks after Andrew's funeral, the Nicholsons returned to Panama where Glenn serves as a field evangelist. They recently returned to Arkansas where Nathan, now age 18, is a freshman at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia. Glenn and Pauline are serving this year as the university's missionaries-in-residence.

For the Nicholsons, this year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering theme -- "Missionaries: From Churches with Love" -- is more than just a slogan. The family is grateful that, in the midst of heartbreaking trauma, Southern Baptists responded with expressions of love ranging from polished shoes to a cemetery headstone.

"I don't think we would have ever made it through Andrew's death and be able to function again unless we knew people were praying for us," Pauline said. "People are ministers of God's grace."

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Cox elected Ga. president;
Godsey book draws censure

By James Dotson

Baptist Press
11/18/96

PERRY, Ga. (BP)--The Georgia Baptist Convention elected Atlanta-area pastor Frank Cox as its new president by a margin of more than 63 percent during its 175th anniversary annual meeting, a gathering that turned up a few surprises that added to an already-full agenda.

More than 6,100 registered messengers meeting at the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter in Perry Nov. 11-12 also:

-- handed a surprise defeat to a comprehensive slate of amendments to the GBC constitution and bylaws recommended by the convention's executive committee.

-- affirmed and adopted as their own a resolution calling on Mercer President R. Kirby Godsey to reconsider the variant theological views in his recent book, "When We Talk About God ... Let's Be Honest," and calling on Mercer's board of trustees to address the concerns with Godsey at their next meeting.

-- celebrated the 175th anniversary of both the convention and its newspaper, The Christian Index, and the 50th anniversary of Truett-McConnell College, with an array of activities that included a reception, historical reenactments throughout the fairgrounds site and an original drama bringing to life the importance of understanding and learning from Georgia Baptist history.

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-- adopted a record 1996 Cooperative Program budget of \$38 million, which is divided evenly between Georgia and Southern Baptist Convention causes after 10.62 percent is taken out for "shared responsibilities." The new budget is 4.77 percent above the current year's and retains the current GBC/SBC allocation percentage. GBC Executive Director J. Robert White noted during the meeting that through Oct. 31 Cooperative Program receipts are running 5.35 percent above last year for the same period.

Meanwhile, the convention faced time constraints imposed not only by a heavy business agenda and a shortened schedule that eliminated the traditional final Wednesday morning session, but also a bomb threat the middle of Tuesday afternoon that cleared the Agricenter for about an hour while authorities searched the premises. Observers were impressed with the orderly fashion in which messengers quietly cleared the convention hall.

No bomb was found, however, and most of the time was made up with the elimination of a few hymns and shortened business sessions. The bomb threat apparently came from a female voice at a phone booth at a Warner Robins restaurant, but authorities had no other leads in the case as of press time.

The convention closed with hundreds of messengers responding to a call by speaker Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., to come forward and join him in prayer for repentance and spiritual awakening.

The election of Cox, pastor of North Metro First Baptist Church in Lawrenceville, followed nearly a year of political campaigning on behalf of conservative- and moderate-backed slates. Current President John Yarbrough, pastor of First Baptist Church, Perry, was ineligible for re-election.

Cox defeated Tom Smiley, pastor of Lakewood Baptist Church, Gainesville, by a margin of 3,415 votes (62.79 percent) to 2,024 votes (37.21 percent).

Candidates on the same conservative slate with Frank Cox also claimed victory for the four vice presidential slots. They were: David Stokes, pastor of Norwich Baptist Church, Brunswick, first vice president; Lester Cooper, pastor of Valley Hill Baptist Church, Riverdale, and current chairman of the GBC executive committee, second vice president; Kenneth Keene, pastor of Vidalia First Baptist Church, third vice president; and Randy Kennedy, founder of the Institute for Growth and Development and a member of Lizella Baptist Church, fourth vice president.

Edwin L. Cliburn, retired GBC assistant executive director and now mayor of Thomaston, was re-elected recording secretary by acclamation.

Cox has been pastor of North Metro First Church (formerly Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Duluth) since 1980. He is a graduate of Mercer University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Luther Rice Seminary, where he received the D.Min. degree.

He has been active on a number of convention boards and committees, including service as chairman of the GBC executive committee's Cooperative Program budget committee. He is the son of DeWitt Cox, vice president of the Georgia Baptist Foundation.

One item that was widely expected to come up at the convention in some form was the controversial book by Mercer President R. Kirby Godsey. In the book, "When We Talk About God ... Let's Be Honest," Godsey describes a personal theology that is at odds, critics say, with traditional Baptist beliefs, especially as they relate to Christology and salvation.

The GBC executive committee leadership, in an attempt to preempt more drastic action against Godsey or Mercer, proposed and saw adopted by the full executive committee in September a resolution that included a provision asking Mercer's trustees to address the matter with Godsey. The resolution was adopted with only a few dissenting votes by the executive committee.

In its report to the full convention, the executive committee chose to have messengers vote to affirm the resolution as its own, and thus give it further weight with Mercer's trustees, according to Cooper. After lengthy floor debate, the resolution was affirmed by a ballot vote of 2,566 (65.26 percent) to 1,366 votes.

In remarks to messengers made from the convention podium during the debate, Godsey charged "this resolution is not about sound doctrine; it is about politics."

Godsey detailed his own salvation experience as a child, as well as a lengthy personal statement of faith. "When we as Baptists use our convention gathering to cast our votes judging a person who has confessed his faith in Jesus, we have lost our way," he said.

Jerry Songer, a member of the GBC administration committee and former pastor of First Baptist Church, Roswell, in a response from the platform, noted that his church is a supporter of Mercer's school of theology and he personally appreciates Godsey's "pilgrimage of faith" and service in the local church.

"We feel, however, that we need leaders with a high view of Scripture, a high view of the crucifixion and the Great Commission," Songer said. He noted five specific quotes from the book that he hoped Mercer trustees would consider: "Is Christianity one option for ordering life?" from page 32; "Does authority not rest in the Bible alone?" on page 50; "The virgin birth is more truth than fact," on page 120; "Crucifixion is not the saving act of God," on page 124; and "There is no evidence that God speaks only to us," on page 136.

"Let's be honest," Songer said. "If the pastor of a church speaks in problematical positions, the deacons of the church call him to accounting. We are asking for the same, that the trustees of Mercer University give consideration accordingly. We affirm that the president of Coca Cola can drink Pepsi privately, but it's in bad taste to do it publicly. We feel the same."

In a press conference following the vote, Godsey explained why he charged politics was at the root of what he called a "firestorm" surrounding the book even though there was broad support for the resolution from both moderates and conservatives on the executive committee.

"Moderate voices on the executive committee said to me personally that the reason they voted for it was for political purposes; they felt that would be a way of satisfying the voices who were opposed to me," Godsey said. "So they thought they could pass a resolution to at least calm the waters. I don't think that's ever the case. There's not a wrong time to tell the truth."

Godsey also said he had not anticipated the intensity of the outcry against the book, noting that none of the three pastors who read the manuscript prior to publication had indicated any concerns about such a controversy.

Under terms of the resolution, Cooper will represent concerns of the GBC executive committee and the convention at the Dec. 10 meeting of Mercer trustees.

The report of the Committee on Nominations, which nominates individuals to serve on agency boards and committees, was adopted as proposed. The only attempted substitution, by former Woman's Missionary Union of Georgia Executive Director Dorothy Pryor, would have placed Pearl Duvall of Cordele on the executive committee in an at-large position instead of Wayne Robertson of Valdosta. Pryor said the substitution would have helped increase representation of women on the committee.

Next year's Georgia Baptist Convention meeting will be Nov. 10-11 at the Cobb Galleria Convention Center in Marietta.

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Proposed Ga. changes
succumb to opposition

By James Dotson

Baptist Press
11/18/96

PERRY, Ga. (BP)--A comprehensive slate of updates and revisions to the Georgia Baptist constitution and bylaws that sailed through the GBC executive committee in March was met with unexpected opposition and subsequent defeat when it came before GBC messengers for final approval Nov. 12.

A show of ballots after a significant period of debate indicated a possible majority in favor, but not the two-thirds required for constitutional amendments. After the vote, executive committee chairman Lester Cooper, pastor of Valley Hill Baptist Church, Riverdale, moved that the 22 recommended changes be considered individually during the regular miscellaneous business session, but his motion was voted down by a substantial margin.

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The concerns -- which apparently arose only weeks before the convention and were not known to executive committee leaders until the opening day of the convention -- centered on the revisions of checks and balances in the current constitution and the powers of the executive committee. The opposition came largely from the moderate wing of Georgia Baptist life concerned with protecting institutions from actions by an executive committee that potentially could become dominated by conservatives.

Those who drafted the changes said the revisions are designed to clean up archaic language and generally update a document that dates to 1919, and the concerns are largely the result of misunderstanding and misinterpretation that could have been cleared up if they had been raised earlier. The changes also would have combined the existing constitution and bylaws into a single document.

An anonymous flyer passed out at the convention to messengers listed the principal concerns, although the specifics were left for messengers to discover for themselves in the copy of the proposed changes.

"The proposed changes move power away from the convention at large and into the hands of the 130 member Executive Committee," read the unsigned notice, labeled "Urgent!" at the top. "That is not the Baptist way. We need to keep as much power as possible in the hands of the people. Therefore, we should vote to defeat the proposed changes."

Principal concerns, from the flyer and floor debate, included:

-- a provision to allow the executive committee to call a special session of the convention with between 21 and 60 days notice. "What reason is there for giving such broad power to 130 people," the handout read. "The GBC has accomplished its work for 175 years without hastily calling special meetings." Ralph Norman, a messenger of Highland Hills Baptist Church, Macon, echoed the sentiments of several speakers. "It ain't broke; don't fix it," he said.

-- the deletion of a clause describing powers of the executive committee to act "when an unforeseen emergency occurs" that requires action before the next convention session. The deleted sentence provides that "nothing in this article shall be construed as giving the Executive Committee authority over any matters already committed by the Convention to any of its boards of trustees; unless such boards decline to act."

"Surely we do not intend for the Executive Committee to be able to declare an emergency and take over Georgia Baptist Medical Center or Truett McConnell College," the flyer states. "There is no reason to delete this reasonable rule, a rule that prevents the Executive Committee from nullifying the power of GBC boards."

-- a provision allowing the executive committee to propose an amendment to the constitution at its September meeting to be enacted at the November annual meeting of the convention, a change from the current requirement that all proposed amendments must be published in The Christian Index at least 90 days before the annual session. "Why the need for such urgency?" the flyer asked.

-- the elimination of a provision that allows the discontinuation of a GBC agency only after majority votes at two consecutive Conventions. "What purpose is served by eliminating this fair and prudent rule?" the flyer asked.

-- a provision that all members of boards and committees appointed by the committee on nominations be active members of Baptist churches, with the exception of those boards in which the committee is required to choose from names submitted by the institution. Mercer University is the only institution to which this provision applies.

The flyer notes that the proposed changes "have too many problems to try to amend them from the floor" and urges defeat of the entire package.

However, Cooper and convention attorney Thomas O. Duvall Jr., who drafted much of the language for the revisions, said after the meeting that most of the concerns could have been cleared up in discussions with executive committee leaders if they had been raised sooner.

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"I believe some of the concerns were more misunderstandings instead of actual problems," Duvall said. "I think ... there could have been an understanding if we could have discussed it in more detail." Duvall added that he didn't believe any of the changes altered the power of the executive committee one way or another.

Cooper noted the revisions were discussed in detail at the March meeting of the executive committee, which approved the proposal unanimously. Also, the entire slate of revisions was published in The Christian Index issue of June 6, he said, providing ample time to address additional concerns.

In response to the specific concerns, Duvall said there currently is no provision for a special session of the convention if it were ever needed -- which he said is becoming more likely in today's fast-paced business environment. South Carolina Baptists have had at least two such special sessions in recent years, Cooper noted.

Regarding the deletion of the section which included the contested provision about discontinuing agencies only after two votes in annual session, Cooper said the intent was to allow the convention to respond rapidly to changing needs by adding and deleting ministries as required rather than waiting for the full convention to vote. Examples were cited of the new Barnabas Ministry to displaced ministers and the Baptist Mobile Health Ministry, a mobile dental and medical clinic operated by volunteers. The definition of "new operation" was unclear, he said, and could be interpreted to mean new ministries as well as new institutions.

On the requirement for having only Georgia Baptists on convention boards and committees, Cooper said the present constitution states that members must be active members of a church. One interpretation of the document is that since it is a Georgia Baptist document, it could logically be referring only to Georgia Baptist churches, he said. Any alternate interpretation has never been tested, he said, except in the case of Mercer University, which is excepted in the proposed provision.

Hudson said he first learned of concerns with the document a few weeks before the convention from an attorney friend in Macon. Several pastors contacted said they also learned of the concerns only just before the convention.

Hudson, a Mercer trustee for 18 years, said because of the lack of time to work out all the problems that he and others saw, he felt the best approach was to defeat the proposal. He did write a letter to Cooper immediately after the convention, however, acknowledging the need for updating the constitution and bylaws and offering his assistance and support in helping rewrite the proposed changes.

"Let me assure you that my opposition was not meant in any way to diminish the hard work of the Committee members or their desire to provide the Convention with the underlying charter language necessary to operate in the current environment," Hudson wrote in the letter, a copy of which he provided to the Index.

Hudson acknowledged the need for updating the documents, and said many of the proposed revisions could be maintained with some changes. As an example, he said provision for a special session could be of value as long as additional safeguards were put in place, such as a minimum number of messengers required for transacting business and a requirement that the constitution or bylaws could not be changed.

"Also, such a special session should not be authorized to adopt changes in the Constitution or By-Laws, discontinue programs, agencies or funding. But otherwise, it would probably be a useful change," Hudson wrote. Cooper later noted that the constitution cannot be amended, under both the existing document and the revisions, except at annual meeting.

An amendment from the floor to the constitution and bylaws revisions would have added the president of the Georgia Baptist Ministers' Wives organization to membership on the executive committee. The amendment was passed overwhelmingly, but it died in the final vote along with the rest of the revisions.

**Group holds prayer meeting
for reconciliation in GBC**

By John D. Pierce

PERRY, Ga. (BP)--A small group of messengers attending the Georgia Baptist Convention annual meeting Nov. 11-12 in Perry gathered at nearby Greater Word of Deliverance Church on Tuesday afternoon to pray for reconciliation, especially among fellow Baptists whose divisions are often reflected during annual sessions. The meeting was scheduled so individuals could "come and go as you like," organizers said.

Most of the approximately 50 messengers who participated in the prayer efforts came during the lunch break and returned to the fairgrounds to participate in the business sessions including casting their votes for convention officers.

"In no way was this intended to be a boycott," explained Eugene Tyre, clarifying an earlier misunderstanding, "but a prayer meeting for people to pray for reconciliation." Tyre, pastor of First Baptist Church, Newnan, and a member of the small group which organized the prayer effort, said the meeting was "birthed out of a desire to pray for reconciliation ... in these troubled times."

The goal of the meeting, Tyre said, was to fulfill the teachings of Jesus in John 17 and was "not intended to disturb the working of the (convention)." It was a "meaningful time" for participants, he added.

About 20 people remained for the entire informal two-hour service marked by prayer and spontaneous testimonies.

"This is just the beginning," said Buddy Parrish, pastor of First Baptist Church, Grayson, and one of the meeting's organizers. He said efforts at reconciliation would continue to grow over time as evidenced by those who came to the prayer service with similar concerns to those of the organizers.

Parrish became convicted about the division among Georgia Baptists while attending a Promise Keepers gathering last February, he explained. He contacted Ron Johnson, then GBC director of evangelism, for prayer support. Johnson introduced Parrish to Home Mission Board leader Reid Hardin who is involved in efforts related to reconciliation among fellow Christians such as the worldwide conference, Coventry '97, scheduled at the Cross of the Nails Cathedral in England next September.

After informal discussions of his concerns with several fellow ministers, "a small group started praying together," Parrish said. Recently, Parrish and Tyre were at a conference center in North Georgia when they began discussing the idea of holding a prayer meeting for reconciliation in Perry.

"The next person we met was Milton Wynn," said Parrish. They learned that Wynn was pastor of Greater Word of Deliverance Church, an African American congregation in Perry. The non-denominational minister offered to host the prayer meeting.

The group of Baptist leaders issued a statement calling the denomination's political/theological activities "a sin against God," and calling for repentance and prayer. An informal invitation was extended to fellow messengers to join in the prayer service in Perry.

With a few members of the host congregation attending the service, some testimonies addressed the need for racial reconciliation as well as healing within the Baptist denomination and among other Christian groups.

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**Okla. Baptists welcome Jordan;
new convention structure OK'd**

By Dave Parker

**Baptist Press
11/18/96**

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--A new executive director-treasurer and a new state convention structure were approved during the 91st annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, Nov. 11-13 at Oklahoma City's Quail Springs Baptist Church and Myriad Convention Center.

Native Oklahoman Anthony Jordan, who has served 14 years as pastor of Northwest Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, was approved as executive director-treasurer Nov. 11 during an extravaganza at the Myriad that doubled as a 50th anniversary celebration for the BGCO church music department.

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The event included a concert by the combined Singing Churchmen of Oklahoma, Singing ChurchWomen of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Baptist Symphony, while Southern Baptist Convention President Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., presented the charge to Jordan, who took over May 29 with the retirement of William G. Tanner, who also formerly served as president of the Home Mission Board, Oklahoma Baptist University and Mary Hardin-Baylor College in Texas.

More than 7,000 people attended the installation ceremony, which included 217 banners from churches across the state.

On the convention restructuring plan, strategic planning committee chairman Nick Garland, pastor of First Baptist Church, Broken Arrow, introduced it by quoting the apostle Paul, "... forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead I press on."

Messengers were shown a video on the restructuring Monday night, then voted on it Tuesday.

The restructuring will move the BGC0 from 12 departments to three "teams" that will use more consultants than in the past and change from being "program-driven" to being "purpose-driven."

Help to families will be a major assignment in the new structure. Jordan plans to name his three team leaders Nov. 18; they must then be approved by the BGC0 board of directors at its December meeting.

Messengers questioned such things as how many staff members would be used, where Woman's Missionary Union would fit in, how the deaf ministry would be handled and where the historical committee would fit in.

Jordan answered "our purpose is not to detail everything. We're going to do a study of everything we do at the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma."

Personnel decisions will be handled by the three team leaders.

The restructuring was approved with only a smattering of negative votes.

Among resolutions, one on partial-birth abortion drew the most discussion. A paragraph acknowledging the grace of God was added, but an attempt to reword it so that it said "all abortions are wrong" failed on a 189-145 vote.

Another paragraph was proposed to point out that President Bill Clinton vetoed a partial-birth abortion bill. After lengthy discussion, the change was voted on and President Charles Graves ruled that the change was not approved, then the entire resolution was approved.

The resolution acknowledges that "all abortions, except in rare cases where the mother's life is clearly in danger, are wrong," then describes the partial birth abortion procedure in detail. It "acknowledges the grace of God to all who have suffered from the tragedy of abortion." Finally, it resolves that messengers "vigorously oppose this procedure and all who stand to defend it."

A resolution on spiritual reformation encourages all Southern Baptists everywhere to "join in prayer, seeking God's face in repentance, asking Him in His sovereign rule to have mercy on His people and to send a great spiritual reformation."

A resolution on parental choice, public education and Goals 2000 says parents, "as the principal educators of their children, require the freedom and ability to elect the educational process best suited for their family needs" and affirms "the God-given right of parents to direct the education of their children." It then resolves that Baptists encourage government representatives to "develop the means and methods of returning educational and funding choices to the parents and reject the philosophy of Goals 2000," a program endorsed by Hillary Clinton.

A resolution concerning gambling in casinos urges "the people of Oklahoma to join us in a total rejection of casino gambling at the ballot box" and asks Baptists to support politicians who take a stand against casino gambling. The Oklahoma Supreme Court has approved an initiative petition on casino gambling; an election will be held no later than the general election in November 1998.

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A resolution opposing same-sex marriages says the approval of same-sex marriages would undermine and restrain people from objecting to homosexuality for moral reasons, then resolves that messengers "do clearly and steadfastly oppose the legalization of homosexual marriage by the State of Hawaii, Oklahoma and the United States of America, and the world."

The 1,408 messengers also approved a 1997 Cooperative Program annual budget of \$18.25 million, a 1.82 percent increase over the 1996 budget of \$17.9 million. As in the current year, the new budget allocates 60 percent to Oklahoma Baptist ministries and 40 percent to Southern Baptist Convention national and international ministries.

Officers elected were Ted Kersh, pastor of Village Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, president; David Willets, pastor of Parkview Baptist Church, Tulsa, first vice president; and John Allen, director of missions for Enon Baptist Association, based in Ardmore, second vice president.

David Freeman, director of missions for Arbuckle Baptist Association, based in Pauls Valley, was re-elected recording secretary.

The 1997 convention will be Nov. 10-12 at Council Road Baptist Church, Bethany.

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\$2 million bond offering
OK'd for Northwest offices

By Don Sorenson

Baptist Press
11/18/96

EUGENE, Ore. (BP)--Messengers to the 49th annual meeting of the Northwest Baptist Convention approved a bond offering of \$2 million to complete construction of the \$4 million Northwest Baptist Center, the new headquarters in Vancouver, Wash.

The facility has been under construction for more than a year and is expected to be completed next year.

The convention, which attracted 495 messengers Nov. 12-14 at the Eugene (Ore.) Conference Center, also approved a budget of \$4,091,139, up from the current budget of \$3,941,689. The new budget includes anticipated Cooperative Program gifts of \$2,135,175, with the percentage of CP gifts to Southern Baptist Convention national and international ministries remaining at 31 percent.

The convention next year will be held in Tacoma, Wash., Nov. 11-13, and will start a year-long observance of the 50th anniversary of the two-state convention.

Messengers approved the dates of Nov. 17-19, a week earlier than usual, to hold the 1998 convention in Spokane, Wash., so a commissioning service by the Home Mission Board can be held during the annual meeting.

Executive Director Jeff Iorg reported the Texas partnership has received strong support in Texas. The arrangement was approved last year and so far 21 requests for assistance in Northwest projects have been made. The partnership provides a resource for help in Northwest ministries, Iorg said.

Terry Little, pastor of Crossover Baptist Church, Mead, Wash., was re-elected president. Don Reeves, pastor of Grant Avenue Baptist Church, Corvallis, Ore., was elected first vice president and Steve Schenewerk, pastor of Community Baptist Church, Winston, Ore., was elected second vice president, both without opposition.

Resolutions included appreciation to 73 churches and volunteers for their work on the new headquarters building, recognition of the late beloved Wm. K. Peters for his lengthy service in the Northwest and urging Baptists in the Northwest to lead out in reinstilling hope, courage and integrity in our society and to pray for elected leaders.

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