

May 3, 1948

TEN THOUSAND EXPECTED IN MEMPHIS FOR SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

MEMPHIS, Tenn.--(BP)--Ten thousand Baptists from 20 states extending across the American continent will converge on Memphis May 19-23 for what is expected to be the largest religious gathering in America in 1948.

It will be the 91st session and the 103rd year for the Southern Baptist Convention, which organization lists 26,764 cooperating churches with a total membership of 6,270,819, according to Porter Routh of Nashville, statistician and Convention secretary. The membership showed a gain of 191,514 during the year 1947.

Dr. Louie D. Newton, outspoken champion for religious liberty and pastor of the Druid Hills Baptist Church of Atlanta, is Convention president. Vice chairmen are Dr. C. Oscar Johnson, pastor of the Third Baptist Church of St. Louis and president of the Baptist World Alliance, and Dr. T. V. McCaul, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Fla. Dr. Newton, now completing his second one-year term, says he will not allow his name to be presented for re-election.

The Convention is expected to express itself on such controversial social issues as the President's civil rights bill, separation of church and state, beverage alcohol and others. Main emphasis of the Convention, however, is expected to be the laying of plans for increased world-wide evangelism and member enlistment in the year immediately ahead.

Climax of the five-day session will be a giant Sunday afternoon evangelistic service in Crump Stadium, May 23, with 30,000 people expected in attendance. Dr. Robert G. Lee, a Memphis pastor and one of the nation's leading evangelists, will preach, concluding the service with a strong evangelistic appeal.

"We want this meeting to be the spark to set off a spiritual awakening through the land," said Dr. C. E. Matthews of Dallas, superintendent of evangelism of the denomination's Home Mission Board.

In addition to the some 40 reports scheduled for presentation, inspirational messages will be delivered by Dr. W. R. Pettigrew, pastor of the Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.; Dr. Walter Pope Binns, president of William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo.; Dr. W. R. White, president of Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Dr. Ellis A. Fuller, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; Dr. Chester Swor, youth leader of Clinton, Miss., and Dr. Johnson.

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Baptist women of the Convention territory will convene Monday and Tuesday, May 17 and 18, for the annual meeting of the Woman's Missionary Union, an auxiliary to the Convention.

The Southern Baptist Convention is one of the most uniquely organized groups in the world. The Convention is made up of "messengers," not "delegates," from the churches, in that no one carries authority to bind his congregation back home to the decisions of the Convention. The denominational program is purely one of cooperation, with its evangelistic, educational and benevolent activities planned in accordance with New Testament teaching, and the churches left free to cooperate or not cooperate as they choose.

That the churches do choose to cooperate is evidenced by the fact that their gifts exceeded \$7,000,000 for the Southern Baptist Convention's world-wide program in 1947. Colleges, seminaries, hospitals, benevolent institutions and mission work in a score of countries bear testimony to their united work in fulfilling the Great Commission.

"The unity of the Southern Baptist Convention is a modern miracle," says Dr. Duke K. McCall, executive secretary of the Convention's Executive Committee. "With less authority in their organization than the United Nations possesses, Southern Baptists have welded together more than 26,000 churches in a compact force for Christ. With diverse economic interests running from the farmer to the financier and without any appeal to class or race prejudice, more than 6,000,000 individuals have been enlisted in a common spiritual enterprise."

Dr. McCall suggests the Baptist belief in "the competency of the soul of man in matters of religion" as the distinctive and fundamental principle of Baptist faith out of which all other Baptist beliefs grow.

C. E. Bryant
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PACIFIC NORTHWEST BAPTISTS
PETITION FOR MEMBERSHIP

NASHVILLE, Tenn.--(BP)--Sixteen Baptist churches in Washington and Oregon states have organized the Baptist General Convention of Oregon and applied for membership as a constituent group of the Southern Baptist Convention. They previously have cooperated as the Northwest Association of California Southern Baptists.

The application has been received here by Porter Routh, Convention Secretary, and will be referred to the Southern Baptist Convention at its annual meeting in Memphis, May 19-23. The Convention constitution provides that the Convention name a special committee to "investigate all matters pertaining to the request and make report to the next annual meeting of the Convention." This means that no definite action can be taken before the 1949 session.

Rev. R. E. Milam, pastor of the Antioch Baptist Church, is president of the new organization in the Pacific Northwest, and has made the application. He said that the 16 churches have a membership of more than 2,000, and contributed last year \$63,311, with \$8,208 going to missions. The Convention budget has been set at \$11,250 for the year with 25 per cent of all undesignated funds going to the Cooperation Program of Southern Baptists.

Mr. Routh advised Mr. Milam that "there is a difference between the admission of messengers to the Convention and the admission of constituent groups. Messengers from any of the churches in your Convention will be welcome at the meeting in Memphis. One messenger is allowed for each church contributing to the work of the Convention during the fiscal year preceding the annual meeting."

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MANY NEWSMEN TO ATTEND

NASHVILLE, Tenn.--(BP)--Possibly the largest number of out-of-town newspaper staff correspondents ever to attend a Southern Baptist Convention will be present for the sessions in Memphis.

C. E. Bryant, publicity director of the Convention, said that many metropolitan papers have notified him they are sending members of their staff to the Memphis meeting. In addition, Miss Lillian R. Block, assistant managing editor of Religious News Service, will make the trip from New York to cover the sessions for her syndicate.

Among newspapers sending correspondents are the New York Times, the Washington Evening Star, the Atlanta Constitution, the New Orleans Times Picayune, the Dallas Morning News, and the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. The Watchman-Examiner, national Baptist publication of New York City, will be represented by its editor, Dr. J. W. Bradbury, and The Christian Century, non-denominational weekly of Chicago, by its managing editor, Dr. Harold E. Fey.

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