

November 24, 1965

State Conventions Seek
Improved Race Relations

By the Baptist Press

Nearly half of the state Baptist conventions meeting recently for their annual sessions took some action giving evidence of concern for improved race relations, a check of convention reports has revealed.

Thirteen of the 29 state conventions affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention either adopted resolutions on race relations, accepted Negro churches into the convention fellowship, or commended the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission for its leadership in the area of race relations.

The Alaska Baptist Convention elected a Negro pastor, Leo Josey of Greater Friendship Baptist Church in Anchorage, as second-vice president. He became one of the few Negroes ever to serve as an officer of a state Baptist convention.

The District of Columbia and Oregon-Washington state Baptist conventions each admitted Negro churches into the conventions. Numerous other state Baptist conventions already have Negro churches as members.

Nine of the conventions adopted resolutions or recommendations from Christian Life Commissions or Committees calling for more Baptist involvement in improving race relations or decrying bigotry and racial prejudice.

The Baptist General Association of Virginia urged church members to face honestly the problems of race relations with Christian love through joint discussion meetings with Negro leaders.

Virginia Baptists made plans for a conference for Baptist ministers and laymen of both races within 18 months to discuss the racial issue, and the convention suggested an exchange between Negro and white pulpits and choirs.

"We acknowledge before God," reported the Virginia Christian Life Committee, "our partnership of guilt in the long, dark night of injustice and discrimination. Under the cloak of moderation, we have maintained a conspiracy of silence, while extremists at both ends of the issue have set the tone of debate and action."

In another resolution, the Virginia convention took a slap at extremist organizations which seek to "create terrorism, racism, and suspicion."

North Carolina Baptists decried "the perverted use of the Christian cross" by the Ku Klux Klan, and the "bigotry, prejudice, intolerance and ill-will which characterizes the Klan." The resolution protested the Klan's making "the symbol of eternal love (the cross) into a symbol of contemporary hate."

In a similar resolution, Maryland Baptists denounced "those who promote in the name of Christianity, racial hatred, smear tactics, character assassinations, guilt by association, violence and would-be patriotism." The Maryland resolution did not call specific organizations by name.

The Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists flatly expressed "unalterable opposition to segregation and racial prejudice in private or public housing, education, and job opportunities."

They called on Southern Baptists to "give themselves to the decisive defeat of racism," because racism "is inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and an affront to God."

Kansas Baptists also commended churches and Baptist institutions which have integrated, and pledged "to go beyond the laws by practicing Christian love and reconciliation in all human relationships."

The Kansas recommendations of the Kansas Christian Life Committee duplicated almost verbatim the 1964 race relations recommendations of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission recommendations to the SBC meeting in Atlantic City. The SBC turned down the recommendations then and adopted a much weaker substitute statement prepared by deep South Baptists.

In separate resolutions, the state Baptist conventions of Kansas, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Virginia commended the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission for its leadership in race relations. The Baptist Convention of Israel had earlier passed a similar resolution.

Michigan Baptists expressed appreciation for the "courageous stand. . . especially in the area of race relations," of the SBC Christian Life Commission, and also adopted a resolution declaring that churches have a responsibility to open their memberships to all who qualify on a scriptural basis, without consideration of such "non-Christian distinctions as race, social class, economic standing, etc."

Colorado Baptists affirmed their position as a convention "integrated by both individual churches and association in the world wide racial strife, that Christian love based on Biblical principles of brotherhood, be our guidelines in solving racial tensions."

The District of Columbia Baptist Convention passed a resolution commending the exchange of pulpits, musical, dramatic and educational programs between white and Negro congregations.

In Texas, the state convention approved unanimously a report from its Christian Life Commission urging Baptists to be creatively involved in solving the problems of racial ghettos, and to apply Christian principles in the problems of the racially changing community.

For the first time, Kentucky Baptists heard a Negro pastor, Homer Netter of Lexington, Ky, speak on the convention program. The Kentucky Christian Life Committee reported that their survey on integration progress in the state revealed that all Baptist schools and hospitals in Kentucky were integrated. Two of the three Baptist hospitals have Negro staff physicians, and all of the four schools have Negro students, most of them Americans rather than foreign students.

South Carolina Baptists adopted a resolution calling for "love and understanding and good will among people of different races," and said that improving race relations is pre-eminently the task of the Christian church."

Although the area of race relations was not specifically mentioned, the Mississippi Baptist Convention created a Christian Action Commission (similar to the Christian Life Commission of Texas) to deal with social and moral issues, alcohol, narcotics, church and state, Christian citizenship, and Christian home life.

Mississippi Baptists voted to employ a full-time director for the new commission, becoming the second state in the SBC to have a staff to deal with moral and social problems.

Time Magazine, in a report following the state conventions, quoted SBC Christian Life Commission Director Foy Valentine of Nashville as saying "there are encouraging signs that we (Southern Baptists) are more interested in reflecting the mind of Christ regarding race and other moral issues.

"We are abandoning the culture which has had us very much its captive, and we are abandoning it in favor of Christ," Time quoted Valentine.

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Southwestern Trustees
Name Officers, Budget

11-24-65

FORT WORTH (BP)--The board of trustees for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here elected W. M. Shamburger, pastor of First Baptist Church in Tyler, Tex., as chairman and approved a 1966-67 budget of \$1,884,484.

Elected as vice-chairman was James S. Riley, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston and reelected secretary-treasurer of the board was Wayne Evans, seminary business manager.

The \$1.8 million budget is an increase of \$119,028 over the previous year's budget.

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The Southern Baptist Cooperative Program will provide \$1,007,516 to the seminary, with the remainder of the budget to come from endowment, fees and auxiliary services. An audit revealed at the meeting showed the total seminary assets to be \$16.4 million.

The board also voted to establish the Wesley Harrison Chair of New Testament as a memorial to Harrison of Seymour, Tex., who bequeathed an estate of \$250,000 to the seminary.

The board's building and grounds committee announced the completion of three projects--the remodeling of Barnard Hall and completion of two new apartment buildings in the student village.

The next two projects would be the remodeling of Fort Worth Hall and the remodeling of faculty offices and classrooms in the basement of the Memorial Building, the committee reported.

At a dinner, the trustees honored foreign missionaries who are on furlough in Fort Worth, and presented a plaque to J. H. Steger of Fort Worth, chairman of the board for the past two years.

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Conventions Study, Uphold
Church-State Separation

11-24-65

By the Baptist Press

Whether to allow Baptist institutions to accept federal aid, the biggest issue to face many of the 29 state Baptist conventions meeting recently, was left in the hands of study committees in seven different states.

Seven state Baptist groups, however, adopted resolutions on church-state separation, most of them confirming "our traditional Baptist stand."

Although they did not define the "traditional Baptist stand," in most cases it meant no federal grants or loans to Baptist colleges and other institutions.

The presidents and boards of trustees at several Baptist colleges throughout the nation see earlier this year had called for changes in policies in many states to allow their schools to accept federal funds.

Their proposals, however, were met with staunch opposition from editors, some ministers and Baptist church members, who see federal aid as a threat to religious liberty and a violation of the "traditional Baptist" principle of separation of church and state.

Strong resolutions opposing federal aid to education were adopted by the state Baptist conventions of New Mexico, California, Virginia, and Louisiana.

Six other states, however, decided the whole question was so complex that special committees should study the matter and report back to the convention next year or the year following.

Kentucky Baptists, facing a financial crisis after the unsuccessful completion of a fund campaign to raise \$9 million for four Kentucky Baptist schools, slated a special convention within eight months to deal with the matter of federal aid and possible means of raising the \$6 million they lack.

Study committees will bring recommendations on the federal aid question to the conventions of Texas, Arkansas, South Carolina, Mississippi, Arizona, and Florida either next year or in 1967.

South Carolina Baptists denied Furman University, Greenville, the right to accept a \$611,898 federal grant to construct a science building, and said in a resolution that the grant that Furman trustees had accepted earlier this year violated the "historic principle of separation of church and state."

Arkansas and Florida Baptists set up church-state study committees, but also adopted resolutions reaffirming the belief that church and state should be separate. In Arkansas, the resolution also urged all Baptist institutions to respect the church-state separation principle.

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Mississippi and Arizona Baptists, like the South Carolina Convention, suggested or asked that their institutions refrain from accepting federal aid until after the study committees have made their reports and a convention policy is established.

A 1961 policy established by Texas Baptists forbidding loans and grants will continue until after that state reconsiders the question next year.

The South Carolina committee study will be conducted in cooperation and consultation with a nation-wide Baptist committee study called Baptist Education Study Task (BEST) which is making a two-year investigation into the complex federal aid issue and other aspects of Baptist education for the Christian Education Commission of the SBC.

The Georgia Baptist Convention voted to bar federal grants on a recommendation from its education commission which earlier this fall conducted four public hearings on the federal aid question.

Georgia Baptist also voted down a motion to approve a \$500,000 federal loan for Mercer University, (Baptist), Macon, Ga., in a 438 to 344 ballot after some convention messengers claimed that the loans at 3 per cent interest involve an adjusted interest rate which requires a federal subsidy.

Although the vote defeating the Mercer loan request set a precedent, there was no actual policy approved forbidding federal loans.

A resolution adopted by the Baptist State Convention of New Mexico urged Baptist colleges in other states "to refrain from taking government financial aid," and deplored "the use of millions of dollars in federal funds to support religious institutions."

The resolution also urged Baptists "to work to the end that such aid will be reduced by other religious groups and denied to all."

During the Southern Baptist General Convention of California session in San Jose, a motion instructing the California Baptist College to accept federal aid in any form it could get it was completely ignored. The motion died for lack of a second.

Instead, California Southern Baptists adopted a resolution opposing "the acceptance of federal monies by any Baptist institutions for the support of its programs."

The resolution stated that Southern Baptist have been inconsistent in the application of the principle of church-state separation, but added that "such instances do not justify a continued breakdown in the practices of doctrine."

Louisiana Baptists flatly opposed acceptance of federal funds by Baptist institutions and agencies in a resolution urging Baptists to be "diligent and unswerving" in their efforts to maintain separation of church and state.

They called on Baptists to "recognize and accept our financial responsibility necessary for the survival of our institutions, and (to) give expression of this recognition through a more faithful stewardship of possessions."

In Virginia, the state convention there adopted a resolution flatly opposing the government's making financial assistance available to any church or denominational causes. Virginia Baptists have for many years forbidden their institutions to accept federal grants or loans.

During the North Carolina Convention, a section was deleted from the report of the convention's public affairs committee which looked with favor on accepting federal aid to higher education. Although the report did not actually suggest a policy allowing North Carolina Baptist institutions to accept federal aid, it did strongly suggest that the convention investigate this possibility.

Only 13 of the 29 state Baptist conventions affiliated with the SBC did not deal with the federal aid question, and most of them were smaller conventions which do not operate colleges.