

May 2, 1949

LOCAL BAPTISTS WILL ATTEND SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

Ten thousand Baptists from 21 states will converge on Oklahoma City, Okla., May 18-22, for the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention -- expected to be the largest religious gathering in America in 1949.

_____, pastor of the _____ Baptist Church, said the 26,822 churches cooperating with the Convention have a total membership of 6,491,981. The number includes 312,246 new converts baptized into the churches in 1948.

The Convention at Memphis will hear reports of the many agencies supported by it both in this country and in foreign mission areas, and will plan for future activity, _____ said. Evangelism and mission expansion are slated for primary emphasis in the years just ahead.

Day sessions of the Convention will be held in Oklahoma City's 6,500-seat Municipal auditorium and all night and Sunday sessions will be held in Taft Stadium, seating 20,000 people. A youth revival service led by Texas college students Saturday night and an evangelistic service Sunday night are expected to climax the sessions.

The Southern Baptist Convention is one of the most uniquely organized groups in the world. The Convention is constituted of "messengers" rather than "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 to the Convention's worldwide program totalled \$8,865,000 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 following Baptists from _____ expect to attend the Convention:

Baptist Press filler material

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Southern Baptist Convention officials have estimated that 150 pastors will bring wire recording machines to the Convention's annual meeting at Oklahoma City, May 18-22, that they may transcribe portions of the program for replay to their churches back home. Special arrangements have been made to accommodate these machines.

During the first three months of 1949, churches contributed a total of \$3,345,589.73 to the Southern Baptist Convention's national and worldwide program of missions, education, and benevolence.

A 1949 census which will appear in the 1949 Southern Baptist Handbook shows that church membership in the United States has reached 80,246,124, which is 55 per cent of the population. The 48 largest evangelical groups in the nation report 46,665,747 members. Roman Catholics report 26,075,697 members. Total membership gain for 1948 was 3.1 per cent, compared with 2.3 per cent in 1947.

Of the 26,822 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, 13,339 (50 per cent) are located in the open country. These churches have 29.1 per cent of the total membership. Only 15.7 per cent of the churches are located in cities of 2500 or more. These city church contain 40.2 per cent of the membership.

"Other costs may change, but the wages of sin remain about the same," writes the editor of the Western Recorder, Kentucky Baptist paper.

Twenty-five college students will represent the Southern Baptist Convention in Europe as "summer missionaries" during their school vacation period. Other groups of students will do mission work in Hawaii, Alaska, and the San Andres Islands.