

Release Sunday, May 8, or later

## 12,000 EXPECTED IN OKLAHOMA CITY FOR SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla.--(BP)--Twelve thousand Baptists from 21 states extending across the American continent will converge on Oklahoma City May 18-22 for what is expected to be the largest religious gathering in America in 1949.

It will be the 92nd annual session and the 104th year for the Southern Baptist Convention, which organization lists 26,822 churches with a total membership of 6,491,981, according to Porter Routh of Nashville, Tenn., statistician and Convention secretary. The membership showed a net gain of 229,162 during the year 1948.

Dr. Robert G. Lee, internationally known religious lecturer and pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., is Convention president. Vice-presidents are Dr. Porter M. Bailes, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Tyler, Texas, and W. Maxey Jarman, chairman of the board of General Shoe Corporation of Nashville, Tenn.

The Convention is expected to express itself on various controversial social issues as well as plan ahead for advancement of the denomination's world program of evangelism, education, and benevolence. Almost sure for discussion are civil rights for minority groups, state aid to parochial schools and other phases of church and state separation, beverage alcohol, and other social problems. Main emphasis of the Convention, however, will be the laying of plans and launching of a gigantic program of world missions.

Spiritual climax of the five-day session will be a youth revival service in Taft Stadium, seating 20,000 people, on Saturday night, this service led by Howard Butt, Frank Boggs, and other Texas college students; and an evangelistic service in the same stadium Sunday night with Dr. Ellis A. Fuller, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Ky., preaching.

Day sessions of the meeting will be held in Oklahoma City's Municipal Auditorium, and night sessions in the Taft Stadium.

In addition to some 40 reports scheduled for presentation setting out the Convention's activities in this country and around the world, inspirational messages will be delivered by Rev. Norman Cox, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Meridian, Miss.; Dr. Roland Q. Leavell, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary at New Orleans, La.; Dr. Arnold T. Ohrn, president of the Baptist World Alliance

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## 2...Southern Baptist Convention

with headquarters at Washington, D. C.; Perry Hayden, the Quaker miller of Tecumseh, Mich., who gained national reknown for his six-year tithing wheat experiment; Senator Robert Kerr of Oklahoma; Rev. E. W. Perry, a Negro minister of Oklahoma City; Dr. T. L. Holcomb, secretary of the Baptist Sunday School Board at Nashville, Tenn.; and Chester Swor, youth leader of Clinton, Miss.

Baptist women of the Convention territory will convene Sunday, May 15, through Tuesday, 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 \$9,000,000 for the Southern Baptist Convention's world-wide program in 1948. 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," say 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.