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SBC Leaders Map  
Action On Race Stand

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist agency leadership met here in immediate response to the strong statement on the crisis in the nation adopted last week by their convention in Houston.

Thirty-two agency heads and program leaders, called to Atlanta by executive secretary Arthur B. Rutledge of the Home Mission Board, brainstormed ways to respond to the 1,100-word statement asking Southern Baptists to work to secure for every person equality of human and legal rights and to seek to eliminate poverty and human indignity.

The convention had asked the mission agency in Atlanta to take the lead in implementing the statement. Rutledge said he called the meeting immediately because he saw the convention asking for action, and he quoted the statement, "We believe that a vigorous Christian response to this national crisis is imperative. Words will not suffice. The time has come for action."

The Atlanta meeting did not attempt to drive toward immediate solutions, but instead searched for directions, structure and an understanding of what already is being done.

Strong threads running through the five-hour session were that Southern Baptists needed to hear from leaders in poverty and civil rights groups, they needed to schedule a grass-roots search for answers, and they needed to heal any division between social action and evangelism.

Probably most significant was the speed with which the leaders came together, and the mood of those who attended. Most agencies of the 11-million member denomination were represented.

Fred Moseley of the Atlanta mission agency said, "One pastor in Houston told me that the convention statement was just another paper action, and it would be six months before the Home Mission Board would do anything.

"I told him, if we wait six months we will get run over. Southern Baptists want action. How else could you interpret the vote of 5,687 to 2,119 on the statement?"

Henlee Barnette, a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, said the hour had come when we must incarnate our convention pronouncements into action.

He said we must overcome the Negro sentiment that the Southern Baptist Convention was "conceived in sin and born in iniquity." These were references to the convention's origin, partly over the slavery question in 1845.

The Houston statement asked Southern Baptists to respect every individual regardless of race or culture, to secure opportunities for every man to achieve his highest potential, to welcome into the fellowship of faith and worship every person, to become well informed about public issues and to involve themselves with other Christians to work for righteousness in public life and in justice for all persons.

The Atlanta meeting of agency leaders was recognized by those attending as historical.

"We have taken steps forward of great significance as Christians," said Foy Valentine of the Christian Life Commission in Nashville, Tenn.

"Too long Southern Baptists have been identified in the mind of the world with such lost causes as the Civil War and slavery. God has great things in store for us as a denomination."

And Hugo Culpepper of Atlanta, director of the division of missions of the Home Mission Board, said, "This is one of the most exciting moments in my life as a disciple of Jesus Christ." He spoke from years spent as a missionary in China and South America, which included a long-time imprisonment by the Japanese.

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One thread which ran through the brainstorming suggestions was that Southern Baptists needed to hear from leaders in government, education, poverty and civil rights areas.

"Program leaders must have listening sessions from such people as an orientation for their planning," Loyd Corder of Atlanta said.

Suggestions also were made that Baptist associations of churches schedule meetings immediately or as part of already planned meetings this fall to discuss the statement, hear from leaders at work in poverty and civil rights, pinpoint problems, and search for actions for both local and national groups to take.

Yet another thread which wove its way through the meeting was expressed by evangelism leader C. E. Autrey of Atlanta, who said, "It is inconsistent to go out after the souls of men and not be concerned about the rest of their lives."

His associate, Harold Lindsay, recognizing that some polarization had come between evangelism and social action, said there was a need to break down any animosity between the two groups. "We must stress what is the real goal of evangelism--that we are interested in the whole man."

He suggested that as a start the division of evangelism of the mission agency and the Christian Life Commission plan to get together in a series of meetings to discuss this division between the two groups.

Autrey said his division would seek to influence every pastor to enlist members to become involved in these problems. They would urge pastors to discuss the problems and the needed Christian response into the orientation of new converts. His division plans to prepare a tract presenting the necessity for such actions.

"Southern Baptists must involve themselves with other denominations including Roman Catholics, to bring about justice, eliminate poverty, and establish human dignity," Autrey added.

Miss Alma Hunt, executive secretary of Woman's Missionary Union, said her organization and the Brotherhood Commission will produce a mission action guide for churches on ministering to Negroes. She said they first considered making it an across-the-board treatment of all races but later decided that Southern Baptists' problem was mostly with Negroes.

The Baptist Sunday School Board representative, Raymond Rigdon, said his agency had recently come to realize they did not have a strategy for teaching Christian brotherhood. They have now worked out an age-level approach of progressive communication.

He indicated there would be a stronger emphasis on the Christian's response to social actions.

Clarence Duncan of the Television Commission said the convention's action would be communicated through their numerous state news programs. He said their mail now included a heavy response from the various ethnic groups of the nation.

Barnette had suggestions for the seminaries that included: integration of faculties with competent Negro teachers, not just "some pet Negro"; provision of more scholarships; establishment of tutoring services; the start of inner-city projects using students, and a change in the curriculum toward reality.

There was some frustration about procedure, but finally the group decided to ask agency heads or a representative to form a steering committee for correlation and planning. Meanwhile, each agency and program will search for both immediate and long-term steps to deal with the crisis.

The entire group will meet in September previous to the Executive Committee meeting in Nashville, and a progress report will be made to the Executive Committee.

There were suggestions that each agency examine its programs to determine if they were encouraging segregation.

Culpepper said that while no large funds were immediately available, his division (which spends near \$8 million a year) will make day-to-day decisions on the side of the current crisis.

There also will be an attempt to communicate to all Southern Baptists the full statement adopted by the convention, and to establish some two-way procedures whereby suggestions can be made by all members of the denominations who want to make them.

Supreme Court To Hear  
Church Property Dispute

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court here agreed to hear a church property case to determine ownership by a local Presbyterian congregation when it is charged that the denomination has departed substantially from its original faith.

The case was appealed from the Georgia Supreme Court, which awarded the property in dispute to two local churches rather than to the general denomination.

Involved are the Mary Elizabeth Blue Hull Memorial Presbyterian Church and the Eastern Heights Presbyterian Church, both of Savannah, Ga., and the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

The Hull Memorial Church affiliated with the general denomination in 1890. It withdrew in 1966.

The Eastern Heights Church, a mission of Hull Memorial, was incorporated in 1930 and immediately joined the Presbyterian Church in the United States. It later withdrew from the denomination.

The dispute arose when the Presbytery of Savannah took action to appoint ministers to these churches and to conduct worship in the buildings.

After hearing the evidence on both sides the Supreme Court of Georgia stated the question to be decided as follows:

"Are local Presbyterian churches which withdraw from the general church, charging abandonment by the general church of the tenets of faith and practice existing when the local churches affiliated with it, entitled to maintain an action in the civil courts for the possession and use of the local church properties, legal title to which is in the local churches?"

Both the Superior Court of Chatham County and the Georgia Supreme Court ruled that the local churches had the right to bring such a question to the court and that the local churches are entitled to retain the property.

The appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court was made by the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Filing amici curiae briefs were the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

The Georgia courts held that although the Presbyterian church in the U. S. had not "completely abandoned" its original faith, there was a "substantial abandonment of, or departure from the original tenets of faith and practice of the general church."

In a case such as this it was ruled that "the civil courts will afford protection to the local churches as to possession and use of the local church properties, free of any claim by the general church."

In its charges against the Presbyterian Church in the U. S, the Eastern Heights Church said it had departed from the original faith in the following ways:

- \* Ordaining women as ministers and ruling elders;
- \* Making pronouncements and recommendations on civil, economic, social and political matters;
- \* Supporting removal of the Bible and prayers from public schools;
- \* Adopting Sunday School literature that taught contrary to the confession of faith and catechisms;
- \* Maintaining membership in and accepting the practices of the National Council of Churches; and
- \* Advocating the doctrine of civil disobedience.

Also included in its charges were that the denomination made pronouncements on the Vietnam war, disseminated publications denying the Holy Trinity and violated the moral and ethical standards of the faith.

The Presbyterian denomination, in its petition to the U. S. Supreme Court, argued that the Georgia decision violated the separation of church and state provisions of the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

The case will not likely be argued before the Supreme Court until the latter part of the year, since at the time of granting certiorari, the court was preparing to adjourn for the summer.

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Home Board Funds  
Alcohol-Drug Study

ATLANTA (BP)--A 13-month research project on alcohol-drug addiction and addict rehabilitation has been funded by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board here.

John M. Price, Jr. dean of the school of religious education at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, will take sabbatical leave beginning July 1 to direct the project.

The Home Mission Board's Christian social ministries department has budgeted \$11,800 to cover operational expenses.

Hugo Culpepper, director of the Home Mission Board's division of missions, said the project will include study and evaluation of many church-related and secular treatment-rehabilitation programs.

In addition, Price will formulate and implement an experimental program "in a selected community where adequate concern for such persons exists on the local church or associational level, and where one or more programs of care and reestablishment are in operation."

Formal objectives of the study are:

1. To discover some patterns of need common to dependent persons (alcohol-drug addicts), their families and their churches.
2. To determine some major trends in attitude, treatment and rehabilitation of such persons.
3. To thoroughly study one or more church-led programs.
4. To design a program of "church-treatment team" rehabilitation for individuals and groups of dependent alcohol-drug addicts.
5. To implement and evaluate this innovative program in a selected community sometime during the 13-month period.
6. To formulate a report of the findings and suggestions for the Home Mission Board.

The research and statistics division of the Sunday School Board will be the primary resource for know-how in the area of questionnaires, sampling surveys and interviews.

Implementation of the findings will be up to the Christian social ministries department of the Home Mission Board, which includes juvenile rehabilitation, youth and family services, weekday ministries, ministries to ex-prisoners and migrant missions.

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