

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 5, 1969

**Illinois Baptists To Vote  
On Constitution, New Name**

URBANA, Ill. (BP)--The Illinois Baptist State Association, meeting here for the first called session in its history May 16-17, will consider a proposed new constitution which recommends changing the name of the association to The Illinois Baptist Convention.

The state association meeting last November adopted the report of its restructure committee which requested a constitution committee to "draft a proposed new constitution or modify the existing constitution to incorporate the necessary changes in keeping with the proposed organizational structure."

At the called session in May, the Illinois Baptist body will consider the committee's proposed new constitution on "first reading." If approved, the new constitution would have to get second approval at the regular convention next November before going into effect.

In an interview with Illinois Baptist Editor Robert J. Hastings, the chairman of the association's constitution committee, Don E. Dillow of Urbana, explained the proposed changes and gave reasons for them.

Dillow said that the proposed name change to Illinois Baptist Convention follows the pattern of other states, many of which have already moved to a simpler name. "No doctrinal or organizational change is implied in the new name."

The new constitution also creates under the office of executive secretary what is called an "executive system," which Dillow described as "a work-doing system that majors on accomplishing the most work with the resources and personnel available."

Dillow, pastor of the Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church where the called convention will hold its sessions, added that the term "executive system," probably does not mean as much as some people would read into it.

He further explained that the board of directors would be organized into four main committees instead of the present 11 committees. "Actually, we have had 11 little 'executive systems', each rather independent of the other," he said. "Now our departments of work will be grouped according to functions, and the whole administration through four committees."

Dillow said the constitution proposal would give the board better correlation of the work of the convention, and would more closely identify the executive secretary with the various departments.

The new constitution also requires the board of directors to develop and maintain a policies manual detailing employment and dismissal policies.

It specifically states that the executive secretary is to be elected by the board of directors by nominating committee elected by the board, and to be dismissed on recommendation of the board's administrative committee "when in the opinion of the administrative committee the executive performance and/or personal behavior of the executive secretary is sub-standard...."

Under a section on doctrine, the new constitution states that the convention "adopts as its expression of faith the Baptist Faith and Message, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, May 9, 1963." Full text of the SBC-adopted statement is printed in the constitution.

The previous constitution also had a section on doctrine, but stated that the association "adopts as its own expression of faith the New Hampshire Declaration of Faith."

A quick check of constitutions of other Baptist state conventions as published in their annual reports indicated that only two other state Baptist groups have sections in their constitutions on doctrine--Hawaii and Indiana. Both affirm the statement of Baptist Faith and Message.

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A section on membership does not refer to the preceding section on doctrine, but states that the convention shall be composed "of messengers who are members of, elected and certified by, cooperating Baptist churches that have voluntarily accepted the nature and purpose of this convention."

A separate article on "Nature and Purpose" states that "as an autonomous body, the convention shall not violate the autonomy of any church or other Baptist body," and says that the purpose of the convention "is to assist in establishing and developing Baptist Church" and "other related activities it considers relevant to its corporate fellowship."

In the interview, Dillow was asked if he felt the association would adopt the new constitution. "I'm an optimist," he replied, "so I would answer yes. However, I believe there will be amendments and changes. It would be presumptuous for the committee to think it is infallible."

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April Mission Gifts Up,  
Report Called Encouraging

5/5/69

NASHVILLE (BP)--An "encouraging" month of mission giving through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget has boosted mission budget gifts for the first third of the year to 5½ per cent more than similar gifts for the same period in 1968.

Gifts for the period, January through April, 1969, totalled \$9,242,021 through the Cooperative Program unified budget, an increase of \$483,477 or 5.52 per cent over similar gifts for the same period in 1968, according to a report from the SBC Executive Committee here.

Total mission gifts, including both the \$9.2 million through the Cooperative Program plus a total of \$16.3 million to designated special mission causes, reached the \$25½ million mark at the end of April.

Most of the \$16.3 million in designated gifts went to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, through its annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions. Designated gifts to all causes increased \$351,103 or 2.2 per cent over the 1968 designations for the same period.

"We can take real encouragement from the fact the Cooperative Program receipts for SBC causes have shown a larger increase during the first four months of 1969 than during the same period in 1968," said Porter W. Routh, executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee here.

Routh said that the 5.52 per cent increase in Cooperative Program gifts for the first four months compared to a 5.24 per cent increase in 1968 over 1967 gifts. "This continued growth will mean much to the cause of Christ," he said.

During the month of April alone, Cooperative Program gifts reached \$2,256,812 an increase of \$90,058 or 4.16 per cent over April, 1968, contributions.

For the four-month period, the grand total of Cooperative Program contributions plus designations increased by \$834,580 or 3.38 per cent over total gifts for the same period in 1968. The \$25½ million in grand total gifts compared to \$24.7 million in 1968.

The figures reported by the SBC Executive Committee reflect only contributions to nation-wide Southern Baptist Convention causes, and do not include amounts given to support local and state-wide Baptist mission efforts.

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Virginia Tech Students Run  
Marathon for Summer Missions

5/5/69

BLACKSBURG, Va. (BP)--Thirty Virginia Polytechnical Institute students ran a 120-mile marathon from Blacksburg, Va., to Eagle Eyrie Baptist Assembly near Lynchburg, Va., to dramatize the fact that they had raised \$1,500 for the Virginia summer missions program.

The students left Blacksburg at 5:30 a.m. on Saturday and arrived at Eagle Eyrie at 3 p.m. the same day.

Each man ran four miles passing a baton containing a check in the amount of \$1,500 made out for summer missions.

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Fund Drive For "Biggest"  
Auditorium in SBC Begun

DEL CITY, Okla. (BP)--A building fund campaign for what is expected to be the largest church auditorium in the Southern Baptist Convention has been launched by the First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, near Oklahoma City.

The fund campaign will seek to raise \$650,000 toward construction of a 3,450-seat auditorium. Total cost of the auditorium will be about \$800,000.

John R. Bisagno, pastor of the church, said the construction will begin within 36 months. He said the design is "not fancy, but provides lots of usable space."

The church currently is constructing a 1,000 capacity educational building to cost \$400,000, and a new gymnasium costing \$35,000.

Total membership is now 3,695. Since Bisagno became pastor in 1965, the church has recorded 3,250 additions.

Bisagno said the church has two Sunday morning services weekly, with 2,000 to 2,100 persons attending each service. An average of 18 persons per Sunday have been uniting with the church by baptism or transfer of letter, he added.

The church led the Southern Baptist Convention in the number of baptisms in 1967, and has led the state Baptist convention in this category for the past four years.

A special all-church building barbecue May 18 is expected to attract 3,000 persons said Bisagno. Principal speaker will be Tom Lester, who plays "Eb" on the television program, "Green Acres." Victory Day in the campaign is set for May 25.

General consultant in the fund drive is James V. Lackey, of the Southern Baptist Convention Stewardship Commission, Nashville.

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Stetson President Resigns,  
No Reasons Given Till May 30

5/5/69

DeLAND, Fla. (BP)--The president of the Stetson University, here Paul F. Geren, has resigned after two years as head of the Baptist school. No reasons for the resignation were announced.

The resignation was not immediately accepted by the Stetson board of trustees, which will meet in regular session on May 30 and will consider the resignation at that time.

Geren, when contacted by telephone, said he wished he could give the reasons for his resignation but had been enjoined by the trustees' executive committee from releasing any such statement to the press until after the May 30 board meeting.

Geren said he realized that rumors would be flying around until that time, but said he had no choice but to wait until the appropriate time.

The chairman of the board of trustees, Earl B. Edington of St. Petersburg, Fla., announced the resignation of President Geren to a meeting of the faculty at Stetson.

Edington, pastor of First Baptist Church in St. Petersburg, said he could make no further comment, other than what was included in an official release from the Stetson public information office.

Stories in the daily press in Florida were filled with speculation on the reasons for the resignation. The St. Petersburg Times, for example, stated that the reason for the resignation was "a serious rift between faculty and the administration."

Officials at Stetson would not comment "on the record," but several other unofficial sources said that apparently the basic reason was the lack of effective communications betw en the faculty and administration, and the feeling on the part of the faculty that they had not been consulted on several decisions made by the president.

The resignation came at a time when Stetson was planning a multi-million fund drive which would finance, among other things, an expansion of the school's evening program on Merritt Island at Cape Kennedy.

Stetson is an 86-year-old Baptist institution named for John B. Stetson, the hatmaker, with an enrollment of 1,850 students on the DeLand campus, and 275 at the Law School in St. Petersburg.

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Although the school is not owned and operated by the Florida Baptist Convention, its president and three-fourths of its trustees must be Baptist. Geren had been praised during his administration for improving the relations between Stetson and the Florida Baptist Convention.

Geren, the fifth president of Stetson, came to the school in September of 1967 from the U. S. Foreign Service. He had held diplomatic positions in India, Syria, Jordan, the Federation of Rhodesia (now Malawi), and Zambia.

Geren was the first deputy director of the Peace Corps, and earlier served in the State Department as director of telecommunication and maritime affairs.

He was administrative vice president of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and is a graduate of Baylor, Louisiana State University, and Harvard University where he earned the doctor of philosophy degree. He is the author of four books.

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#### C O R R E C T I O N

Please delete graph 10 (next to last graph in story) of BP story carried 4-29-69, headlined "Ouachita University Faces Financial Crisis, Board Told," This graph names several individuals who would head combined departments for the Arkansas convention. The announcement was premature, and might change at a later date. BP will provide a story when the positions are officially filled. Thanks

--Baptist Press



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