

March 23, 1950

127 Ninth Avenue, North Nashville, Tennessee

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION TO MEET OUTSIDE TRADITIONAL SOUTH

The Southern Baptist Convention which has nearly eight million members in 22 states will meet this year for the first time outside of the traditional South. The annual meeting will be held in Chicago, May 9-12, and will be attended by 15,000 messengers elected by the churches.

Baptists are unique in that their annual convention is primarily a body representative of the churches and not a minister's group. 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 theme for this year's convention, over which Dr. Robert G. Lee, Memphis, Tenn., will preside, is taken from the fourth stanza of "America." It is "Freedom's Holy Light." Southern Baptists are expected to consider several important social and religious questions facing America today. Among these are separation of church and state, the race problem, what to do about missions in communistic China. The closing service of the convention will be an evangelistic rally in the Chicago Coliseum, in which the Baptist churches of Chicago will join.

Southern Baptists are expected to go with their convention to San Francisco, Calif., next year, a departure from the practice of the past looked upon as being even more radical than their meeting in Chicago.

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SOUTHERN BAPTISTS MADE SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN 1949

Southern Baptists gained 463 new churches last year. They now have 27,285 churches and 6,761,265 members, according to an announcement made by Porter Routh, secretary of survey and information for the denomination. They baptized 334,892 new members last year. This was 24,666 more than in 1948.

Net gain in church membership for the year was 272,044. Sunday School enrolment was up eight per cent to 4,643,650. Training Union enrolment was up 14.5 per cent to 1,235,438. Woman's Missionary Union enrolment was up 10.1 per cent to 943,135. Brotherhood enrolment was up 19.4 per cent to 142,412.

Southern Baptists built \$97,772,047 worth of new church property to bring total value to more than one half billion dollars. They gave \$178,337,307 for the support of their churches last year. This was \$22,762,803 more than in 1948. Mission gifts last year were \$31,316,818.

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A survey by the United Stewardship Council of 16 major denominations for the period since 1925 shows that Southern Baptists lead in gains in both membership and gifts. During the period, Southern Baptists membership has gained 67 per cent and gifts have jumped 319 per cent. During the same period, Methodists have gained 31 per cent in membership and 42 per cent in gifts; Disciples of Christ have gained 18 per cent in membership and 57 per cent in gifts; Presbyterian U.S.A. has gained 27 per cent in membership and 50 per cent in gifts; and Episcopalians 39 per cent in membership and 68 per cent in gifts. Northern Baptists have climbed 10 per cent in membership, and 46 per cent in gifts.

Three new films, telling the story of individuals who overcame their personal problems through a Christian experience, have been released by the Protestant Film Commission. The titles are "The Birthday Party," "A Job for Bob," and "What Happened to Jojo." The films run 30 minutes each and cost \$90,000 to produce.

The executive committee of the World Council of Churches has issued a statement calling upon the nations to consider the responsibility involved in the hydrogen bomb. The statement concluded, "This is the hour to listen afresh to the word of God, who is Lord of history. And this is the hour for earnest prayer to Him. For the fate of mankind is in his hands. Those who trust Him do not need to fear whatever comes. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Dr. G. Kearnie Keegan, Southern Baptist youth leader for many years and present pastor of the Temple Baptist Church, Los Angeles, has been elected secretary of the Student Department of the Sunday School Board. He has accepted and will start his new work on May 1.

The American Legion has launched a national "Go to Church" movement, starting April 16.

There were 140,032,345 gallons of whisky bottled in the U.S. in 1949, about 1.3 per cent less than in 1948. Sales of whisky declined about 1 per cent, but sales of wine increased about 12 per cent.