

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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October 27, 1969

**Kansas Convention Launches
\$500,000 Drive Within State**

WICHITA, Kan. (BP)--Following a "summit meeting" of top Southern Baptist leaders, the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists has launched an immediate crash fund campaign to raise \$500,000 by January of 1970 within the convention as the first major step toward funding its \$1.6 million indebtedness.

Lester Arvin, state senator who serves as chairman of the convention's five-member board of managers, said that once the fund campaign within Kansas and Nebraska is successful, plans will be announced detailing sources for the remainder of the goal.

"If we are successful, and we are sure we will be," said Arvin, "we are convinced we will have other aid from other Southern Baptists and other Baptist state conventions."

Arvin said that William Pitt, director of endowment and capital giving services for the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission, is already on the job in leading the convention in the \$500,000 state fund campaign.

In addition to the staff assistance from the SBC Stewardship Commission, Arvin said that the executive secretaries of the nearby Missouri and Oklahoma Baptist state conventions had offered the assistance to their staff members to help the Kansas convention with its ongoing program promotion.

Arvin said that two state convention executives, Earl Harding of the Missouri Baptist Convention, and T. B. Lackey of the Oklahoma Baptist Convention, attended the "summit meeting" here as representatives of a committee appointed by the State Executive Secretaries' Association formed in September to come to the aid of the Kansas convention.

Arvin added that the Kansas convention is also in constant, almost daily contact with Hugo Culpepper, head of the missions division for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board; and with Bob Kilgore and Pat McDaniel, of the board's church loan division, who also attended the meeting.

Also attending was Owen Cooper, president of the Mississippi and Coastal Chemical Corp., Yazoo City, Miss., and former vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, who came as an interested and concerned layman. Arvin said that Cooper compared the Kansas convention's financial troubles to Hurricane Camille, adding that Baptists would respond to the financial crisis just as they did to the natural disaster hitting Mississippi.

The group met with the five-man management board, and with Kansas State Securities Commissioner Michael Quinn. They discussed alternative ways to fund the \$1.6 million indebtedness of the convention.

Arvin said the group ended the meeting with a spirit of optimism, feeling that the convention was on the way toward solving the financial crisis.

Last November, the convention acknowledged that its church bond association was financially insolvent, due to making long-term loans to churches backed by short-term church bonds. At last report, about 44 of the church loans were in arrears on their payments.

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LBJ Attends Church's 125th
Anniversary Celebration

10/27/69

MINDEN, La. (BP)--Former President Lyndon Baines Johnson and his wife attended the 125th anniversary celebration of First Baptist Church here, paying tribute along with about 1,100 others to the man who organized the church in 1845.

The former president, however, was the only person present who could claim the church's founder as his great grandfather.

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The church was organized in 1845 by George Washington Baines, who was the pastor for five years before moving to Texas where he became an outstanding pastor, the founder of The Texas Baptist (now the Baptist Standard), and president of Baylor University, Waco, Tex.

Most of the church's 125th anniversary celebration was a tribute to Baines. The pastor of the church, Ronald Prince, preached as if he were Baines returning to the church in 1969 to see the church as it had grown from four members in 1945 to 2,700 today.

Prince pointed to a silver antique communion plate used by the church during Baine's pastorate, expressing amazement that this one plate was enough for the few members in the church's early days, and so inadequate to hold enough communion bread for the church's total membership today.

During the service, Prince, himself a former Texas pastor, presented to the former President a leather-bound history of the church, with particular emphasis on the ministry of Mr. Johnson's great grandfather as the founder.

Johnson spoke very briefly in response, expressing his gratitude and noting that he is now among the great number of unemployed in the nation.

Prince said that the former president was "visibly moved" by the service, and that he obviously came that Sunday to worship.

Hundreds were turned away from the service, Prince said. Many lined the sidewalks outside the building.

It was one of Johnson's few public appearances since leaving office. Prince said that he stipulated in accepting the invitation that he would come only to worship, not to speak or seek publicity.

The invitation had been issued even before he left office as president. A program printed for the anniversary showed a front cover picture of Baines, and on the back was a letter from Johnson written from the White House in 1968.

Following the service, the former president shook hands with many of the people standing outside the church instead of going straight to the car where Mrs. Johnson was waiting.

Later, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, his press secretary, and entourage were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Walker, a lumber executive and deacon at the church. Walker is a third generation member of the church.

Prince said that the former president told him at the luncheon how much evangelist Billy Graham had meant to him personally, and added he was pleased that President Richard Nixon was a close friend of Graham's.

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Phelps Joins Mercer
As Development VP

10/27/69

MACON, Ga. (BP)--Ralph A. Phelps Jr., former president of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., has been named vice president for development at Mercer University, President Rufus C. Harris has announced.

Phelps, 48, presently is vice president and trust officer of Worthen Bank and Trust Company in Little Rock, Ark.

During his 16-year presidency of Ouachita, the student body tripled, a graduate school was added, assets increased from \$1.8 to \$8.4 million and 22 buildings were constructed.

Harris said of the appointment, "Mercer is fortunate to secure the services of a person of Dr. Phelps' stature. He has distinguished himself in the field of education.

"Mercer long has felt the need of someone to specialize in the area of endowment building, fund raising and new development. We have not filled this position because, until now, we have not found precisely the right person for the post," Harris said.

The Mercer position will mark Phelps' return to Georgia. In 1967, he took six month's leave of absence from Ouachita to become regional director of the Office of Economic Opportunity's Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta.

Before becoming president of Ouachita in 1953, Phelps was associate professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, where he earned the master and doctor of theology degrees. A native of Texas, he previously was pastor of three churches in Texas.

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