



BAPTIST PRESS

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November 21, 1969

Foreign Mission Board Joins Baptist Press News Network

RICHMOND (BP)--The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention will join the Baptist Press news network effective Jan. 1, 1970, with creation of a Baptist press bureau here to cover foreign missions news around the world.

W. C. Fields, director of Baptist Press with offices in Nashville, and Jesse Fletcher, director of the missions support division of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, made the announcement jointly.

Fletcher, as acting public relations director for the board, will serve as bureau chief for Baptist Press here until the board elects a public relations director in the mission support division, said Fields.

Baptist Press, the daily news service of the Southern Baptist Convention, also has regional offices in Atlanta, Dallas and Washington, and a bureau at the Sunday School Board in Nashville. The national office, which Fields directs, is connected with the Executive Committee of the SBC.

Both Fletcher and Fields said they felt the new Baptist Press bureau here will be a "significant step forward for all of us," and will "add a new dimension to the denomination's total outreach."

Fletcher said plans call for increased efforts to cover Baptist foreign mission efforts on an international scale.

Copy will be sent by teletypewriter exchange (TWX) from the Richmond bureau to the national office in Nashville where it will be edited for Baptist Press style and distributed to news media across the country, as well as abroad.

In the past, the Foreign Mission Board has maintained its own news service, rather than channeling its news through Baptist Press.

Fields said that the opening of the bureau here would greatly strengthen Baptist Press as a total denominational news service, providing coverage of one of the most important aspects of the entire denomination's program--foreign missions.

Fletcher said that he felt that the wide acceptance of Baptist Press would enable the Foreign Mission Board to receive broader news coverage in the future.

Fletcher added that when the board approved creation of the Baptist Press bureau, they also elected Miss Ione Gray, director of press relations, to the newly-created position of international editor and writer. Mike Dixon is senior editor on the press relations staff.

Earlier, the board had approved the employment of a director of public relations, but Fletcher said that the board felt the relationship with Baptist Press was important enough to establish even before the public relations director had been employed.

As the new service for the denomination, Baptist Press is sent to the editors of Baptist state papers across the country, the religion editors of more than 100 daily newspapers, national news media, and radio and television stations with religious newscasts.

Arkansas Baptists To Study
Membership Policy on Baptism

FORT SMITH, Ark. (BP)--The Arkansas Baptist State Convention side-stepped a thorny doctrinal question here, voting to appoint a committee to study the convention's policy regarding membership of churches that accept the baptism of other denominations.

The committee study was recommended by the chairman of two committees which have been grappling with the problems precipitated last year when the convention voted to "withdraw fellowship" from four churches because they practice "alien immersion" or "open communion."

On the motion of Dillard Miller, pastor of First Baptist Church, Mena, Ark., the convention approved the committee study, and voted to seat all messengers to this year's convention except any from the four churches previously excluded.

Miller, chairman of the committees on credentials and reconciliation, said that purpose of the committee study would be "to clarify, specify and recommend policies regarding membership to this convention."

Miller said that only one of the four churches excluded last year had conferred with the convention's reconciliation committee, and this church indicated it would not send messengers to the Fort Smith convention.

The four churches excluded because they accepted as members persons who have been baptized by non-Baptist churches, or allow non-Baptists to partake of the Lord's Supper, are: First Baptist Church, Russellville, Ark.; First Baptist Church, Malvern, Ark.; University Baptist Church, Little Rock; and Lake Village Baptist Church, Lake Village, Ark.

In other action, the convention adopted a budget of \$2,737,229, allocating \$906,642 to world missions through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program.

Resolutions adopted by the convention expressed support for the programs and curriculum materials produced by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, opposed materialistic trends and commercial business operation on Sunday, and urged television and motion picture industries to reject violence, immorality and illicit sex in their productions.

Elected president of the convention was Tal Bonham, pastor of Southside Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, Ark. The convention will meet next year in Pine Bluff, Nov. 17-19, 1970.

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New Mexico Baptists Defeat
Doctrinal Test Amendment

11/21/69

ROSWELL, N.M. (BP)--The Baptist Convention of New Mexico turned down an amendment that would have eliminated from its fellowship any churches that in the future might accept as members persons who have been baptized by non-Baptist churches.

By a vote of 185-103, the convention defeated a constitution change offered from the floor asking that "no church be recognized as a cooperative church by the convention which practices open membership and receives members on the basis of their baptism by other than a Baptist church."

The amendment was suggested by Frank Wheeler, superintendent of missions for the Mountain Valley Baptist Association, with offices in Alamogordo, N.M.

During debate on the amendment, opposition was voiced on the grounds that the action would be an infringement upon the autonomy of the local church, and that doctrinal matters of this nature should rest in the hands of the local congregation.

A convention official pointed out that at the present, no Southern Baptist church in New Mexico is known to have policies approving of "alien immersion."

In other action, the convention adopted a 1970 budget of \$626,168, a decrease of \$34,067 from the 1969 budget.

According to the convention's State Mission Board president, Bernard Dougharty of Santa Fe, N.M., the reduction was the result of what he termed a more realistic look at the financial picture of the convention and the churches' income.

The 1970 budget will also include \$97,070 in "preferred items" which must be paid before all other funds are distributed on the formula basis of 77 per cent to state mission causes and 33 per cent to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program.

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Resolutions adopted by the convention urged Baptists to oppose future legislation that might destroy separation of church and state or increase liquor outlets in the state, and assured President Richard M. Nixon of prayerful support as he seeks a peaceful solution to the Vietnam war.

Another resolution requested the state attorney general not to appeal to the state Supreme Court a recent district court decision that the sale of liquor on Sunday be illegal.

Several months ago, the attorney general ruled that because of a loophole in recent legislation, bars, taverns and liquor stores could remain open; but the district court overturned the attorney general's ruling.

Re-elected president of the convention was John W. Ransdell, pastor of Fruit Avenue Baptist Church, Albuquerque, N.M. Next year's convention will be in Alamogordo, N.M., Nov. 10-12, 1970.

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South Carolina Baptists
Elect Harold Cole Secretary

11/21/69

CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP)--The South Carolina Baptist Convention elected a new general secretary-treasurer, honored its outgoing executive, elected a rural minister as president, adopted a record budget, and resolved to support President M. Nixon.

The convention's resolution committee however, did not report out another resolution which would have required teachers in the state's Baptist schools to support the Statement of Baptist Faith and Message adopted by the SBC in 1925 and 1963.

Meeting here for their 148th annual session, the convention elected A. Harold Cole, former assistant general secretary-treasurer, to the top executive position without opposition.

Cole will take office Jan. 1, 1970 following the retirement of Horace G. Hammett, who was honored during an hour-long session of the convention for his 20 years' service to the convention. Hammett has been general secretary for the last eight years.

The outgoing executive was given a silver service and a gift of \$7,500 from the convention's General Board in order to pay off the mortgage on his home and attend the Baptist World Alliance in Tokyo next July.

A record budget of \$5.3 million was adopted for 1970, allocating \$3.5 million for state mission efforts and \$1.7 million for Southern Baptist world mission causes.

For the first time in more than 50 years, the convention elected the pastor of a rural church as president, naming J. C. Rice, pastor of Poplar Springs Baptist Church near Lawrence, S.C., to the top position.

In a major address, the first laymen to serve as president of the convention during this century, Preston H. Callison of Columbia, S.C., called for greater participation in church and denominational affairs by laymen and women.

Callison, an attorney and state legislator, advocated women being ordained as deacons, and that they be given offices in the convention and associations.

Women have long been the backbone of many church organizations, but they need to be on the policy-making levels, said the outgoing convention president.

The only major resolution adopted by the convention asked that a telegram be sent to President Nixon assuring him of the concern and prayers of South Carolina Baptists as he seeks an honorable peace in Vietnam.

The nature of the resolution neither supported or condemned the war, and made no mention of Moratorium demonstrations in the country.

Several other resolutions were submitted from the floor, but none were recommended for adoption by the convention's resolutions committee.

Two such resolutions buried in committee would have required teachers in the Baptist colleges in the state to support the statement of Baptist Faith and Message adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963, and would have commended the recent speech on television news commentators by Vice President Spiro Agnew.

Other resolutions not reported out by the committee touched on pastors' salaries, student activities, and the possibility of organizing Baptist Student Unions at the high school level.

Convention officials reported that it was the poorest attended session in the last 10 years, with 1,699 messengers registered.

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Colorado Baptists Concur
With Baptist Doctrines

COLORADO SPRINGS (BP)--Colorado Baptists meeting here in annual session voted to re-affirm their concurrence with the doctrinal beliefs as presented in the Baptist Faith and Message Statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1925 and 1963.

The Colorado Baptist General Convention adopted a resolution pleding to "reassert ourselves in faithfulness to our basic doctrinal distinctives for the preservation of the spiritual integrity of our churches."

Other resolutions adopted by the convention touched on the war in Vietnam, news media coverage of churches, the generation gap and trends toward commercial business operation on Sunday.

In major busines, the convention adopted a budget of \$449,954, including a state Cooperative Program goal of \$252,128. The convention voted to increase its percentage going to Southern Baptist Convention causes from 18 to 18½ per cent, or \$46,639. The total budget is an increase of about \$17,000 over the 1969 budget.

The resolution on the war in Vietnam urged Baptists, as individuals, to write congressmen and President M. Nixon, expressing their feelings regarding Moratorium Day demonstrations designed to influence foreign policy.

The resolution further pledged prayers "for devine wisdom for them and their efforts to bring an honorable and just end to the war in Vietnam."

Another resolution acknowledged the power in the news media to influence the moral climate of the nation, and urged Baptists to object to the "unfavorable light often cast upon churches, Christian people and the moral teachings of the Bible" by the media.

Elected president of the convention was Charles Aiken, pastor of Lynn Gardens Baptist Church in Pueblo, Colorado. Next year the convention will meet at Grand Junction, Colorado, Nov. 17-19.

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