



BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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April 2, 1970

**Panama Baptists Move
Toward Independence**

CANAL ZONE (BP)--The Panama Baptist Convention has adopted a structural change to assume more responsibility for its financial and program leadership. The change becomes effective next year when a new constitution is presented.

About 157 messengers, representing 42 churches, 78 missions and over 5,000 Baptists gathered for the three-day meeting at First Baptist Church, Balboa Heights, here.

The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board has provided leadership and fraternal assistance for pastors' salaries since the convention was founded 11 years ago. Now the move is to make the work indigenous.

The government of Panama was recently taken over by a military junta. However, this has not interfered with religious activities in the small country.

In other action, the convention adopted a proposed \$15,000 budget for next year and heard the treasurer's report which showed over \$13,000 received through the Cooperative Program and total gifts of over \$22,000 received last year.

W. D. Morgan, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Rainbow City, was re-elected president.

Gerald Palmer, secretary of the Home Mission Board's department of language missions, has provided leadership from the board. Commenting on the Panama convention, Palmer said:

"Our efforts in the past few years have been to assist the Panama convention in assuming an increased share of the responsibility formerly carried by the Home Mission Board.

"The excellent quality of leadership demonstrated before and during the convention sessions indicates a bright hope for the future," he said.

Although the Panama convention has no official ties with the Southern Baptist Convention, the board does support nine missionary couples and one single missionary here.

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Doctor, Pharmacist, Dentist
Give Med Supplies For Ministry

4/2/70

DALLAS (BP)--A retired physician and a pharmacist from Dallas, plus a dentist from nearby Duncanville, Tex., have donated extensive medical equipment and supplies to the Texas Baptist "River Ministry" to Latin Americans because of publicity about the project.

The physician, Dr. John G. Scales, and the pharmacist, James Ragan, of Dallas made the donations after television and newspaper reports of a gift of \$23,000 worth of medical equipment by another physician Dr. Marvin Bell, a retired Dallas pathologist. All three are Baptists.

The Duncanville dentist, Dr. Richard L. Davidson, said he was moved by the plight of the economically disadvantaged Latin Americans along the Rio Grande River. Although he is not a Baptist, Dr. Davidson collected medical and dental supplies valued at more than \$10,000 and donated his services to work in River Ministry clinics.

The Duncanville dentist made the decision to aid the program after Gene McCombs, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Duncanville, told him about the River Ministry and showed him a newsletter on the project.

Dr. Scales, who saw the story of the program on WFAA-TV in Dallas, donated a fully-equipped X-Ray lab and a basil metabolism unit, which would cost nearly \$7,000 new.

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Ragan, who read about Dr. Bell's gift in the Dallas Morning News, has given a supply of drugs for use in the River Ministry and plans to contact physicians and other pharmacists to enlist their help.

For the past seven years, Dr. Scales has served without salary as pastor of Parkview Baptist Chapel, a mission of Bishop Avenue Baptist Church here. Before becoming ordained to fill Parkview's vacant pulpit, Dr. Scales was a deacon and Sunday School teacher at Kessler Park Baptist Church, Dallas.

If purchase new, the supplies and equipment donated by the pharmacist and three physicians would cost about \$40,000.

Currently, the River Ministry has five clinics along the Rio Grande River with hopes to set up more. Volunteer personnel are needed to assist in treating patients, said Elmin Howell, coordinator of the River Ministry for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

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South Carolina Pastor
Named As Top OEO Aide

4/2/70

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--Richard S. Brannon, pastor of the Kathwood Baptist Church here, has resigned to become a special assistant in the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in Washington, D.C.

He is the second Baptist pastor in Columbia to accept a high-ranking government post since January when R. Archie Ellis resigned as pastor of the First Baptist Church here, to become deputy director of the state welfare department.

In announcing his appointment and submitting his resignation before the Columbia church, Brannon said:

"The responsibilities of this office will call for me to do what I have spent more than 20 years doing--speaking and writing about people and their problems; except now I shall be dealing with the problem of poverty and opportunity which exists in our nation."

He explained that he does not consider his service to God limited to the church and leaves the pastoral ministry "to perform other sacred responsibilities for people who have needs."

As special assistant, Brannon will speak throughout the nation on behalf of the director of OEO, on current activities and new directions. He will communicate any changing philosophies and programs of the anti-poverty agency.

He will also serve as advisor to the director on rural affairs, volunteerism, problems of youth and the older poor. He will try to develop effective working relationships with leaders in state and local government, as well as other service and charitable institutions.

The Columbia minister writes a syndicated newspaper column and has a radio program, both entitled "Richard Brannon's Notebook."

Brannon hopes to correct some of the bad impressions of OEO which have resulted from mis-management of funds and lack of sufficient preparation for programs.

The Spartanburg native is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has earned a master's and doctor's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and also studied at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

Before coming to the Kathwood church in 1965, he was pastor of Huffman Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

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Cooperative Program Gifts
Increase In First Quarter

4/2/70

NASHVILLE (BP)--During the first one-fourth of 1970, contributions to world missions through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program unified budget increased by \$330,791 or 4.74 per cent over gifts for the first quarter of 1969.

A big month of giving during March offset decreased receipts during February to bring the gifts back up to the level previously predicted by officials of the convention's Executive Committee, which prepares the monthly financial reports.

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During the month of March, Cooperative Program contributions increased 18 per cent over giving for March of 1969. The \$2.3 million given in March was the largest amount contributed through the Cooperative Program for any March in SBC history. The 18 per cent increase in March offset a 6.18 per cent increase in February.

John H. Williams, financial planning secretary for the SBC Executive Committee, explained that during February, checks from two rather large state conventions failed to arrive before the books closed; but were counted instead with March receipts making March a record month.

Total Cooperative Program gifts for the first quarter of 1970 reached \$7.3 million, an increase of \$330,791 or 4.74 per cent over the \$6.9 million given during the first three months of 1969.

Designated contributions to specific SBC mission causes were down with \$14 million designated funds thus far in 1970 compared to \$14.2 million for the same period in 1969. It was a decrease of 1.58 per cent, or \$225,201.

Total combined contributions (Cooperative Program plus designated gifts) reached \$21.3 million for the quarter, compared to \$21.2 million in 1969, for an increase of .5 per cent or \$105,589.

Of the \$21.3 million total, \$17.5 million has gone to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, and \$1.6 million has been sent to the SBC Home Mission Board.

The contributions included in the report reflect only gifts to nationwide Southern Baptist causes, and do not include funds given to support state and local mission efforts by Southern Baptists.



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