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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 12, 1970

**Georgia Convention Proposes
Baptist Center at College Site**

AUGUSTA, Ga. (BP)-- Possible development of a giant Baptist center located on land now occupied by struggling Atlanta Baptist College was disclosed here during the 149th annual meeting of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

The convention gave its Executive Committee authority to work with trustees of Atlanta Baptist College in negotiating possible transfer of almost 500 acres of land in Atlanta's wealthy north side to convention ownership, with the site envisioned as the location for several Baptist enterprises.

The college property, purchased by the Atlanta Baptist Association 10 years ago for about \$1 million, is now worth about \$8 to \$10 million. The property will be offered to the convention if trustees for the college and the Atlanta Baptist Association which owns the college, give their formal approval at a later date.

If the property transfer is consummated, the convention offices will be moved from their current downtown location on Peachtree Street to the college site.

Convention officials said several other Baptist agencies could possibly maintain offices at the proposed site, including the Atlanta Baptist Association offices, a proposed new home for the aged, the Georgia Baptist Children's Homes offices, and possibly the offices of several other local and Southern Baptist agencies with regional offices in Atlanta.

The action leaves the door open for continuation of the financially-troubled college, but only if college trustees can secure additional revenue before June of next year to prevent deficit operation of the school.

Several months ago, the trustees sold about 60 acres of the land for about \$400,000 in order to pay off existing debts and keep the school operating for the current school year.

Monroe Swilley, president of the Baptist school since it opened three years ago, explained that the college cannot continue beyond June of 1971 without incurring indebtedness or selling off pieces of its valuable land.

The convention action also provides for the possibility of an existing Georgia Baptist college or university operating Atlanta Baptist College for the remainder of the 1970-71 year, but no convention funds were allocated for operation of the Atlanta school, nor was any specific Georgia Baptist school named to take over the college.

In a related action, the convention also approved a possible long-term lease or sale of the present convention headquarters office in downtown Atlanta. Searcy S. Garrison, executive secretary of the convention, told the messenger of a firm offer from an Atlanta real estate developer of a 99 year lease which, would net the convention about \$20 million during the 99-year period.

In other actions, the convention approved a major capital improvements and endowment program which will raise over \$13 million in building and endowment funds for its educational and benevolent institutions over a five to 10 year span, if successful.

The convention adopted a record \$5,872,200 budget for 1971, a four per cent increase over the 1970 budget. After deduction of about 10 per cent for shared Georgia and Southern Baptist Convention promotional expenses, the remaining budget is divided equally between state and SBC causes.

The messengers also voted to create a state-level "minister-church relations service" to help church-less ministers and minister-less churches get together, and authorized employment of a staff member to handle the assignment.

A similar proposal was defeated by the convention in 1968, and the vote in this year's convention was split 651 to 356 in favor of the motion.

Several messengers opposed the proposal, saying it moves "towards a hierarchy." The proposal included a phrase specifying that "no episcopal authority" would be exercised over the churches, and that the local autonomy of the churches would be respected.

Resolutions adopted by the convention deplored obscene movies being shown in Atlanta, voiced concern over drug abuse and called for medical teams to work with drug users. Two resolutions adopted sparked debate, both dealing with Georgia Baptist institutions.

A resolution submitted from the floor would have instructed the Georgia Baptist Children's Home trustees and administration to admit children without regard to race, but the convention's resolutions committee changed the wording to leave the matter in the hands of the trustees, pointing out that the convention two years ago approved the trustees' request to remove the word "white" from the charter so that admission policies would be for all children, not just "white" children. The final resolution asked the trustees to "consider the full meaning of the gospel" in implementing their admission policies.

Another resolution introduced from the floor accusing Mercer University of being unsympathetic with the convictions of Georgia Baptists was reworded by the committee so that the convention urged all its institutions to work for improved communications with the churches and the convention.

Elected president of the convention was R. J. Robinson, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Augusta, the host for the convention and the historic site of the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention 125 years ago in 1845. Sessions were held at the Bell Memorial Auditorium here.

Next year the convention will meet at Jekyll Island, Ga., Nov. 8-10.

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Oklahoma Executive Sets Retirement;
Convention Re-Elects Dane President

11/12/70

TULSA, Okla. (BP) -- The Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, for the first time in 30 years, re-elected its current president to a second term, and heard of plans for its executive secretary to retire.

Re-elected to a second term as president was J. P. Dane, pastor of Portland Avenue Baptist Church in Oklahoma City.

Not since 1940 had the convention elected an incumbent president to a second term, when the late J. W. Storer, then pastor of First Baptist Church in Tulsa where the convention was held, was elected to a third term as president. Since then the state convention's presidents have served one term only.

Dane was re-elected by a margin of 47 votes over the host pastor for the convention, Warren Hultgren, pastor of First Baptist Church here. The vote was 480-433.

During the three-day meeting at the Tulsa church, convention executive secretary T. Bert Lackey announced plans to retire from the position, effective Sept. 4, 1971.

Lackey has been executive secretary of the convention for the past 19 years, and has been involved in Oklahoma Baptist work as a pastor, district and general missionary, and state convention official for 45 years. Before becoming executive secretary, he was assistant executive secretary.

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Lackey asked the convention's Board of Directors to take appropriate action to select someone to serve in the post from the date of his retirement, Sept. 4, until the convention's annual meeting in November. Under Oklahoma convention procedure, the executive secretary is elected by the annual convention.

For the first time in 20 years, the entire slate of nominees from the convention's nominating committee for membership on committees and boards of trustees for convention institutions was not elected.

The nominating committee's report was amended to substitute names of four persons nominated from the floor for choices of the committee. Three of the four were trustees for Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and one was chairman of the convention's program committee. All four committee nominees were from Oklahoma City.

Kenneth Mullins, pastor of Eastwood Baptist Church in Tulsa who made the nominations from the floor, explained that he felt that if the nominating committee's suggestions were adopted, too many of the trustees would be concentrated in Oklahoma City. He said 10 of the Oklahoma Baptist University's 32 trustees would be from Oklahoma City if the nominating committee report was adopted.

A major resolution adopted by the convention called for Baptists to support a statewide petition drive aimed at giving Oklahoma a uniform day of rest and recreation on Sunday. It was submitted by the convention's Christian life committee.

In other major action, the convention adopted a budget of \$3.8 million, to be divided 57 per cent to state causes, and 43 per cent to Southern Baptist Convention causes. All funds received over the budget in 1971 would stay within the state to support Oklahoma Baptist University and Baptist student work in the state.

Next year, the convention will meet in Oklahoma City, Nov. 15-17.

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North Carolina Convention
Urges Voluntary School Prayer

11/12/70

GREENSBORO, N.C. (BP)-- Voting 562 - 529, the North Carolina Baptist State Convention here narrowly adopted a resolution criticizing the U. S. Supreme Court for ruling against "voluntary prayer in public schools."

Claud Asbury, a Baptist pastor in Wilmington, N.C., presented the resolution to the convention in 1969, but the convention referred it to its Christian Life and Public Affairs Council for study.

After a year of study, the committee recommended that the Asbury resolution be rejected, arguing that it violated Baptists' historic principle of separation of church and state, but the convention messengers passed the resolution anyway by a 33-vote margin.

Asbury, who has made similar motions at the Southern Baptist Convention and at previous North Carolina conventions, argued in the resolution that the 1962 ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court (*Ingle v. Vitale*) clearly ruled against voluntary prayer in public schools.

His resolution stated that "we, the Baptists of North Carolina, do not agree with the foretated... ruling of the U. S. Supreme Court..., (and) that we...go on record giving our approval to voluntary prayer in public schools."

The motion by Asbury, a vocal supporter of so-called "prayer amendments" to the U. S. Constitution, is in contrast to actions taken by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1964 and 1966 opposing such amendments to the Constitution, and in 1969 in New Orleans when the SBC resolutions committee rejected a resolution Asbury submitted on prayer amendments. Asbury protested the decision, but was ruled out of order by SBC President W. A. Criswell.

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It is believed to be the first time that a Southern Baptist state convention has adopted such a resolution. Numerous state conventions, as well as the SBC, had previously supported the Supreme Court decision and opposed any change in the wording of the U.S. Constitution guarantee for religious liberty and church-state separation.

In other major actions, the North Carolina convention passed without a dissenting vote a record 1971 budget of \$7.3 million, and authorized loans to three institutions for \$12.4 million. An increase of \$350,000, the budget allocates one-third to Southern Baptist Convention causes, and two-thirds for statewide efforts.

Resolutions were adopted commending peace efforts in Indo China, opposing liquor law liberalization in the state, favoring highway safety programs, asking for recall of the nation's presidential envoy to the Vatican, and reaffirming a request made last year for humane treatment of prisoners of war.

At the suggestion of the Christian Life and Public Affairs Council, the convention rejected another resolution offered last year at Fayetteville, N.C., which asked Baptists to support conscientious objectors, and urging amnesty to all men now in prison or in exile for avoiding military service.

The convention referred to its General Board and Christian Life and Public Affairs Council for later action a resolution asking that future conventions meet on weekends, that the convention hold a joint session with its Negro counterpart, the General Baptist Convention, and a suggestion that a fund be established to pay the salaries of pastors fired for preaching on such matters as racial issues.

A constitution and bylaw change was approved spelling out procedures to be followed in removing a trustee for one of the convention's boards or agencies.

Re-elected president of the convention was John Lawrence, pastor of Forest Hills Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.

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Louisiana Convention Releases Hospital To Accept Federal Aid

11/12/70

SHREVEPORT, La. (BP)-- For the second consecutive year, the Louisiana Baptist Convention voted to give away one of its hospitals to become a private healing center operated by its own board of trustees.

The convention adopted, with very little opposition and no debate, the recommendation of its hospital advisory committee to release Baptist Hospital in Alexandria, La., to its trustees.

Trustees of the Baptist hospital had previously asked the convention's Executive Board to permit them to either accept a \$6 million government loan, even though the convention has adopted policies prohibiting such loans, or to release them from Baptist ownership so they would be free to accept any and all such funds.

Last year, the convention released Baton Rouge General Hospital to become an independent agency, after that hospital's trustees requested the release.

In other major actions, the Louisiana convention approved a new action emphasis called LIVE for 1971-72, adopted a record \$3.9 million budget, and approved resolutions dealing with church-state separation, horse racing in Louisiana, release of Vietnam war prisoners, and crime control and investigation.

LIVE, the new convention emphasis, was described as "a total church approach to the Christian message," and as "an all-inclusive emphasis which will promote Bible study, witnessing, stewardship, music, evangelism, television ministry, youth and other activities on both a state and local level."

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The \$3.9 million budget represents an increase of \$50,000 over the 1970 budget, and includes a slight percentage increase to Southern Baptist Convention causes. It will give 31.5 per cent to SBC causes, and 68.5 per cent to Louisiana Baptist efforts.

Resolutions adopted by the convention on one hand criticized President Richard Nixon for supporting tax funds for private and parochial schools and for appointing a personal representative to the Vatican; but also commended the President for rejecting the recommendations of the special Commission on Obscenity and Pornography.

Another resolution commended the Louisiana Supreme Court for declaring as unconstitutional Louisiana legislation giving tax moneys to private and parochial schools through teacher contract grants.

The Mafia Probe Committee of Louisiana was commended for its efforts in exposing the influence of organized crime on Louisiana state government and society by the convention.

A resolution on Vietnam war prisoners urged humane treatment of American prisoners of war and urged Vietnam government officials to release immediately wounded and injured prisoners, publication of names of all prisoners, and impartial inspection of prisoner facilities and medical treatment.

The convention expressed disapproval of granting of licenses for horse racing at Clarence Downs at Clarence, La., in north Louisiana and Delta Downs in south Louisiana.

Re-elected president of the convention was Leon Hyatt pastor of First Baptist Church of Houma, La.

The Executive Board of the convention and the Baptist Message presented an award for "excellency in religious journalism" to Ed Pettis, religious news editor for the Shreveport Journal here.

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Utah-Idaho Baptists Adopt
Budget, Report 1970 Gains

11/12/70

SALT LAKE CITY (BP)-- The Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention adopted a record \$264,396 budget for 1971, and reported on membership gains during the past year.

Meeting at the First Southern Baptist Church here, the youthful convention reported more than 500 baptisms (conversions) during 1970, boosting membership in its 60 churches and 25 missions to a total of 8,948.

The \$264,396 budget for 1970 includes a Cooperative Program goal of \$60,531 to be raised in the convention's churches. About 20 per cent, or \$12,880, will be sent to support Southern Baptist Convention world mission causes.

Elected president of the convention was M. K. Wilder, pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church, Page, Ariz.

Darwin E. Welsh, executive secretary of the convention, said the spirit shown by the messengers was "the greatest ever."

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Florida Convention Keeps
Relationships With Stetson

11/12/70

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (BP)-- In an almost complete reversal of the previous year's convention action, the Florida Baptist Convention here overwhelmingly approved a report praising Stetson University and continuing its current relationship with the Baptist school.

Last year, Florida Baptists defeated by a narrow five-vote margin an effort to withhold the \$300,000 budget allocation to Stetson, and voted to appoint a committee to study the relationship between the convention and Stetson.

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In contrast, the 1970 session, acting on the study committee's report, commended the Stetson board of trustees and President John E. Johns "for the manner in which they are fulfilling their tasks" and stated that "we look forward optimistically to strengthening the ties between the denomination and the school."

The committee recommended that no change be made in the current relationship. Stetson is considered a private Baptist school. It has a self-perpetuating board of trustees, with board members nominated by a committee appointed jointly by the convention and the Stetson board.

Another study committee appointed by the convention last year to study relationships with Palm Beach Atlantic College, a school owned by the Palm-Lake Baptist Association and operated in the facilities of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, also recommended no change in relationship with the convention.

"We recommend that the Florida Baptist Convention not establish a relationship with Palm Beach Atlantic College at this time," the committee said. Another point in the recommendation asked that the convention's Education Commission consult with the school's trustees about any long-range plan they develop regarding relationships with the convention.

The convention encouraged Palm Beach Atlantic College to "lead in development of the college into a Baptist institution of the highest academic quality," and approved of allocating \$25,000 for scholarships to church-related vocational students at the school.

Palm Beach Atlantic College, headed by Jess Moody, president and pastor of the First Baptist Church of West Palm Beach, has an enrollment of about 275 students, including 97 ministerial students or other volunteers for church-related vocations.

In other actions, the Florida convention elected its retiring editor, W. Guy Stracener, as president for the coming year, and approved a special bond program for church finances which guarantees payment for bond holders. Stracener retires Dec. 31 as editor of the Florida Baptist Witness, weekly state paper published by the convention.

The convention adopted a budget of \$4.3 million which allocates 46 per cent to Southern Baptist Convention causes, and 54 per cent to state efforts. There was no opposition to the budget, which again includes a \$300,000 allocation to Stetson.

During a youth rally, about a dozen students came to the microphone to tell the older convention messengers how they felt about the generation gap after the presiding officer unexpectedly invited any "who wanted to speak to do so."

The students warned the older Baptists against trying to "run away from the truth," and against being afraid of tough intellectual questions. They called for openness and honesty, and to end denominational in-fighting.

During a pre-convention session of the convention's State Board of Missions, James N. Ponder, evangelism secretary for the Illinois Baptist State Association, was elected evangelism director for Florida Baptists. Ponder is a native of Texas.



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