



BAPTIST PRESS

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American Baptists Open Atlanta Regional Office

ATLANTA (BP)--The American Baptist Convention is moving into the South, opening a regional office here, with the hope of strengthening American Baptist churches in Southern states.

At the same time, they hope to be cooperating with other Baptist conventions in the South, according to E. B. Hicks, American Baptist executive officer here.

Hicks has taken on the problems of 130 churches in the South as the first executive minister of the newly-formed American Baptist churches of the South.

Churches of the American Baptist Convention, until recent years, were predominantly located in the Northern section of the nation. The convention was once known as the Northern Baptist Convention.

Hicks, former assistant secretary of the American Baptist Convention's Division of Parish Development of the Home Mission Society, will coordinate all agencies of the ABC in 14 Southern states.

In the South, ABC churches are spread from Norfolk, Va., to San Antonio, Tex., with black, white and Spanish congregations, Hicks said.

Hicks said there is no designation in his listing of the 130 churches as to the predominate race, but it had been reported earlier by the press that there are 30 predominately white American Baptist churches in the South, with the remaining 100 churches black or Mexican-American.

Many of the 130 churches are dually-aligned with other Baptist conventions, including the Southern Baptist Convention, the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., and the Progressive Baptist Convention, he said.

Names of the ABC churches in the South have not been released. Hicks said he believes there are a few former Southern Baptist churches that have switched to the American Baptist Convention, but this, too, is not designated on his list.

Three predominately black churches in Atlanta are affiliated with the American Baptist Convention--West Hunter Street Baptist Church, Ralph Abernathy, pastor; Ebenezer Baptist Church, Martin Luther King Sr., pastor; and Greater Mount Calvary Baptist Church, B. Joseph Johnson, pastor.

"We are not in competition with anyone," Hicks said. "We will be dealing with unusual groups of people and trying to make the church relevant."

In his new post, Hicks will be traveling throughout the South, visiting in American Baptist Churches. His responsibilities number "even more than hoped for," he said and include meeting the churches' needs and helping with church programs.

"We hope to keep the churches integrated. We think we have a model to show to the nation," Hicks said.

He said his office is willing to work with other Baptist conventions in the South. Hicks said in the past he met with other Baptist convention members, including National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., in conferences on dual alignment.

"Nobody wants to steal churches," Hicks said. "There are enough people in the world that no one needs to steal a church. The job is entirely too big for one convention. But together we can accomplish many things if we don't mind who gets the credit."

During the 25 years Hicks has worked with American Baptists, he also has been aligned with the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. He has served as national director of Baptist educational centers and as director of an education center in Topeka, Kan. While in Kansas, he also was executive secretary of the Missionary Baptist Convention of the state.

Hicks has been on the national staff of the ABC Home Mission Society for 14 years. He has special responsibilities for inter-city urban, and parish witness and video-tape recordings.

A Kansas native, he is a graduate of Washburn University of Topeka, and Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kan. He has done advanced studies in race relations at Fisk University, Nashville, and the urban church at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

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Baptisms In Jordan
Show Sharp Increase

7/16/71

AMMAN, Jordan (BP)--In less than one month recently, 41 persons were baptized in the country of Jordan, compared to a total of 13 conversions during all of last year, Southern Baptist missionaries reported here.

A spirit of revival is sweeping the Baptist churches of Jordan, said Paul S. C. Smith, Southern Baptist missionary to Jordan.

The sharp increase in baptisms has boosted membership in churches of the Jordan Baptist Convention by 24 per cent, Smith reported.

In Zarka, Jordan's second largest city where Baptists began work less than three years ago, 23 persons were baptized. Twelve candidates were awaiting baptism, and whole families have asked for the rite, Smith said.

Eleven girls from the Baptist girls' school in Ajloun were baptized recently, and more than 70 in grades five through 12 have made professions of faith in Christ preliminary to baptism, he reported.

Seven persons were to be baptized in Irbid on July 18; two of them were from the village of Taiybeh.

"It is really a wonderful experience to see people emerge from the fear of bombs, bullets and revolution and enter into a fear of the Lord and a love for him," said Smith, a native of Mississippi and missionary to Jordan since 1963.

Southern Baptists, who began work in Jordan in 1952, carry on a combination of educational, medical and evangelical ministries. Currently, 14 SBC missionaries are assigned to Jordan.

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BP PHOTO MAILED TO BAPTIST STATE PAPER EDITORS

84 Per Cent of SBC Messengers
Church Workers, Survey Shows

7/16/71

NASHVILLE (BP)--A poll of 7,310 messengers attending the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis in June showed that 84.4 per cent were members of a church staff, the wife of a church staff member, a denominational worker or missionary.

A total of 15.1 per cent of the 7,310 messengers indicated they were laymen in "secular" employment, or "homemakers."

The percentages add to more than 100 per cent because of multiple answers, especially in the "homemaker" category, according to Martin B. Bradley, secretary of the research and statistics department for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

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Of the 7,310 messengers, 52.4 per cent said they were staff members of a Southern Baptist church. Wives of church staff members accounted for 20.9 per cent.

In other related categories, 1.7 per cent indicated they were home or foreign missionaries, 3.8 per cent said they were workers for Baptist associations, 3.0 per cent were state convention staff members, 2.2 per cent indicated they were denominational workers, and .4 per cent said they were evangelists.

Laymen responding indicated that 8.8 per cent of the messengers were in "secular" employment, and that 6.3 per cent were "homemakers."

In response to other questions in the poll, nearly half (49.7 per cent) said they attended the 1969 SBC in New Orleans, and 46.3 per cent said they attended the 1970 convention in Denver.

A surprising 77 per cent said they planned to stay for the last convention session on Thursday morning in St. Louis. It was the largest percentage responding "yes" to any one question in the entire poll.

Two thirds of the 7,310 messengers participating in the poll were men; one-third, were women.

In age span, 32.1 per cent were between the ages of 35-44; 25.3 per cent were ages 45-54; 18.8 per cent were over 55; 16.2 per cent were ages 35-39; and 10.9 per cent were under 30.