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September 21, 1971

Arkansas Convention Committee
Defines Term, "Regular Baptist"

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--A committee of the Arkansas Baptist Convention, after a two-year study and a controversy that has simmered for six years, will make four recommendations to the state convention here Nov. 16-18 seeking to "clarify" requirements for membership in the convention.

The 25-member committee was appointed two years ago during the height of a controversy spawned in 1968 when the convention withdrew fellowship from four churches that practice either "alien immersion" or "open communion."

The four churches were ousted from the convention on the basis that they did not meet requirements in the convention's Constitution limiting membership to "regular Baptist churches."

When the 1971 convention meets at Second Baptist Church here in November, the committee of 25 will recommend adoption of a definition of the term "regular Baptist church." This is the way the committee's definition of the term reads:

"Regular Baptist churches are those Baptist churches which in doctrine and in practice adhere to the principles and the spirit of the 'Baptist Faith and Message' (statement) as adopted by the 1963 session of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Last year, on the committee's recommendation, the Arkansas convention adopted the "Baptist Faith and Message" statement as its own expression.

According to the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, "alien immersion" is defined as baptism by immersion by a church of a differing ecclesiastical fellowship or order (ie, a non-Southern Baptist church). "Open communion" is a practice by a local church permitting persons in addition to members of that local congregation to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Though the "Baptist Faith and Message" statement has a section on "Baptism and the Lord's Supper," it does not specifically rule out a Baptist church's accepting the immersion of another church for its members, or deny the practice of "open communion." The statement says:

"Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

"The Lord's Supper," the statement continues, "is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming."

The committee's four recommendations to the convention in November call for three constitution changes to define the term "regular Baptist churches" in various sections of the Constitution. Passage by two successive conventions is required on all constitution changes.

No indication was given by the committee on who would decide whether or not a specific church met the stipulation of adhering "in doctrine and in practice" to the statement of Faith and Message.

In 1965, the convention voted to withdraw fellowship from First Baptist Church, Russellville, Ark., because the church practiced "alien immersion."

Again in 1968, the convention voted to withdraw fellowship from four churches, including the Russellville congregation, because they practiced with "alien immersion" or "open Communion" and therefore were not "regular Baptist churches."

Carl Overton, associational missionary of the Ashley County Baptist Association in Hamburg, Ark., made the 1968 motion, citing previous convention resolutions which he said stated that churches which engage in these practices are not "regular Baptist churches."

At the 1969 convention in Fort Smith, Ark., Dillard Millar, pastor of First Baptist Church in Mena, Ark., made the motion asking for the committee to define the term "regular Baptist churches" and to "clarify, specify and recommend policies regarding membership in this convention."

In addition to the Russellville church, other churches excluded by the 1968 convention are First Baptist Church, Malvern, Ark.; University Baptist Church, Little Rock; and Lake Village Baptist Church, Lake Village, Ark.

None of the four churches sent messengers to the state convention last year.

Wilson Deese, pastor of West Helena Baptist Church, West Helena, Ark., is chairman of the committee of 25 making the recommendation defining the term "regular Baptist church."

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**Stetson Names Two Baptists
"Ministers of the Year"**

9/21/71

DELAND, Fla. (BP)--Two Florida Baptist pastors were cited here as "Ministers of the Year" by Stetson University, a private Baptist school.

They are William R. Flury of Panacea, Fla., named "1972 Rural Minister of the Year" by Stetson, and Bill Francis Billingsley of Hollywood, Fla., named "1972 Urban Minister of the Year."

Billingsley is pastor of Sheridan Hills Baptist Church in Hollywood. Flury is pastor of First Baptist Church in Panacea.

The Stetson award cited Billingsley for leading the church to a membership of more than 1,000 and to establish a complete social ministries concern that embraces a child care program, work with juvenile delinquents and alcoholics.

Flury was cited for leading his church to increase its Sunday School enrollment by more than 25 per cent, and its giving to missions through the Cooperative Program by more than 500 per cent. Flury was also praised for "his ability to effect reconciliation among estranged Christians in a small community.

John E. Johns, president of Stetson, presented the awards during a Baptist leadership luncheon. It was the second year that the Baptist school has presented the awards to ministers nominated from churches and associations throughout the state.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Following is a replacement story for the Baptist Press report carried 9/20/71, headlined "Grenade Slightly Injures Colorado Baptist Leader." The new story, based on an interview with Glen Braswell, gives new and correct information not available at the time of the earlier story and gives the complete and correct listing of injured persons. Please substitute this for the earlier story.

**Colorado Baptist Leader Among
12 Injured By Grenade Explosion**

9/21/71

JERUSALEM (BP)--A grenade, tossed by an unknown assailant, exploded on the streets of Old Jerusalem, killing a small Arab child and injuring 12 persons, including executive secretary of the Colorado Baptist General Convention and two independent Baptist preachers.

Injured were five Arab children and seven American tourists, part of an 18-member tour group composed primarily of Baptist laymen and women from independent Baptist churches.

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None of the Americans was seriously injured. One of the five Arab children reportedly lost an eye and another lost a leg.

Minor sharpnel fragment injuries were sustained by Glen E. Braswell, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist-related Colorado Baptist General Convention in Denver; and six others, all members of independent Baptist churches in Corpus Christi, Tex., and Tinley Park, Ill.

Injured slightly were Buddy Murphy, pastor of South Crest Baptist Church, Corpus Christi, Tex.; Dana Pitman, a 17-year-old high school senior who is a member of Murphy's church;

Joe Boyd, an independent Baptist evangelist based in Corpus Christi, and his wife, Edith; Alex Noble, a Chicago area construction worker who attends Moody Bible Institute at night; and Bertha Frye, a nurse, both of Tinley Park, Ill., and members of the Tinley Park Baptist Church, an independent Baptist congregation.

Israeli authorities charged that Arab guerrilla groups were behind the attack in an effort to hurt the Israeli tourist trade, according to one news report. A later news report indicated that a terrorist group in Damascus had claimed credit for the attack.

Braswell, in an interview, said that the grenade was probably tossed at the American tourist group, not the children playing in the streets of Old Jerusalem. It was Sunday morning and no one was on the street except the tourist group and the Arab children.

The group was walking down a decline about five or six blocks from the entrance of Herod's Gate to the walled city. They were walking along the route called the Via Delorosa, the way of the cross, which traditionally is the route Christ took to the crucifixion.

Braswell said there were five tourists walking about 30 feet ahead of the other 18 tour members, when he and Mrs. Boyd at the head of the group saw the grenade hit the small Arab girl in the chest and fall to the ground.

"I remember thinking, 'What is that?' and about that time it exploded," Braswell said. He and the other four were about 15 feet away. The Arab children were only about six feet away. The closest girl suffered massive brain damage.

At first, Braswell said he did not even realize he had been hit by a grenade fragment. His first concern was for Mrs. Boyd and the children, he added. There was no pain and only after one of the Baptist laymen pointed to the blood on his chest did he realize he had been hit.

They walked back outside the walled city and took a taxi to a refugee hospital, and then went to a second hospital for minor treatment. They did not remove the grenade fragments and told the Americans there should be no complications.

Braswell said he planned to go to the Denver clinic to either have the fragment removed, or receive assurance that there would be no damage by leaving it. The fragment was imbedded about an inch or more deep into the flesh of his chest, he said.

"If we had been grouped together, the grenade probably would have hit the group," Braswell said. He added that he did not feel it was motivated by anti-Americanism.

Boyd, according to one news report, said he felt it was "a miracle of God that we escaped disaster."

Braswell added that if the grenade had not hit the small Arab girl, it would have probably hit the pavement and slid down to the tour group before exploding, possibly killing the Americans instead of the Arab child.

"I don't think the Lord loves me any more than he loves that little Arab girl," Braswell said. "Why it should happen to them and 18 of us get only small injuries, I don't understand. But we are grateful to God that our lives were spared."

The 18 members of the troupe group included six persons from the Chicago area, most of them from Tinley Park Baptist Church in Tinley Park, Ill.; five from Corpus Christi, Tex.; two from Arkansas, and five from Denver.

Only five of the 18 were Southern Baptists--Braswell, Mr. and Mrs. Theo Previs of Denver, a deacon at Riverside Baptist Church in Denver; and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Shamburger of Little Rock, Ark., a semi-retired Baptist religious education worker. Braswell was the only Southern Baptist injured.

Also uninjured were the pastor of Tinley Park Baptist Church, David Loser and three members of the church. Loser earlier on the trip had baptized one of the injured tour members, Alex Noble, in the Jordan River, after Noble told him he did not feel his earlier baptism was scriptural.

Both Boyd, a former All-American football player for Texas A&M University, College Station, and Murphy, a former student at University of Corpus Christi, Tex., are former Southern Baptists.

Seventeen-year-old Dana Pitman of Corpus Christi, Tex., and his brother almost didn't make it on the trip. Their automobile was robbed in New York City and they were delayed one full day joining the tour getting new passports, money and clothing. Pitman was slightly injured by the fragments.

The grenade incident occurred on the last day of the two-week tour. Earlier, the group had visited Athens, Cairo, Beirut, Cyprus and Tel Aviv before reaching Jerusalem.

"All through the tour, I didn't detect in either Arabs or Israelis anything but friendliness, courtesy and I just look at it personally as one of those incidents that is not connected with any anti-Americanism," Braswell said.



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