

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 11, 1971

Georgia Baptists' Harmony
Marred With Racial Debate

JEKYLL ISLAND, Ga. (BP)--One of the most harmonious sessions in years for the Georgia Baptist Convention was marred by debate on only one issue--implementation of a three-year policy to integrate the convention's children's homes.

For three days on this resort island, business actions were peaceful and calm. The convention approved a record budget, made plans for celebrating its sesquicentennial anniversary, routinely approved a complicated financial plan for retiring over \$1 million in outstanding debts for one of its colleges, and authorized a \$10 million loan for a hospital.

In addition to approving the debt retirement plan for Norman Junior College at Norman Park, Ga., the convention authorized development of a Baptist Assembly for South Georgia on the campus of the Baptist school which closed in June.

The debate in the otherwise tame convention came when John Nichol, pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., asked the convention to instruct trustees of Georgia Baptist Children's Homes to implement an open-door policy of accepting children of all races.

Nichol, pastor of an integrated church, explained that some of his black church members need the services of the home, but that he had been told by children's home officials that they would not be accepted unless the convention in annual session so ordered.

After brief but intense debate, messengers voted by a margin of about two to one to defeat Nichol's proposal and to leave the "delicate matter" to children's home trustees and the administrator.

This was the second year in a row that Nichol had requested the convention to instruct children's home trustees to put into actual practice a policy they adopted in 1968, when a "whites only" clause was stricken from the children's home charter. But no black children have been sought or accepted.

In other action, the convention adopted a 1972 budget of \$6.2 million, an increase of 5.6 per cent over 1971's budget. After deduction of 10 per cent and shared administrative and promotional expenses, the budget will be divided equally between Georgia and Southern Baptist Convention causes.

The convention authorized Atlanta Baptist Hospital to borrow up to \$10 million to add new facilities and another \$4 million to erect an additional professional building. The loan will come from an Atlanta bank and an insurance company.

Quick approval was given to plans for celebration of the convention's 150th birthday, June 25-29 at Powellton Baptist Church, where the convention was organized in 1822. A special sesquicentennial program is also being planned for the 1972 convention, which meets Nov. 13-15 in Savannah.

James A. Lester, editor of the Baptist and Reflector in Tennessee, is also writing a new history of the Georgia Baptist Convention to be officially released in June.

The Christian Index, weekly news magazine of Georgia Baptists, will also be 150 years old in 1972. Editor Jack U. Harwell announced that his publication will switch to a new tabloid format on January 1 and will publish a special sesquicentennial issue in June and a book on the history of the Christian Index in November.

Re-elected president of the convention for a second term was R. Jack Robinson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Augusta, Ga.

Virginia Baptists Oppose Busing, Withdrawal of Race Study Material

ARLINGTON, Va. (BP)--After nearly an hour's debate each, the Baptist General Association of Virginia adopted a motion expressing "regret" and "distress" over withdrawal of a quarterly including a Baptist study of race relations, and approved a resolution opposing forced busing to achieve integration.

Debate on both proposals lasted nearly an hour each, but observers at the association's annual meeting said the discussions were not "heated."

Mahan Siler, pastor of Ravenswood Baptist Church in Annandale, Va., made the motion that the association express regret and distress over action taken recently by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in withdrawing the quarterly *Becoming* for 14-15 year olds because officials felt the study material on race relations was "potentially inflammatory."

During debate on the motion, Richard Moore of Chesapeake, Va., and a trustee for the Sunday School Board, read to the convention a letter from James L. Sullivan, executive secretary of the board, explaining reasons for the actions to the trustees. Moore questioned whether it was appropriate for a state convention to criticize an agency of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Siler pointed out that his intention was not to attack or denounce the Sunday School Board, but to inform both the board and the public at large that not all Baptists felt that the material was "inflammatory."

Later, during adoption of resolutions by the association, the messengers to the meeting expressed opposition to forced busing to achieve racial balance, but adopted an amendment to the resolution supporting open housing "in order to make our neighborhood school concept stand on Christian principles."

"We express our conviction that assignment of pupils to schools solely on the basis of race is contrary to the rights of American citizens as guaranteed by the Constitution, . . . and that the coercive element involved in the policy of racial balance and consequent forced busing is contrary to the best interests of education of all children," said the resolution.

Approving the report of its religious liberty committee, the association narrowly adopted a recommendation "that Virginia Baptists favor the freedom of Broadman Press to print what ever will meet the needs of cooperating churches."

The motion carried by 255-231, a margin of 24 votes. During debate, four speakers opposed the motion, which appeared to be aimed at a controversy raging for two years in the Southern Baptist Convention over recall and rewriting of the Genesis-Exodus volume of the Broadman Bible Commentary because of its alleged liberalism.

The religious liberty committee also recommended that Virginia Baptists oppose "any attempt to amend the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution on the question of public school prayer and Bible reading." Only one negative vote was cast.

Another hotly-contested proposal was submitted by the association's Christian life committee, which requested the convention's General Board to "take the matter of consumer exploitation under advisement immediately and report with recommendations at the next annual meeting" of the association.

An effort to refer the proposal back to the committee failed by a vote of 275-212. The association then approved the committee's proposal by what observers called "an overwhelming majority."

The association approved overwhelmingly the recommendations of a special committee on pastor-church staff relations proposing that a previously created office of information and research for the state association be assigned primary responsibilities in the field of church-staff relations. The position has not yet been filled.

Job description detailed in the committee's recommendation called for the office to prepare and maintain files on pastors and other church staff members, and authorized the office to contact churches and offer services in providing information on prospective church staff members. It also authorized counseling services to churches or staff members on a request basis.

In another major action, the association set plans and goals for an extensive ministry in the "urban corridor" of Virginia. The goals included establishing 58 new churches in the urban corridor by 1980, and the possibility of a full-time employee to the area of metropolitan missions to coordinate work in the area.

Resolutions adopted by the association called on Congress to place restrictions on advertisements of alcoholic beverages, and opposed legalization of gambling, parimutuel betting, and lotteries in the state.

In other action, the association authorized a special church-wide offering for Virginia Baptist Children's Homes, and adopted a budget of \$4.7 million. The budget will provide 38 per cent to support Southern Baptist world mission causes.

Elected president of the convention was W. Barker Hardison, pastor of Westover Baptist Church, Arlington, Va., where the convention met.

Next year the annual association meeting will be held at Virginia Beach, Va., Nov. 14-16, 1972.

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Six Texas Baptist Leaders Oppose Quarterly Withdrawal

HOUSTON (BP)--Six state Baptist convention presidents, who sponsored a mass interracial evangelistic rally in the Astrodome here, have expressed regret over the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's withdrawal of a quarterly for teenagers including a unit on race relations.

"The decision of the Southern Baptist Convention's Sunday School Board to withdraw from distribution a periodical with a picture of both black and white persons is not only regrettable, but fails to reflect new attitudes of love which have grown at the grass roots of Baptist life," the presidents said in a joint statement.

"Those of us who were involved in what is believed to be the largest gathering of Baptists in recent U. S. history in the Astrodome October 27 saw evidence of a common ground of all races around the cross of Jesus," they continued.

"We feel that this response of thousands of Baptists is eloquent testimony that this decision (by the Sunday School Board) ignored a wave of new conscience over racial prejudice which has evolved in recent years. We join in expressing regret over the decision and in praying for the day when such attitudes will be no more," the statement concluded.

The Astrodome meeting of blacks, whites and Mexican-Americans, representing six Texas state Baptist conventions of more than 2.5 million members, was billed as a "spiritual spectacular." It drew more than 41,700 persons, and resulted in more than 1,000 decisions for Christ.

The signers included a white Southern Baptist, Jimmy R. Allen of San Antonio, now immediate past president of the 1.9 million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas; a Mexican-American Southern Baptist, Epifanio Salazar of Corpus Christi, Tex., president of the Mexican Baptist Departmental Convention (an affiliate of the BGCT); and a black president, W. F. Dudley of Houston, Baptist Missionary and Education Convention of Texas.

Other signers were black convention presidents, M. L. Price of Houston, Missionary Baptist General Convention of Texas; P. S. Wilkinson of San Antonio, American Baptist Convention of Texas; and J. W. Brent of Houston, Baptist Progressive State Convention of Texas.

The statement came as a result of a Sunday School Board decision to revise *Becoming*, a church training quarterly for 14-15-year-olds, and a corresponding leadership quarterly, which had been printed but not yet distributed.

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James L. Sullivan, Sunday School Board executive secretary-treasurer, and Allen B. Comish, director of the board's Church Services and Materials Division, decided that a photo showing a black boy and two white girls conversing and some textual material by Twyla Wright of Casa Grande, Ariz., were "potentially inflammatory."

"A review of materials in the publishing process dealing with sensitive issues led us to observe that misunderstandings could result from release of this issue in its original form," Comish said.

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Michigan Convention Adopts
Record Budget, Resolutions

11-11-71

ST. CLAIR SHORES, Mich. (BP)-- The Baptist State Convention of Michigan meeting here adopted a record budget and approved resolutions dealing with moral degradation in society, separation of church and state, Christian citizenship, and evangelism.

The new budget totals \$843,407, including a goal of \$393,936 to be raised by Southern Baptist churches in Michigan. Of the state goal, 20.5 per cent will be allocated to Southern Baptist world mission causes, an increase of .5 per cent over the 1971 allocation to SBC causes.

Resolutions were adopted expressing "grave concern and alarm" at the increase of use of alcohol, drugs and pornographic materials, saying "the Christian life is inconsistent with such wrongs."

Other resolutions reaffirmed "the traditional Baptist position" on separation of church and state though it did not specify what this position is; urged Southern Baptists in Michigan to accept their responsibilities as Christian citizens to vote in next year's elections; and urged Baptists to "seek a revival of . . . lay witnessing" in evangelism.

Elected president of the convention was Roy Adams, pastor of Eastgate Baptist Church, Flint, Mich. Next year the convention will meet Nov. 14-16 at Niles Avenue Baptist Church, St. Joseph, Mich.

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