



News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

---FEATURES

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460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

Telephone (615) 244-2355

W. C. Fields, Director

Jim Newton, Assistant Director

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Philadelphia--A Historic City
Of Baptist, American Heritage

By Lynn E. May Jr.
Executive Secretary, SBC Historical Commission

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--For the first time since its formation in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention will meet this year, June 6-8, in the "Cradle of the Nation."

In doing so, the messengers to the convention will gather in not only one of America's most historic cities, but also in a city rich with Baptist heritage.

Philadelphia is well-known as the home of the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, the Betsy Ross House, Congress Hall, and other national memorials. As the site of the Continental Congress which adopted the Declaration of Independence, and as the site of the first capital of the United States, Philadelphia is known as the cradle of our nation.

Many Baptists, however, are unaware of the historic significance of Philadelphia as the site of numerous important beginnings and developments in the heritage of Baptists.

It was here that the first Baptist association in America was organized. It was here that the first national organization of Baptists, the Triennial Convention, held its first and last meetings. It was here that the first session of the Baptist World Alliance to meet in the United States was held.

A brief summary of these events will indicate the riches of Southern Baptists' Philadelphia heritage.

It all started in 1688 when Elias Keach, son of a famous London Baptist minister, led 12 Baptists who had migrated from England, Wales and Ireland to form the Pennepack Baptist Church near Philadelphia.

Under Keach's leadership, this early church soon gave birth to four other churches in surrounding areas of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, including the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia which was formed in 1698. These churches firmly planted the Baptist witness in the Philadelphia area. The historic Pennepack Church, now called Lower Dublin Baptist Church, is located at Bustleton in Philadelphia. First Baptist Church is located at 17th and Sansom Streets, a few blocks from the headquarters hotel for the convention (the Sheraton).

On July 27, 1707, representatives of five small churches organized the Philadelphia Baptist Association, the first such organization of Baptist churches in America.

Patterned after English Baptist associations, it handled questions of doctrine and practice, counseled churches, provided preachers, and sent out missionaries. The Calvinistic confession of faith adopted by the association in 1742 was widely endorsed by Baptists in America and helped to give them direction theologically.

This association played an important part in the growth of Baptists in the South. In 1749 it sent Oliver Hart to Charleston, S.C., where in 1750 he led in the formation of the Charleston Association, the first in the South.

Today, the Philadelphia Association continues to unite the efforts of American Baptists in the Philadelphia area, including the Lower Dublin (Pennepack) Church and the First Baptist Church which helped to organize it 255 years ago.

In 1774, Baptist history and American history merged in a significant way in Philadelphia. When the Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in 1774, Baptists sought to take advantage of this effort in behalf of freedom by sending Isaac Backus of Massachusetts to lay before the Congress the Baptist plea for religious liberty:

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Backus, staunch leader in the struggle for religious freedom, secured the assistance of Philadelphia Baptist Association leaders. They arranged a meeting with the delegates of Massachusetts to the Congress as a preliminary step toward the presentation of their grievances before the entire Continental Congress.

On October 14, 1774, Backus, John Manning and other Baptist leaders met with Massachusetts members of the Congress--Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert T. Paine, and others--and confronted them with Baptists' claims for religious liberty. Through four hours of debate, Backus and his supporters sought to establish the Baptists' cause as "a national political grievance." Though they did not achieve that purpose, they did secure a promise from these political leaders that an effort would be made to do something for the relief of the Baptists. The site of this significant encounter was Carpenters' Hall, now located at 320 Chestnut St., Philadelphia.

With the fight for religious liberty won when the Bill of Rights, including its First Amendment guarantees of religious freedom, was added to the Constitution in 1789, the next significant Baptist historical event in Philadelphia occurred in 1814. That was the year the so-called "Triennial Convention" was organized, welding the scattered Baptists of America into a national denomination.

On May 18, 1814, at the invitation of the Philadelphia Association, 26 ministers and seven laymen from 11 states and the District of Columbia, met at the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia and formed the first national Baptist body in America. Though popularly called the "Triennial Convention" since it met every three years, the official name was "The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions."

The formation of this denominational body in Philadelphia was the culmination of numerous preparatory events. Sentiment among Baptists in America for the support of foreign missions grew following the beginning of William Carey's mission work in India. The conversion of Congregational missionaries Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice to Baptist views when they went to India further stimulated that interest in missions. Rice's return to enlist support from American Baptists was climaxed by the formation of this convention. The world mission enterprise thus helped Baptists in America find a basis on which to "elicit, combine and direct" their energies into a single cause.

Southern leaders who helped organize the Triennial Convention included such stalwarts as Richard Furman of South Carolina, first president of the convention, and William Bullein Johnson of Georgia, the last Southerner to serve as president of the Triennial Convention before the Baptist schism of 1845.

In 1844, Philadelphia was the scene of the final meeting of the Triennial Convention. Though the Triennial Convention had united efforts of Baptists North and South in foreign missions and other denominational enterprises for 30 years, the last meeting in 1844 was fraught with tension and distrust.

The heat of the slavery controversy, dissatisfaction among the Southern brethren with the northern-based American Baptist Home Mission Society (which they believed was neglecting Southern mission fields), and other factors prompted charges and countercharges on both sides. An uneasy peace was achieved at the Philadelphia meeting with the passage of a resolution by the convention proclaiming its neutral position on the controversial issues. William Bullein Johnson, elected president of the Triennial Convention in 1841, asked the brethren in 1844 not to consider him for re-election.

Some leaders, both North and South, left the Philadelphia meeting in 1844 with the feeling that separation was inevitable. They were right. It happened the next year, 1845, with the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention in Augusta, Ga. Johnson, the last Southern president of the Triennial Convention, was elected first president of the new Southern Baptist Convention.

It was not until 1911 that members of the Southern Baptist Convention returned to Philadelphia for a major convention with the Baptists of the North with whom they severed ties in 1845.

In 1911, Baptists from around the world, including those of the Northern and Southern Baptist Conventions, gathered in Philadelphia for the second Congress of the Baptist World Alliance. Significantly, Philadelphia was chosen as the site for the first meeting of the Alliance in the United States. At the Philadelphia meeting of the world fellowship organized in 1905, the Alliance elected Robert S. MacArthur as the first American to serve as president of the organization.

On June 6-8, 1972, Southern Baptists will be returning to their birthplace for the first time as a national body since they pulled out of the Triennial Convention meeting here in 1844. On their return, they will find a city rich, not only in the heritage of their nation, but their denomination.

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Lottie Moon Christmas Offering
Tops \$17 Million--New Record

5/4/72

RICHMOND (BP)--The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions reached a record total of \$17,833,810 when the books closed April 30, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board here announced.

The annual mission offering is sponsored by the Woman's Missionary Union in Southern Baptist churches across the nation.

The announcement was the second time in less than three months that the Baptist mission agency, hard-hit by dollar devaluation and worldwide inflation, has received encouraging financial news, according to board officials. In February, the board learned that the SBC Executive Committee would be recommending a 9.8 per cent increase in Cooperative Program funding for the board for 1973.

The board's \$36 million-plus budget is dependent primarily on the Cooperative Program unified budget of the convention, and the annual Lottie Moon Offering in local churches, for its funding.

The record Lottie Moon gifts exceeded by \$1 million the goal of \$16,750 set by the Woman's Missionary Union. It surpassed the 1970 offering by about \$1.6 million, or 9.9 per cent. It was the largest single increase in the offering's 83-year history.

Foreign Mission Board Executive Secretary Baker J. Cauthen said the offering would go a long way toward offsetting the estimated \$1.2 million setback caused by dollar devaluation and a nearly 6 per cent annual erosion due to inflation.

The agency voted in January to increase missionary support by more than \$800,000 to help missionaries combat devaluation and inflation.

Cauthen said that the dollars would be "translated into mission realities" soon. The money will go toward "salaries of missionaries, education of missionaries' children, programs of evangelism and church development, schools and student work, hospitals, publications and benevolences," he added.

"Funds needed for church buildings, schools, hospitals, publishing houses, and other needed structures also can become realities because of these gifts," he said.

Cauthen said, however, that some large requests for mission funding still cannot be met.

Cauthen pointed out that the strong surge in the offering this year was especially significant because the money becomes available in a year when the board is operating without any increase in its Cooperative Program allotment.

"Together with the good news of an anticipated Cooperative Program increase for 1973," he said, "the word can go out to potential mission volunteers and to the missions overseas that Southern Baptists have said we should continue the advance.

On learning of the final amount when the books closed on the mission offering April 30, Cauthen immediately telephoned Woman's Missionary Union Executive Secretary Alma Hunt to express appreciation to the WMU and all who helped in raising the offering.

In an article written for the board's monthly magazine, *The Commission*, Cauthen gave credit for the offering's success to pastors, Baptist Brotherhood Commission workers, "Missionary Day" in Sunday Schools, and other church programs and leadership under the direction of Woman's Missionary Union.

Cauthen called the record gifts "a remarkable outpouring of generosity in missionary concern," and an "answer to prayer." He added: "We are convinced there is a deep concern for worldwide missionary labor that fills the hearts of the people in the churches.

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"Southern Baptists believe in the Great Commission," he declared. "There is deep determination to do what we can do to give the gospel to all the world. And there is an understanding that the giving of life is even more important than the giving of money. . . ."

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Total Mission Gifts Up 5.66%,
Cooperative Program Up 1.33%

5/4/72

NASHVILLE (BP)--A big increase in designated giving and a slight increase in Cooperative Program contributions combined to end the first third of the year with a 5.66 per cent increase in total world mission gifts in the Southern Baptist Convention.

At the end of the first four months of the year, Southern Baptists had given \$29,374,732 to world missions through the Cooperative Program unified budget and through designated offerings and contributions to specific mission causes. It was an increase of \$1.5 million, or 5.66 per cent.

Cooperative Program unified budget giving was up slightly, 1.33 per cent or \$137,097 over Cooperative Program contributions for the same four month period in 1971.

By April 30, 1972, Southern Baptists had given \$10,455,956 through the Cooperative Program to support the work of their national denominational efforts.

During the same four months, however, Baptists had given \$18,918,776 in designated contributions to specific mission causes. Designations were up \$1,436,339, or 8.22 per cent.

Included in the \$18.9 million in designated contributions was a record \$17.8 million given through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. (See separate story.)

The increase in Cooperative Program contributions was held to a 1.3 per cent increase partially because five state conventions did not send in their Cooperative Program checks for the month of April in time to be counted before the books closed April 28, explained SBC Executive Committee Financial Planning Secretary John H. Williams.

Thus the April Cooperative Program records will show no contributions from Alabama, Colorado, Illinois, Oklahoma and West Virginia. Instead, their April gifts will be counted during May, Williams explained.

April Cooperative Program contributions totalled \$2.3 million, or \$18,867 less than was given in April of 1971. It was a decrease of .79 per cent.

April designated gifts were up sharply, with \$2.4 million in designations during April compared to \$2.1 million for the same month last year. Designations during the month increased \$295,484, or 13.87 per cent.

The amounts reflected in the financial report prepared by the SBC Executive Committee do not include funds contributed to local and state mission efforts, but report only contributions to national and worldwide Baptist mission efforts.

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*460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219*

LYNN MAY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 9TH AVE. NO.
NASHVILLE TN 37203