



BAPTIST PRESS

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May 15, 1972

**Convention Messengers Urged
To Get Individual Credentials**

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--Southern Baptist leaders have issued a plea for each elected "messenger" to the Southern Baptist Convention here June 6-8 to obtain in advance the proper credentials needed to register as a voting "messenger."

Last year, more than 5,000 messengers (delegates) showed up at the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis without their credentials, and each one had to go before the SBC credentials committee for certification before they could register.

"This is ridiculous," said Carl E. Bates, president of the convention and pastor of First Baptist Church of Charlotte, N.C.

"It's absolutely ridiculous," said the chairman of the SBC credentials committee last year. "It's disgusting," added the SBC registration secretary.

B. Conrad Johnston, pastor of the Salem Baptist Church in Salem, Va., who was chairman of the convention credentials committee last year, explained that nearly one-third of the messengers to the convention arrived in St. Louis without the required messenger registration cards.

It takes three times as long to register without the registration cards as it does with them, Johnston said. With the credentials, registration takes about 10 minutes. Without them, it takes 30 to 45 minutes, he estimated.

At times last year, there were 200 to 300 persons waiting in line to get certification from the credentials committee before they could register.

W. Fred Kendall, executive secretary of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and registration secretary for the SBC, said that most of those who failed to bring their proper credentials cannot understand why they can't go ahead and register anyway.

But Kendall and those who help register the messengers have no way of knowing who is an official "messenger" elected by a local church, and who is not. By convention procedure, any person who seeks to register who does not have the proper credentials is automatically referred to the credentials committee.

The committee and its members must interview all such persons, determine if they have been officially elected by their church, discover how many other messengers have been elected by their church, and determine how many messengers the church is entitled to elect according to its contributions through the Cooperative Program and/or its membership.

The Constitution of the convention states that each church "in friendly cooperation" with the convention and which has "been a bona fide contributor" to the convention's work is eligible for one messenger; plus one additional messenger for every 250 members or for each \$250 paid to the work of the convention in the previous year. No church is entitled to more than 10 messengers.

Bates said, however, that one year recently, as many as 50 persons from one church registered as messengers--a fact not discovered until after the convention.

Not only do some churches send too many people, fully one-third do not obtain the messenger cards in advance for the individual messengers, Kendall said. "This puts a terrible burden on the credentials committee," he added.

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Johnston said the committee, which includes only ten members, would spend 14 hours a day certifying credentials for those who forgot to bring them. The committee members did not have time to eat, or go to the convention sessions, he said.

Even former presidents of the convention and heads of SBC agencies have come to the convention as elected messengers, but have failed to get credentials in advance, Johnston said. "But I won't call any names--it would be too embarrassing."

Johnston said that even a letter from a church listing the messengers it has elected is not adequate. The committee has no way of checking to see if the other messengers on the list have been registered, he added. The current requirements further stipulate each messenger must have his own individual credentials.

Johnston said that every person who fails to bring his credentials seems to think he is the only person to forget them.

All three of the convention leaders urged churches to write immediately to their state convention executive secretaries to obtain the individual credentials, to fill them out properly in advance, and to give them to the elected messengers. Furthermore, they urged each messenger to take the initiative in obtaining the credentials if the church has not automatically provided them.

The messenger registration cards are available from the executive secretary of the state convention with which the specific churches are affiliated, Kendall said.

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Baptist Layman Gives
\$1 Million to Hospital

5/15/72

DALLAS (BP)--A Baptist layman has donated \$1 million to Baylor University Medical Center here to establish a center for continuing education in a wide range of medical and paramedical fields.

A. Webb Roberts, a land developer and bank organizer, made the gift during the annual spring meeting of the trustees of the Texas Baptist institution.

The endowment gift will finance the A. Webb Roberts Center for Continuing Education in the Health Sciences, according to W. Dewey Presley, chairman of Baylor's Dallas board.

Boone Powell Sr., medical center executive director, said the center will be operated in existing facilities to fund a series of continuing education programs in postgraduate education for physicians, visiting professorships and lectureships and periodic institutes.

The institutes will include nursing, pastoral care, medical technology, radiologic technology and radiophysics, medical electronics, physical therapy, occupational therapy, nutrition and food service, pharmacy, hospital administration and other professional and technical fields.

Soon the center will join TAGER, a closed circuit microwave television system which links a consortium of universities, colleges, medical schools and hospitals in north Texas.

Roberts, a quiet and unassuming bachelor, specified establishment of the center in honor of his mother, the late Mrs. Georgia Coggins Roberts of Ball Ground, Ga. He describes her as "a devout Christian to whom hundreds of Georgia mountain people would travel miles seeking her counsel."

A native of Ball Ground, Roberts has served as a trustee of Dallas Baptist College. He is a member of Dallas's First Baptist Church.

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Baptist World Alliance Sets
Executive Committee Session

5/15/72

KINGSTON, Jamaica (BP)--The Executive Committee of the Baptist World Alliance will meet here July 27-31 to make plans for the 13th Baptist World Congress in Stockholm, Sweden in 1975, and hear reports on the work of the world-wide Baptist organization.

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Robert S. Denny, general secretary for the alliance, said items on the agenda include a progress report on constitutional revision and possible restructure of the alliance to better meet needs of the modern age.

In addition to the business sessions of the executive committee, there will be conferences by leaders of the BWA-sponsored World Mission of Reconciliation, study sessions by the BWA's five commissions, conferences on relief and communications, and planning sessions by leaders of the men's, women's and youth departments.

Youth leaders will give primary attention to plans for the eighth Baptist World Youth Conference in Portland, Ore., in 1974.

Denny added that the main thrust of the World Mission of Reconciliation Through Jesus Christ probably will be determined at the Jamaica meeting. Joseph B. Underwood, general chairman of WMR coordination, will lead in planning sessions prior to opening of the executive committee and will bring recommendations to the larger group.

Denny said the significance of the meeting in Jamaica is that it will symbolize the alliance's desire to carry its activities beyond the primary Baptist population centers. There are 55,000 Baptists in Jamaica. Their work is led here by Azariah McKenzie, general secretary.

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CORRECTION

In BP story mailed 5-11-72, headlined "SBC Pageant to Depict Heritage of Denomination," please correct typographical error, graph 5, line 2 to read: ". . . the first association of churches in America, in 1707 . . ." (instead of 1907 as sent). Also, graph 13, change last sentence to read: "Both were Philadelphia pastors and leaders in the Philadelphia Baptist Association." (Only Morgan was a founder.) Thanks.

--Baptist Press

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Nominations for SBC Annual
Sermon Preacher Requested

BELLAIRE, Tex. (BP)--Nominations for persons to preach the annual convention sermon at the Southern Baptist Convention in Portland in 1973 are being accepted by the SBC Committee on Order of Business, the committee's chairman said here.

Lee Porter, chairman of the committee and pastor of First Baptist Church of Bellaire, Tex., said the committee would give serious consideration to every name submitted before making its recommendations at the SBC in Philadelphia, June 6-8.

Last year, more than 200 names were submitted, Porter said. "We want people to have an opportunity to nominate persons they think would preach a good sermon at the Portland convention, and would urge them to send their suggestions in writing to the committee," Porter said.

The committee can be addressed care of its chairman, 4601 Bellaire Blvd., Bellaire, Tex., 77401.

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Amish Religious Liberty
Upheld by Supreme Court

5/15/72

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U. S. Supreme Court here upheld the right of a group of Amish parents in Wisconsin to defy the compulsory school attendance law for their children beyond the eighth grade.

The court decided that, in a claim of the right of the free exercise of religion as in a case of the nature of the Amish practice, the state's interest in education is not as great as the rights protected by the First Amendment.

Three Amish families were involved in this case. Frieda Yoder, daughter of Jonas Yoder; Barbara Miller, daughter of Wallace Miller; and Vernon Yutzy, son of Adin Yutzy, graduated from the eighth grade of public schools. But according to Amish practice and beliefs, the parents refused to send their children to high school.

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The parents were charged, tried and convicted of violating the compulsory attendance law in Wisconsin and were fined \$5.00 each. The Wisconsin Circuit Court affirmed the convictions, but the state Supreme Court reversed the decisions of the lower courts on the basis of the "free exercise clause of the First Amendment."

The First Amendment provides: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ."

The Yoders and the Yutzys are members of the Old Order Amish religion. The Millers are members of the Conservative Amish Mennonite Church.

According to testimony in the case, attendance of Amish children at high school, public or private, is contrary to the Amish religion and way of life. This restriction does not necessarily apply to all vocational schools beyond the eighth grade, but it does apply to all high schools that meet the requirements of the state for a high school education.

In this case, the Amish believed that by sending their children to high school, they would not only expose themselves to the danger of the censure of the church community, but, as found by the County Court, endanger their own salvation and that of their children.

The State of Wisconsin did not challenge the sincerity of the Amish beliefs.

The Supreme Court, in its study of the case, came to this conclusion: "As a result of their common heritage, Old Order Amish communities today are characterized by a fundamental belief that salvation requires a life in a church community separate and apart from the world and worldly influence. This concept of life aloof from the world and its values is central to their faith."

The court summarized the Amish objection to formal education for their children beyond the eighth grade in two major reasons: (1) high school and college education teaches values at variance with the Amish values and way of life; (2) high school and college education take the children away from their home and community, physically and emotionally, during the crucial and formative adolescent period of life.

On the other hand, the Amish do not object to elementary public school education for their children, according to the court, because they believe that the "three R's" are necessary in order to read the Bible, to be good farmers and citizens and to be able to deal with non-Amish people when necessary in the course of daily affairs.

In 31 pages of opinion, the Supreme Court gave four major reasons for upholding the Amish parents and their right to the free exercise of religion over the interest of the state in requiring high school education.

1. The state's interest in universal education is not totally free from a balancing process when it impinges on other fundamental rights, such as the free exercise of religion and the traditional interest of parents with respect to the religious upbringing of their children.
2. The Amish demonstrated to the court's satisfaction that enforcement of the compulsory education requirement beyond the eighth grade would gravely endanger if not destroy the free exercise of their religious beliefs.
3. The State of Wisconsin failed to show that its interest in education would be adversely affected by granting an exemption to the Amish.
4. In this case the state's interest in education does not supercede the right of the free exercise of religion, because the Amish provided convincing evidence that their practice does not impair the physical or mental health of the children, nor result in an inability to be self-supporting, or to discharge the duties and responsibilities of citizenship, or in any other way materially detract from the welfare of society.

The Supreme Court decision was 6 to 1. Justices Lewis F. Powell and William H. Rehnquist did not participate.

Chief Justice Warren E. Burger read the court's opinion. Justice William O. Douglas dissented only in part, indicating an almost unanimous decision by the court. In addition to the 31-page opinion of the court, five justices took an additional 14 pages to express their concurring opinions and dissent in part.

American Baptists Change Name,
Approve Restructure, Sessions

DENVER (BP)--After six hours of debate, the American Baptist Convention here approved a restructure study that changes the name of the denomination and calls for meeting every other year instead of annual sessions.

Delegates to the convention, after several amendments and lengthy discussion, adopted the recommendations of the Study Commission on Denominational Structure by a vote of 1,244 to 113.

In other actions, the delegates rejected a strongly-worded resolution criticizing President Nixon's decision to mine North Vietnamese harbors, and adopted instead a statement both questioning American policy in Southeast Asia generally, and criticizing military aims of North Vietnam.

Another resolution adopted by the convention commended "the new ecumenism represented in Key 73," an evangelistic effort in 1973 involving 130 denominations and religious groups.

The restructure proposals came at a time when many other religious denominations, including United Methodists and United Presbyterians, were voting on restructure plans that generally tend toward centralization.

Under the American Baptist restructure proposals, the name of the denomination would be changed to "American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.," and the convention would meet biennially instead of annually.

The convention would also create a 200-member General Board to replace the smaller General Council to coordinate the work of the denomination between its biennial sessions. An amendment to retain annual sessions was narrowly defeated by a vote of 1,101 to 1,385.

Other changes call for the rotation of the convention presidency between clergy and laity, without regard to race or sex. Originally, the committee had recommended that the presidency be rotated among men, women, blacks and other minority groups.

Elected new president of the convention was Gene E. Bartlett, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Newton Centre, Mass., and former president of Colgate Rochester Divinity School. Bartlett will succeed Mrs. Marcus Rohlf of Seattle, Wash.

By a vote of 846-818, the convention rejected a strongly-worded resolution calling for immediate steps to cease all military operations in Indochina and to withdraw all U.S. military personnel from Vietnam, adopting instead a resolution described by one news report as a "watered down" version.

The resolution which was rejected echoed views expressed earlier in the week by Mrs. Rohlf in a telegram to President Nixon. Mrs. Rohlf expressed concern for the "resumption of heavy bombing and the blockading of North Vietnam."

In other action, the convention confirmed the election of Robert C. Campbell, professor of New Testament and dean at the American Baptist Seminary of the West, Covina, Calif., as the denomination's general secretary. Under the reorganization plan, the general secretary will have greater authority than any previous general secretary. In a brief acceptance speech, Campbell told the delegates: "Thank you, I think."



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