



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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### Pay Expenses to Get Lay Involvement, SBC Urged

NASHVILLE (BP)--More laymen could be involved in annual sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention if local churches would pay their travel expenses to attend, an opinion poll of a random sample of Southern Baptist laymen disclosed here.

The survey was conducted at the request of the SBC Executive Committee in response to a motion adopted at the SBC in Philadelphia last June asking the committee to study means of involving more laymen in the annual convention.

Glendon McCullough, executive secretary of the SBC Brotherhood Commission, the denomination's organization for laymen and boys, made the motion, proposing the possibility of changing the convention dates "to a time laymen can attend more conveniently."

At the same convention a survey of the 6,429 "messengers" (delegates) attending disclosed that 82.8 per cent of those attending were church staff members, denominational workers, missionaries or the wives of such church professionals; and only 13.3 per cent were lay persons.

In an effort to urge more laymen to attend the convention, and in response to the findings of the survey just completed, the Executive Committee voted to encourage churches to pay, or share, expenses of lay persons attending the annual convention sessions, as well as the pastor.

The opinion poll showed that most lay leaders surveyed felt that the expense of attending the convention kept more laymen away than did the meeting dates or times.

In fact, June was the runaway choice of the lay leaders as the best month for the convention, and almost two thirds said they would prefer it to start on Monday or Tuesday. The convention traditionally meets the second or third week in June, Monday through Thursday.

Almost 43 per cent said they would pick as either first or second choice the third week of June as the best time for the convention. Beginning the convention on Monday was selected by 33.5 per cent, or Tuesday by 32.4 per cent.

The opinion poll summarized the views of 173 deacon chairmen, Sunday School directors, Training Union directors, and Women's Missionary Union directors. The questionnaire was sent to a random sample of 400 churches, polling 100 persons in each of the four categories.

Almost 90 per cent of the lay persons surveyed said they had never attended an annual session of the SBC.

An overwhelming 80.9 per cent said they felt there should be about as many laymen at the annual convention as there are church staff members.

More than half (55.5 per cent) of those who have never attended a convention said they would attend one if their churches paid the travel expense. Of the 38.7 per cent who said they would not attend, even if expenses were paid, about one fourth said vocational responsibilities would not permit it, and one fifth said family responsibilities would not allow it.

When asked for their suggestions on ways to encourage more laymen to attend the convention, four major suggestions were most often proposed: the local church should pay their expenses (14.5 per cent); the local church should stress attendance at the convention (13.3 per cent); laymen should be made to feel they are needed there (9.2) per cent; and provide better scheduling or meet on weekends (9.2 per cent).

Other findings of the survey disclosed that 57.8 per cent felt the annual convention is "very important," that about 53 per cent followed closely actions of the convention as reported in news media and Baptist state papers, that more than half knew the names of the president and immediate past president of the SBC and the meeting place for the 1973 convention in Portland, Ore., and that 61.3 per cent read their Baptist state paper "quite regularly."

About two-thirds of those surveyed were men, and respondents were fairly evenly divided in age, with about 30 per cent between ages 40-49 and 20 per cent each in other ten-year age brackets between 30 and up.

The survey was conducted at the request of the SBC Executive Committee by the research services department of the SBC Sunday School Board here.

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Baptists Give \$250,000  
To Aid Managua Relief

2/26/73

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptists around the world have responded to the earthquake that virtually demolished the city of Managua, Nicaragua, by giving more than \$250,000 in relief, the Baptist World Alliance reported here.

Carl W. Tiller, the BWA's relief coordinator, called the response "one of the greatest demonstrations of Christian love in the history of Baptist World Relief."

Tiller, however, added that the monetary figure does not tell the full story of response.

The true measure of concern is reflected in sacrificial gifts, such as \$25 (US) from the Baptists in Bangladesh which is still plagued with damage from its 1971-72 war for independence and \$50 from Baptists in India where both flood and famine are even now.

Baptists in the neighboring countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala are giving direct assistance--their own vehicles carrying emergency food and medicines to the earthquake survivors.

A strategic personality in administering outside aid to meet relief needs of the people has been Dr. Gustavo A. Parajon, a member of the Baptist Hospital staff at Managua, and son of a former pastor of First Baptist Church in Managua.

Less than a week after the quake--even while the Nicaragua government sealed the city off from the outside world in an attempt to assess damage and bury the dead, Dr. Robert A. Hingson, a Baptist layman from Cincinnati, Ohio, had flown to Managua as a representative of the Baptist World Alliance and at the invitation of Central American health authorities.

He carried with him several thousand dollars worth of medical supplies donated by American drug manufacturers, and sufficient money to help meet emergency needs for food, water, shelter and clothing. The cash came from the BWA relief department's emergency reserve and an immediate gift from the Baptist Federation of Canada.

Dr. Hingson helped Nicaragua health authorities, with whom he had worked previously, to plan for recovery from the earthquake. He made a full report of findings and recommendations to BWA General Secretary Robert S. Denny and other alliance leaders as soon as he returned home.

Contributions and reports of direct help have flowed into the Washington BWA offices. The American Baptist Churches USA, which has mission work in Managua, appealed directly to its churches and raised more than \$200,000 in special offerings to be disbursed by ABC people in Nicaragua.

The Southern Baptist Convention channeled a generous though lesser amount through missions in countries adjacent, and made plans to help Managua churches rebuild their houses of worship, Tiller said.

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Appeals were made also by conventions and unions in Europe, Australia, Africa, and other countries in Latin America.

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Texas PR Office Promotes  
O'Brien, Hires Risinger

2/26/73

DALLAS (BP)--Robert J. O'Brien has been promoted to press director in the Texas Baptist public relations department, according to Orville L. Scott, public relations director for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

David A. Risinger, a Baptist Standard staff writer, will join the Texas Baptist public relations staff as a press representative.

O'Brien, 33, will supervise liaison with the mass media and coordinate efforts to provide editorial and public relations needs of commissions, divisions and departments of Texas. He will work under Scott.

Risinger, 27, a staff writer for the Texas Baptist state news publication since 1971, will work under O'Brien, writing news and feature articles and serving Texas Baptist public relations needs.

O'Brien joined the Texas Baptist Public Relations staff in 1968 after three years as assistant editor of Royal Ambassador publications for the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, Memphis.

Previously, O'Brien was a police and general assignments reporter and religion editor for five years on metropolitan daily newspapers in Virginia.

A native of South Carolina, O'Brien is a graduate of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va., and Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., where he earned a master's degree in journalism. He was named outstanding journalism graduate in 1961 at Washington and Lee by Sigma Delta Chi.

Risinger, a native of Bryan, Tex., is a 1967 graduate of Texas A&M University, College Station, and holds a master's degree in journalism from the University of Oregon.

During two years in the U.S. Army, Risinger supervised the information office for an army training base in California, and was editor of a brigade news publication while stationed in Quang Tri, South Vietnam.

Risinger joined the Baptist Standard from a position as a reporter on the Borger (Tex.) News Herald. He also worked for one summer on the Wichita Falls (Tex.) Times-Record.

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