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July 12, 1973

Missouri Convention
Moves to Restructure

JEFFERSON CITY, MO. (BP)--In the face of mounting criticism of its staff and operating procedures, the Missouri Baptist Convention Board has made some preliminary moves toward restructuring its work.

Actions by the 51-member board were taken in a regular meeting here while awaiting the results of a special audit of the convention's 1970, 1971 and 1972 financial records.

Controversy among Baptists of the state during the last several months has revolved around Earl O. Harding, the board's executive secretary, the accounting procedures used in the convention's offices here and the administration of \$53,150 in expenditures under the 1971 budget.

Harding told the board's 13-member executive committee prior to the two-day board meeting that he is returning \$40,000 of an interest-free home loan of \$62,500 that was advanced to him from convention funds in 1968. He stated he has arranged for a private loan on his residence.

During the first day of the board meeting, Harding apparently suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized. Nurses at St. Mary's Hospital said that he was under intensive care but not in critical condition.

Votes of confidence in Harding had been given in early April by the board and again in late May by the board's executive committee.

The board here adopted several recommendations by a "committee to study structure and re-organization," chaired by Samuel E. Maddox of St. Joseph, Mo.

The actions call for election rather than appointment of members and officers of the executive committee, attendance by any board member at any session of the executive committee and prompt completion and formal approval of executive committee minutes with immediate distribution to the full board.

The board likewise voted to publish the salary grades of employees and reaffirmed the rights of Missouri Baptist people to know about salary provisions.

A personnel committee was also authorized from the executive committee to work with the executive secretary on personnel policies and decisions.

The convention board authorized the restructure committee to continue its work and to include the advice and assistance of "pastors, ministers of education, directors of missions and laymen."

The board turned down a recommendation of its education committee that the 35 percent of its Cooperative Program (unified budget) funds presently going to Southern Baptist Convention causes be reduced to 30 percent. The committee had recommended that the five percent be added to the money supporting the four Baptist colleges in the state.

The board heard but took no action on a letter from the First Baptist Church, Cape Girardeau, Mo., expressing concern about the administration of the convention's affairs and calling for the resignation of Harding.

The church clerk read the letter and reported that it expressed a vote by the church in regular business session. W. T. Holland, a former president of the Missouri Baptist Convention, is pastor of the church.

Frank E. Myers, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Warrensburg, Mo., and chairman of the convention board, indicated that the special audit of the convention's financial records now in progress would be distributed to the 51 members of the board immediately on its completion.

Within two weeks after board members receive the audit a special board meeting will be called to consider its implications, he said.

The audit, being prepared by the firm of Baird, Kurtz and Dobson, is expected to be finished around the first of August.

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Nathan Porter Resigns HMB
To Enter Arkansas Pastorate

7/12/73

ATLANTA (BP)--Home Mission Board evangelism staffer, Nathan Porter, has resigned from the Southern Baptist mission agency to become pastor of the First Baptist Church in Arkadelphia, Ark., effective August 15.

Porter has served since 1960 as a liason between college and university students and the Home Mission Board.

He has spoken on more than 300 campuses, talking with students interested in missionary vocations and promoting student summer missions.

He came to the board as associate secretary for missionary personnel in 1960. In 1968, he was named associate director in the board's division of evangelism, serving as director of student evangelism. He has assisted campus ministries and Baptist Student Union groups in student evangelism training.

Porter, 40, said he believes the greatest challenge for @hristians today is in the local church.

"I am excited about the great potential for mission support which exists in Arkadelphia," Porter said. "Good pastoral leadership in the past has led the church into multiple weekday social ministries and an excellent ministry to college students. The church has also come to experience strong Christian fellowship."

Porter was born in Campinas, Sao Paulo, Brazil, where his parents were missionaries from 1922 to 1962. He is a graduate of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Before joining the Home Mission Board staff, he served as mission pastor for First Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla., and as pastor of the Lakeview Heights Baptist Church in Tulsa.

Carrying on a mission-involvement tradition of three generations, Porter's elder daughter, Becca, is serving as a student summer missionary at Calvary Baptist Church in Matawan, N.J.

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Former POW Scores "Treason;"
Relates Importance of Faith

7/12/73

By David A. Risinger

DALLAS (BP)--"The most severe test of faith for POWs came when 'treasonous Americans' visited Hanoi representing themselves as the voice of America," Capt. Howard Rutledge told 22,000 Texas youths.

Rutledge, a naval captain from San Diego, Calif., who was imprisoned in North Vietnam for 7-1/2 years, spoke at the three regional youth conferences sponsored in as many weeks by the Texas Baptist evangelism division.

Taking sharp exception to the Hanoi visitors as the "true voice of America," Rutledge said the national media inflated their importance.

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Before audiences in Dallas, San Antonio and Odessa, Tex., Rutledge confessed that he prayed for the first time in 20 years as he parachuted from his downed plane over North Vietnam in 1965.

"For the next 7-1/2 years, I nurtured a spiritual seed planted when I was a boy growing up in the Baptist church," he explained.

His first years of imprisonment in Hanoi were in complete isolation.

"Like a blind man who is forced to develop other senses to replace his useless eyes, a man in isolation must quit regretting what he can't do and build a new life around what he can do."

Rutledge explained that this time alone produced thoughts and a new closeness to God that he would never have experienced otherwise.

He told the young people, "Learn to walk alone with God, away from the loud noises and confusion of the day. I promise you it'll give you a lift and change your life just as it did mine."

In 1971, after Rutledge was taken out of isolation and put in with other prisoners, the first thing the men wanted was a church service.

North Vietnamese soldiers came for Rutledge and two others who led in the service.

He remembers, "As we stood in the courtyard before being marched off to punishment, someone began to sing the first line of the National Anthem.

"Before he reached the end of the first line, every man in that building was singing with him at the top of their voices and before they started the second verse, all nine buildings joined in.

"That afternoon, the citizens of Hanoi heard the Star Spangled Banner loud and clear. For the previous five years, we had lived in silence but the three of us standing in that courtyard were nine feet tall and we wept unashamed.

"Reduced to its simplest terms," Rutledge continued, "We were sustained, first, by faith in a living God, dedication to country, devotion of families and dependence on one another."

Rutledge planned on his return home to be active in his church, First Southern church of Clairemont in San Diego. But numerous speaking engagements have allowed him to worship with that congregation only a few times.

Enrolment in graduate school this fall will scale down appearances.

Rutledge's story of imprisonment and the family who waited back home is available in a book, "In the Presence of Mine Enemies."

His wife, Phyllis, three daughters and one son dealt courageously with life without father, explains Rutledge, even when a tragic swimming accident rendered his son, John, now 20, paralyzed from his neck down.