

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 9, 1973

**Baptist Churches in Mexico  
Suffered Heavy Quake Damage**

WASHINGTON (BP)--The floods and earthquake which struck Mexico in August caused at least \$390,000 damage to Baptist congregations there, according to a newly-completed survey released by the Baptist World Alliance.

Churches in the state of Puebla were most severely damaged, reports Carl W. Tiller, associate secretary and relief coordinator for the BWA, which is serving as a channel for Baptist bodies and churches which wish to provide financial help.

An estimated \$100,000 is needed to rebuild the severely damaged Baptist church in San Gabriel Chilac, Puebla, Tiller said.

Another \$100,000 will be needed to rebuild the Baptist church in Calipan, Puebla; \$80,000 to reconstruct the San Juan de Retana church in the Bajie region near Irapuato City, Guanajuato; \$50,000 each to rebuild two missions, one in Mniahuatan, Puebla, and the other in Huejónapan, Puebla, and \$10,000 to repair the church at Tehuacan, Puebla.

In many cases the disaster destroyed homes of Baptist pastors and laymen.

Baptist nationals and Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico launched efforts to alleviate suffering in the days after the earthquake, but needs still exist.

"With our own efforts and the help of the brotherhood, the material losses will be repaired sooner or later, and thanks to God we did not lose any of our loved ones," Agustín Acosta E. of the staff of the National Baptist Convention of Mexico told the BWA. "The reconstruction of these churches and parsonages is urgent as is the giving of Christian solidarity to those brothers who have lost their homes," he said.

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**Indiana Baptists Set Record  
Budget, Name Woman Officer**

11/9/73

KOKOMO, Ind. (BP)--The State Convention of Baptists in Indiana adopted a record budget, took another step toward becoming self-supporting, elected its first woman officer and passed resolutions on political unrest, pornography and freedom of expression.

"Messengers" to the 15th annual session of the convention adopted a 1974 budget of \$876,657, a 21 per cent increase over 1973. Of that amount the convention expects to receive \$636,000 through the Cooperative Program unified budget of its 250 Southern Baptist churches (a 30 per cent increase over 1973), with 29.4 per cent of that amount going to Southern Baptist Convention-wide mission causes.

In what was described as a step toward becoming a self-supporting convention, the messengers voted that any funds received above the \$636,000 Cooperative Program goal will go to church pastoral aid and that the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board will be advised to reduce its allocation to Indiana by that amount.

The Home Mission Board helps support work in areas where Southern Baptist efforts are new. Five years ago, an Indiana spokesman said, the Home Mission Board provided 63 per cent of the convention's missions budget. Now that percentage is 48, he said.

Mrs. E. W. Springs of Hammond, Ind., was elected historical secretary, becoming

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the first woman officer in the convention's 15-year history. B. T. Scrivner, pastor of First Baptist Church, Sellersburg, was re-elected president.

A resolution on the current political crises in the nation issued a call to prayer in the churches, a call for faith in the political process and a call for Christians to participate in the political process.

The messengers voted to send a telegram to President Richard M. Nixon stating simply "Indiana Baptists are praying for you."

Other resolutions urged respect for Baptists' rights of individual interpretation of scripture and asked the Indiana General Assembly to strengthen current laws on pornography and obscenity.

In other action, the messengers approved a recommendation from its executive board that a study be conducted by the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission which would ascertain the feasibility of a capital funds campaign for the development of the state's Highland Lakes Baptist Center. The convention owns 380 acres of land near Monrovia, Ind., which is to be developed into a state Baptist assembly.

The 1974 convention will be held Nov. 12-14 at First Southern Baptist Church in Hammond, Ind.

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#### Arkansas Defeats Information Service, Argues Doctrine

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--"Messengers" to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention defeated a proposal to set up a department of information services to help churches find pastors and engaged in what observers call "the final flurries" of a long-standing doctrinal debate over "alien immersion" and "open communion."

The convention also adopted a Cooperative Program unified budget of \$4,681,428, the largest in its history, with 39.32 per cent of that amount set aside for Southern Baptist Convention-wide causes.

The proposal which would have established the information services office as a state convention department lost by a vote of about 60-40 per cent in a standing vote of nearly 1,000 registered messengers.

Those objecting to the office felt it would "vest too much power" in the state convention's employees and that it would "deter from the work of the Holy Spirit."

Although observers said "an overall good spirit prevailed" during the three-day meeting, a protest was raised concerning seating of messengers from two churches--one which had previously practiced "alien immersion" (the practice of accepting persons baptized by immersion by other denominations) and the other which previously had involvement with "open communion" (the practice of observing the Lord's Supper with Christians of other churches).

The issue on one of the churches, First Baptist Church, Russellville, Ark., which had previously practiced alien immersion, died when messengers discovered the church, which had been denied seats on previous occasions, had sent no messengers.

However, messengers voted unanimously to send a letter to the Russellville church expressing appreciation for its continued support of the Cooperative Program and hope that the church would soon be reassociated with the convention.

Messengers from First Baptist Church, Malvern, Ark., were seated, with only about 25 dissenting votes, after the credentials committee reported that the church was no longer in violation of the convention's constitution. That controversy started several years ago when the Malvern church participated in a community-wide, ecumenical communion service, a convention spokesman said.

The spokesman said the current pastor, a successor to the pastor who served when

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the controversy started, told the credentials committee that the Malvern church no longer practiced open communion although it had not officially rescinded the previous participation.

"The Russellville church no longer practices alien immersion, according to our information," the convention spokesman added, "and I believe its messengers would also have been seated if they had sought seats."

"The controversy started in 1965," the spokesman said, "when First Baptist Church, Russellville, was not seated. Through the years four churches have been put out. Last year all churches which sent messengers were seated."

He added, "I don't believe any of the Arkansas churches are now in violation of the constitution, and I believe we no longer have any major doctrinal problems in the convention."

In other action, the messengers heard a report that 51 per cent of the 1,193 Southern Baptist churches in the state are participating in the convention's higher education campaign and have pledged \$3 million. According to reports, total pledges have exceeded the \$4 million campaign goal by about \$1 million.

Messengers elected Don Moore, pastor of Grand Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Smith, Ark., as president.

Porter Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, told the messengers that last year Arkansas had the largest increase in Cooperative Program gifts to Southern Baptist causes of any of the older state conventions. Observers predict this year's receipts will top that record.

Next year's convention is set for Nov. 19-21, First Baptist Church, Little Rock.

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Texas Baptists Elect  
Black Officer

11/9/73

By David A. Risinger

CORPUS CHRISTI, Tex. (BP)--The recalling of a presidential election and the election of its first black officer highlighted what would have been, otherwise, a routine annual session for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

An estimated 2,700 messengers were startled to learn there had been an error in counting the ballots when they elected their new president earlier in the day.

Corrected results revealed that Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Tex., had been elected president instead of James G. Harris, pastor of University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Tex., and current first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

No doubt existed, however, that Harold Branch, pastor of St. John's Baptist Church in Corpus Christi, emerged as second vice president and as the first black officer in the convention's 88-year history.

Jay Skaggs, Texas Baptist treasurer, said convention officials used two sets of computer cards for balloting, not knowing one type had 18 holes and the other had 20.

He said this caused the computer to yield a false result on the election. Smith and Harris had been front runners in a three-way race for president.

Landrum P. Leavell, pastor in Wichita Falls and outgoing president, said, "The real story to me is the gracious way Harris responded to this embarrassing event and acknowledged the will of the convention to elect Dr. Smith."

Harris held a press conference earlier in the day, and stories of his election had already hit some Texas papers, including a front page version in his hometown.

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Branch said he did not feel his election was "tokenism." He added, "I have been a Southern Baptist since 1947 and have worked my way up like anyone else."

He expressed the feeling his election would open the door for additional black churches to join the 22 already among some 4,400 Texas Baptist congregations.

In other business, the threat of a debate over abortion failed to materialize. Robert Holbrook, pastor of First Baptist Church in Hallettsville, Tex., submitted to the convention resolutions committee a proposal that would, among other things, outlaw abortions in Texas Baptist hospitals.

The committee returned with a lighter version which asked the Texas Christian Life and Human Welfare commissions to "do continuing study and provide updated materials from various perspectives of thought to Texas Baptists."

Texas Baptists adopted a record \$17,250,000 Cooperative Program budget of which 34 per cent will go for Southern Baptist Convention-wide causes. A goal of \$20 million has been set for 1975.

The convention also paid homage to retiring Executive Secretary T. A. Patterson and heard, for the first time as a body, Patterson's successor, James H. Landes, former pastor of First Baptist Church, Richardson, Tex.

Next year's convention will be Oct. 29-31 in Amarillo, Tex.

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Northwest Convention Calls  
Reorganization of Structure

11/9/73

SEATTLE, Wash. (BP)--The Northwest Baptist Convention celebrated its 25th anniversary and adopted a report which will lead to reorganization of its convention structure.

Implementing a recommendation of a committee appointed by the convention last year to study the convention structure, "messengers" to the convention voted to phase out the convention's Baptist Building in Portland, Ore., and develop a convention office-church program training center complex near Portland.

The messengers also instructed the convention's administrative staff to develop other ways to better utilize existing personnel, programs and resources in projecting Northwest Baptist Convention ministries.

A portion of the committee's recommendation, which called for phasing out the Northwest Baptist Convention's Mt. Baker Baptist Assembly, near Bellingham, Wash., was defeated.

The convention adopted a total budget of \$814,966, including \$414,000 expected from the Cooperative Program unified budgets of its 291 churches. Twenty-one per cent of the \$414,000, one per cent higher than last year, will go to Southern Baptist Convention-wide causes.

The remainder of the total budget will come from SBC agencies, primarily the SBC Home Mission Board, which help support Baptist efforts in developing areas.

Messengers also decided that 50 per cent of any funds in excess of the Cooperative Program budget will go to SBC causes and 50 per cent to Northwest Baptist Convention causes.

Cecil Sims, pastor of Richland (Wash.) Baptist Church and a member of the SBC Executive Committee, was re-elected president of Northwest Baptist Convention.

Next year's convention is set, Nov. 12-14, Klamath Falls, Ore.

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#### CORRECTION

In Baptist Press story headlined "Baptist Astronaut Goes After Dual Space Record," mailed 11/8/73, please change graph 1, line 2, to read ". . . as he zooms through outer space as pilot of the Skylab 3 mission.

Change graph 4, line 1, to read, "Apollo 15 astronaut Jim Irwin, the first Baptist to set foot on the moon, spent. . . (not spend as sent). Thanks.

--Baptist Press