

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 15, 1973

**Louisiana Baptists Open
Membership, Praise Vatican**

PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--The Louisiana Baptist Convention in its 126th annual meeting here deleted the word "white" from its constitutional membership requirement for churches and passed several resolutions, one of which praised the Vatican for its recent stand on religious freedom.

Messengers to the 1,300--church convention also passed a record \$5 million Cooperative Program unified budget, drafted resolutions opposed to Watergate and tax support of private schools and approved an office of information and counseling as a service to pastors and local churches.

Removal of the word "white" from the constitutional membership requirements was almost unanimous, with only one dissenting vote heard. A spokesman said he believes the Louisiana convention was the only one of 33 Southern Baptist state-level conventions with such a prohibition.

He said the convention voted "a number of years ago," during a peak period of racial tension, to allow only "white Baptist churches in good standing" to join. Now membership requirements, he said, call only for "churches in good standing."

White Louisiana Southern Baptist churches have had blacks among their more than 482,000 members, he said, but no predominantly black churches.

The statement on the Vatican, called by an observer "perhaps the most striking resolution offered," praised the Vatican for its "forthright declaration of freedom to the United Nations."

The Vatican's statement was quoted as saying, "Everyone has the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to adhere or not to adhere to any religion or belief, professed in public or in private; to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Freedom of religion, which involves freedom of choice and freedom of worship, is undermined by religious tolerance and discrimination on religious grounds."

Another resolution cited previous stands by Vice President--Designate Gerald Ford in favor of tax support for non-public schools and declared that "such a position would seemingly place the proposed vice president in personal opposition to separation of church and state at the point of public tax support for private education."

It said, "We affirm our position in opposition to such tax credit and we respectfully urge the vice presidential nominee to rethink his position due the fact that upon entering the executive branch of government he will be called upon to help enforce the law as interpreted by the Supreme Court" (against tax support of non-public schools).

"Whereasing" that Louisiana Baptists "suffer agony and deep concern" because "the character and worthy goals of the nation are threatened by moral, economic and political crises," another resolution urged political leaders at all levels "to repudiate illegal and questionable manipulation of election processes" and resolved "to support any and all constructive efforts of the president and other elected and appointed officials to resolve the Watergate situation and related issues with deep dispatch and integrity:"

Turning to the role of the news media, the resolution continued, "We encourage the news media to employ its channels of communication to help reconcile differences between fact and opinion, for whatever causes, with lucid and unbiased daily presentation and interpretation of news and current affairs."

Louisiana Baptists and "all God-fearing people" were further urged to "properly inform themselves" and become personally involved in government processes at all levels.

A spokesman said the office of information and counseling, the result of several years of study by a convention committee, will apparently offer counsel to both pastors and churches only as they request it. He said the office will counsel pastors who encounter personal problems and provide information to pastors and churches about personnel needs.

Emory Wallace, pastor of First Baptist Church, DeRidder, La., was elected president.

Messengers voted to divide the \$5 million Cooperative Program budget, 68.5 per cent for Louisiana Baptist causes and 31.5 per cent for Southern Baptist Convention-wide causes.

In other action, messengers approved, because of declining enrollments, closure of the convention's 57-year-old boarding high school, Acadia Academy in Eunice, and set next year's convention for Nov. 11-13 at First Baptist Church, West Monroe, La.

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Body Will Not Bar Churches
Accepting "Non-immersed"

11/15/73

GREENSBORO, N. C. (BP)--The North Carolina State Convention of Baptists, climaxing its 143rd annual session, rejected an amendment to its convention constitution that would have limited "messengers" to those coming from churches which have only immersed members.

After more than one hour's debate a standing-room only crowd defeated the amendment, 1307 to 1248. The amendment would have required a two-thirds majority for passage.

Observers characterized defeat of the amendment as a vote for local church autonomy and not a vote against baptism by immersion.

One of those who opposed the amendment was former Southern Baptist Convention President Carl Bates, pastor of First Baptist Church, Charlotte, N. C., and former president of the North Carolina convention.

Bates told messengers that he favors baptism by immersion but that the wording of the amendment gave him "no choice" but to oppose it. He said it was neither a vote for baptism nor did it clarify the nature of a Baptist convention.

"A vote for this amendment would put me as a messenger and my convention in the position of interfering with a local church," Bates said. "A convention is a convention and a church is a church, and the convention should not tell the church what to do."

The amendment, offered by M. O. Owens Jr. of Gastonia, N. C., was one of two the convention faced on baptism questions.

The first, which would have given the Southern Baptist state body the authority to set "doctrinal, ethical or cooperative" requirements for convention affiliation by its member churches, was withdrawn before the messengers had a chance to vote on it.

The North Carolina convention has faced the baptismal question for the past three years.

In 1971, the amendment was approved by a majority, but failed to get the two-thirds required to become a part of the constitution. In 1972, Owens offered the amendment again but withdrew it in favor of a resolution reaffirming the convention's belief in baptism by immersion and naming a committee to study the problem of some churches accepting members from other denominations without immersing them.

The committee found 11 such churches, all of which declined to change those policies, although, a spokesman said, all believe in immersion and practice it with new converts. Owen's amendment would have severed their convention affiliation if they accepted any more non-immersed members.

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In other action, the convention approved a \$9.2 million Cooperative Program unified budget for 1974--75. 34 per cent of which goes to Southern Baptist Convention-wide causes-- and passed resolutions on several subjects, including Christian citizenship, more responsible television programming and stronger liquor laws.

One resolution urged "Baptist people in North Carolina to exemplify and to require character and integrity in both public and private life and to discharge responsibly their duties as citizens."

Two laymen were elected to top positions. Allen Bailey, Charlotte lawyer, was named president of the convention and another attorney, C. D. Bean Jr. of Rockingham, was named second vice president. Coy Privette, pastor of North Kannapolis Baptist Church, was elected first vice president. All were active in the defeat of the recent liquor-by-the-drink referendum in North Carolina.

Messengers to the convention approved a joint session in Raleigh, N. C., next year with the General Baptist Convention of North Carolina (black), Nov. 4-6.

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Baptists Join Prairie Dogs,
Artillery for Oklahoma Meet

11/15/73

LAWTON, Okla. (BP)--Surrounded by prairie dogs and the sound of exploding artillery shells, "messengers" to the annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma here elected a former batting champion as president, spoke against legalization of parimutuel betting and approved a record \$4.7 million budget.

As shells from nearby Fort Sill's artillery training center thudded ominously throughout the proceedings, some 1,100 messengers from Oklahoma Southern Baptist churches threaded their way daily to McMahon Auditorium in Elmer Thomas Park avoiding not mine fields, but terrain pitted with prairie dog holes.

The holes, observers report, have "spread" from a nearby "prairie dog town," set up because ecologists want to preserve part of the state's western heritage.

While the roving prairie dogs observed no human boundaries, the messengers did, sailing through the three-day convention on placid waters, ruffled only slightly by resolutions against gambling and restrictions by the state on uses of church buses.

LaVonn Brown, 39, who holds the Oklahoma Baptist University baseball batting average record of .478, was elected president. He is pastor of First Baptist Church, Norman, Okla.

The record Cooperative Program unified budget, if a "challenge section" is met, will reach \$4,725,000. The basic budget was set at \$4,600,000. Messengers voted to divide both sections, 59.5 per cent for state causes and 40.5 per cent for Southern Baptist Convention-wide causes.

Messengers apparently responded to a recommendation of the convention's Christian Life Committee which called for Oklahoma Baptists to launch a fight against a state-wide parimutuel gambling proposal which will be voted on next August.

A resolution passed opposing parimutuel and any other forms of legalized gambling now promoted in Oklahoma.

Citing a welter of national and international crises, such as Watergate, inflation, energy and the Middle East, another resolution encouraged "all people to continue looking to God for strength, the Bible as their guide and the church for Christian fellowship and service."

It also urged "our people to pray for our leaders on all levels of government, that they might be sensitive to divine leadership in the total fulfillment of their responsibilities."

The resolution involving church buses asked the state legislature to reconsider a law which decrees that no former school buses can retain their yellow color or flashing loading

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and unloading lights.

The resolution encouraged enactment of provisions for use of warning lights that could signal passing motorists to be cautious of children coming to or leaving a church bus.

Amendments to the Oklahoma convention's constitution and bylaws changed the title of the convention's executive secretary-treasurer, Joe L. Ingram, to executive director and the title of Ingram's associate, Lyle Garlow, to associate executive director.

The convention marked the first time in years that Oklahoma Baptists have not met in a church building in either Oklahoma City or Tulsa.

But next year, they will journey back to Tulsa, Nov. 11-13, to meet at First Baptist Church there.

Maybe they've had enough of prairie dog holes and artillery shells.

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Georgia Baptists to Build
\$5.5 Million Admin. Center

11/15/73

ATLANTA (BP)--Georgia Baptists gave enthusiastic approval to construction of a major \$5.5 million Baptist Administration Center on the northeastern edge of Atlanta during their 152nd annual meeting here.

The new headquarters for the Baptist Convention of the State of Georgia was approved with only one dissenting vote.

Searcy S. Garrison, executive secretary of the convention, said that ground will probably be broken when the convention's executive committee meets December 11, "and it should take about 18 months to build the new center."

The Georgia convention has occupied its present headquarters in the heart of downtown Atlanta since 1943. The block-long tract where that building sits will be leased on a long-term basis to help amortize costs for the proposed new Baptist Administrative Center.

Georgia Baptists will be asked to raise \$1 million during their state mission offering next September, with all over \$250,000 to go toward the new center, a convention spokesman said.

The new Georgia Baptist center will be located on a 25-acre tract adjacent to Mercer University in Atlanta.

In other major actions, the Georgia convention approved a record 1974 Cooperative Program budget of \$7,036,000, an increase of 3.5 per cent over 1973.

After deduction of \$691,000 in shared promotional and administrative costs, receipts will be divided equally between Georgia and Southern Baptist Convention causes.

The Georgia convention adopted resolutions urging respect for the sanctity of the Lord's Day and calling on Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter to retract recent statements favoring legalization of state-wide liquor sales.

Another resolution called for special prayer for war tensions in the Middle East, "to ask God's guidance that those who seek peace be, in accord with his plan, blessed peacemakers."

Another resolution urged Georgia Baptists to be more involved in all levels of government "as part of their witness to the full nature of the gospel." Young people were also urged to "seek for themselves a vocation through which they will make their contribution to government."

A special committee was authorized to investigate the relationship between Mercer University in Macon, Ga., and the Georgia Baptist convention, as relates to election of Mercer trustees. There has been tension within the Georgia convention for several years

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about the system by which Mercer, in effect, names its own trustees, the spokesman said.

John T. Tippet Jr., pastor of Calvary Baptist Temple, Savannah, Ga., was re-elected Georgia convention president for a second term. The 1974 convention will meet Nov. 11-13 at Mabel White Memorial Baptist Church, Macon.

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D. C. Student Director
Steps Down After 39 Years

11/15/73

WASHINGTON (BP)--Howard Rees, director of student work for the District of Columbia Baptist Convention for 39 years, has stepped down because of health problems.

Rees, whose name has been synonymous with Baptist student ministries, first joined the convention in 1934 on a "temporary basis."

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Baptist Project Leads to
Water Supply for Limbe

11/15/73

LIMBE, Haiti (BP)--A Baptist world relief project set off a chain of events here that is unexpectedly resulting in establishment of a stable water supply for the citizens of this municipality.

Steps toward the water supply actually began several years ago when an electrical shortage at the Baptist hospital (Hospital Le Bon Samaritain) became a concern of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) relief committee, a BWA spokesman said.

Nighttime obstetrical deliveries and emergency surgery were difficult for medical personnel because the lanterns gave inadequate light. Carrying torchlights required an extra hand that wasn't always available.

With help from Bread for the World, the German welfare organization, money was provided to solve the power shortage by installing a small hydro-electric power plant on the Limbe River, the BWA spokesman said.

The hospital has since had a steady supply of electricity. In fact, power production from the Limbe River project is greater than the hospital needs, so power has been made available to the municipality of Limbe, the spokesman said.

Success of the hydro-electric project also prompted thoughts about furnishing water to the people. The people of the town previously had numerous wells affording mucky water at depths from three to 15 feet.

Lowering of dirty buckets into the water made the wells a hazard, as did the human excrement often thrown on the ground or in shallow latrines within a few yards of the wells, the BWA spokesman said.

The new power source has made possible the drilling of a 76-foot well and the installation of a pump which delivers 20 gallons of water per minute. After completion of a reservoir, the water reportedly will be available to a substantial number of Limbe citizens and thousands of people who frequent the market place on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Hopefully, the well will measurably decrease the number of intestinal diseases to be treated in the area, the BWA quoted Dr. William H. Hodges, the hospital's director, as saying.

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Charles Bolton, Former
SBC Executive, Dies at 87

11/15/73

THOMASVILLE, Ga. (BP)--Charles Houston Bolton, 87, a former Southern Baptist executive and pastor, died November 14 in a hospital here after two heart attacks in less than a week.

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Bolton was formerly executive secretary for both the Southern Baptist Foundation and the Florida Baptist State Convention. He was an associate executive secretary for what was then known as the Southern Baptist Convention's Relief and Annuity Board (now Annuity Board) from 1939-41.

Bolton, a native of Franklin County, Ala., who once said the pastorate was the "love of my life," was named the first full-time executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Foundation in 1949.

He left the foundation in 1953 to become pastor of First Baptist Church, Avon Park, Fla., where he maintained a permanent residence after retirement until his death.

Bolton was executive secretary of the Florida convention from 1941-44 and subsequently served as pastor of Riverside Baptist Church in Miami, Fla., until joining the foundation staff.

A long-time leader among Southern Baptists, Bolton was a pastor in Alabama and Florida for many years and served in several state and SBC-wide posts.

He was a member of the board of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, 1920-24, president of the Florida convention in 1939 and 1945 and was a member of the SBC's Executive Committee from 1936-39 and 1944-49. Bolton served as a long-time supporter and trustee for Stetson University, DeLand, Fla.

A friend said Bolton suffered a heart attack on Sunday, Nov. 11, while getting ready to go to First Baptist Church, Adel, Ga., where he was to preach his last sermon as interim pastor.

The aging minister had a recurring attack the following Tuesday, the friend said, and died the next day.

Bolton is survived by his widow, the former Lena Mae Painter and two daughters.

Services were at First Baptist Church, Thomasville, with burial in Jacksonville, Fla.

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11/15/73

Alabama Baptists Celebrate;
Speak on Evolution, Lobbying

GREENSBORO, Ala. (BP)--Alabama Baptists climaxed their sesquicentennial celebration by returning to the site of the founding of the Alabama Baptist State Convention in this small south Alabama town.

Sessions of the 151st annual meeting actually were split between First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, and a tent erected here on the site of the original Salem Baptist Church where the convention was organized, Oct. 28, 1823.

Messengers took time from the festive occasion to engage in considerable debate over two resolutions. One, calling for teaching the biblical view of creation alongside the evolution theory, was approved, but another, calling for an advisory committee to work with state legislators on matters of interest to Baptists, was defeated.

The latter resolution, observers say, lost because messengers apparently resented the implications of Baptist "lobbying."

A layman, Lambert Mims, mayor of Mobile, Ala., and immediate past president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, opposed the resolution, stating that the place for Baptists to do their lobbying and influence was at the ballot box and in urging the election of Christians to make the laws.

A spokesman said the resolution did not completely rule out Baptists speaking to legislative concerns. It was suggested, he said, that "under the present set-up the convention's Christian Life and Public Affairs Committee and/or the convention's Executive Board could make requests and handle such matters without it being an official convention action."

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The entire annual meeting was geared to the climax of the sesquicentennial celebration. A pageant, "The Vision Glorious," featured a 300-voice choir, the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and a cast of 100.

Old fashioned "fa-so-la" singing and dinner on the grounds were complimented with long dresses, bonnets and an occasional visitor on horseback.

The convention elected Dotson M. Mills Jr., pastor of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, as president and set a record 1974 Cooperative Program unified budget of \$6,600,000, some \$600,000 higher than the year before. Of that budget, 35.5 per cent will go to Southern Baptist Convention-wide causes.

Speakers included Alabama Governor George Wallace, SBC President Owen Cooper and Porter Routh, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

Next year's convention is set for Nov. 19-20, Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile.