

November 19, 1974

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The Southern Baptist Convention works in all 50 states, with a variety of churches (34,665) and ministries expressing the vitality of a 12.3-million-member denomination, which has grown from its old South rural setting of the SBC's founding in 1845 to the nation's largest Protestant-evangelical denomination. Much of what the SBC is today is the result of what's generally known as the "Pioneer Movement"--the missions thrust, beginning essentially in the early 1940s, into the states outside the old South. Largely it's the story of the people who forged the work, the state conventions they established and Southern Baptists' national missions work through their Home Mission Board. This is a three-part series on the "Pioneer Movement" into new territory.

First of a Series

The SBC "Pioneer Movement:" The Beginnings

By Everett Hullum Jr. and Kim Watson  
For Baptist Press

No air conditioning existed then, and the 4,774 registered "messengers" to the 1942 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention -- their shirts and dresses wet with sweat -- sat in the oven-dry confines of San Antonio's Municipal Auditorium. Listening, nodding, amending, dozing, they kept alive the paper-shuffling, humming undercurrent of all conventions as they talked to old friends, neighbors, new acquaintances.

On the afternoon of the third day -- a hot, cloudless Monday -- J.B. Rounds, a messenger from Oklahoma, made his crucial motion.

Many in the hall had looked to avoid a floor fight, when moments before, the committee that had been studying the question under debate moved to continue its work an additional year. But Rounds would have none of that.

"After a careful study of the situation and in consideration of the provisions of the constitution and by-laws of this Convention," Rounds moved in his minority report, "we recommend that the Southern Baptist General Convention of the State of California be admitted to membership in the Southern Baptist Convention."

More followed, but few heard it. The debate that had been anticipated for weeks -- state Baptist papers had trumpeted its pros and cons -- was begun.

And the vote, when it finally came, was close. No one even seemed to notice it was precedent setting in that a state convention -- not messengers from churches -- was admitted to SBC membership. Nevertheless, the motion carried.

"That may have been the most meaningful decision in Southern Baptist Convention life since it was founded in 1845," says Bill Hunke, a regional coordinator for the SBC Home Mission Board, reflecting on the significance of the vote.

Among other things, the vote was a product of the times. The conditions of the 1930s had begun hurling Southerners -- including thousands of Southern Baptists -- around the nation. In the fierce, desperate heat of the Depression and the dustbowl, Texans' and Oklahomans' and Arkansans' roots dried up, and they were blown toward California. In a decade, the Pacific coast state grew by a million people, more than one third of them from the Southwest.

They came from what was then a predominantly rural-oriented, deep South-saturated Southern Baptist Convention, made up of 15 state conventions, born in the 1800's, and four newcomers, formed between 1906 and 1928, which were beginning to indicate, even then, the broader approach of years to come.

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Th 15 old r stat conventions were Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

The newer conventions, founded even before the expansive pioneer thrus, into new areas, were Oklahoma (1906), Illinois (1907), New Mexico (1912) and Arizona (1928).

With those 19 state conventions in the fold, with some 3.7 million members, the stage was set for expansion which has resulted, today, in 33 state conventions covering 50 states and counting 34,665 churches with 12.3 million members.

That represents the nation's largest Protestant-evangelical denomination, and does not count the SBC's foreign missions enterprise, the world's largest overseas missionary program, which has 2,579 missionaries in 81 nations and some 6,900 overseas churches with some 807,356 members. (The Home Mission Board has about 2,200 missionaries under appointment throughout the U. S.)

The people who started that great thrust, propelling Southern Baptists off dead center, were primarily plain, farming people.

As the nation's conditions launched them into new territory throughout the United States, they brought their own culture, their own traditions and lifestyle and their own religious expression.

But they found no churches like they had at home, so these 1930's Johnny Appleseeds planted the seeds of eventual SBC growth by starting new ones. They began, almost by accident, an expansion program in the U.S., which the Home Mission Board and workers in the new -- or "pioneer" -- areas now pursue by design.

Th first new church was begun at Shafter, Calif., in 1936, where the California convention was organized in 1942.

The beginnings of SBC expansion in Shafter were followed by that 1942 vote which proved a pivotal decision in the SBC development. It shattered the unwritten comity agreement between Southern and Northern Baptists and opened wide avenues for SBC action in states outside the traditional southern tier.

Yet it is doubtful that the messengers realized the full implications -- or full impact -- of that moment. At stake was more than the traditional geographic bastion behind which Southern Baptists had tarried for a century.

By accepting messengers from churches so far from its established borders, the convention, tacitly, not only jeopardized already strained Baptist interregional relationships, but forced Southern Baptists to forge a new philosophy of growth.

In years ahead, their structures, planning, idea of themselves and understanding of their faith would be reexamined and clarified. And, at the least, they would stumble into a new consciousness of their place and direction, a consciousness that would color all their judgments, goals, understandings, attitudes -- a consciousness that would become their future. (BP)

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NEXT: Th Move West

### Second in a Series

The SBC "Pioneer Movement:" The Move West

By Everett Hullum Jr. and Kim Watson  
for Baptist Press

Much of what the Southern Baptist Convention is today is the result of what is generally known as the "Pioneer Movement" -- the missions thrust, beginning in the early 1940's, into the states outside the old South.

The move westward represents a dynamic episode in the SBC's journey to 12.3 million members in 33 state conventions covering 50 states.

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With the SBC feeling its own "manifest destiny," voices called for continued expansion from the 19 state conventions which developed between 1845, when the SBC was founded, and 1928, when the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention began and the SBC counted some 3.7 million members.

"Southern Baptists are convinced that a northward migration will be lost to the Baptist cause if they are left to themselves, explained an authority at the time. "This deep conviction, under God, for an adequate evangelizing of America is a potent motivating force among them."

Yet the Pioneer Movement in 1942 was little more than a wink of the Convention mind. Then, the SBC was a parochial, isolationist denomination, loosely structured, theologically and ecclesiastically insecure, and largely ignorant of all religious conditions nationwide.

Until 1942.

In that year, with the Convention's acceptance of California as a state convention, what would become the most rapid religious expansion in U.S. church history lurched into gear.

Two events gave it immediate emphasis:

First, a \$2.5 million debt that had saddled the SBC's Home Mission Board for two decades was paid off in 1943, freeing funds for new work.

Second, in 1944, a new executive secretary came to direct the 25-church, 14-year-old Arizona Southern Baptist Convention. At that point the movement began advancing on dual axes -- California and Arizona -- and its story became intertwined with the story of a lean, clear-eyed, weathered Texan--Willis J. Ray.

Willis J. Ray came to Arizona in 1944, after working in evangelism for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

When Ray arrived, the temperature in Phoenix was 117 degrees and he wondered if he "was in the wrong place." But his first preaching experience in his new state reassured him. At West Van Buren Church in Phoenix, Ray preached to 13 people and 12 of them joined the church. One became its lay preacher.

Because the convention was struggling, Ray initiated a trust fund -- challenging the convention to set aside \$25,000 to "tie up church property" and serve as seed money for growth.

With this money and twice as much faith, Ray began to answer the first calls coming to him to begin work throughout the Western states.

There wasn't any time to wait," remembers Leroy Smith, who drove 65,000 miles a year for Willis Ray, starting churches from Utah to South Dakota.

The first contact outside Arizona came from a man Ray had known in Texas. Harold Dillman, a Utahian, was moving back to Roosevelt and wanted to begin a Southern Baptist mission there.

While Ray was still in Texas, Dillman had sought \$400 for support -- and Ray, who'd been working with 165 churches in Texas -- couldn't raise it. Now, Dillman needed \$2,000 to form his mission, meeting in a ladies club building, into a church.

Ray dived into the trust fund and the first Baptist church in Utah was begun. It affiliated with the Arizona Convention.

About the same time, Charles Shipp, a Southern Baptist pastor serving in a Northern Baptist church in Idaho Falls, Idaho, was fired because his sermons angered some of the deacons. One told him, "Sir, you don't preach like that in this church."

"They were warm, spiritual messages," Ray says.

The result was that about 30 people left the church with Shipp, who wrote the Home Mission Board for assistance. He was referred to Ray, who visited. "And that," says Ray, "was the beginning of Southern Baptist work in Idaho."

Oil field workers, moving into Wyoming from Oklahoma, started SBC work there. Again, they got in touch with the Home Mission Board, which forwarded their request to Ray. In 1947, he visited the key family in their apartment and helped them find a pastor. Again, the work affiliated with Arizona.

Meanwhile, the same family -- the Kings -- moved to Billings, Mont., where they were again instrumental in organizing the first Baptist church in the state. The work continued, and the Arizona convention stretched into the Dakotas.

A chaplain in the military started a church in Rapid City, S.D., in 1949. Work in Western Nebraska also began about that time. Both states affiliated with Arizona.

New Mexico Baptists were already working in southern Colorado when Ray received his first request from the state. He passed it on to New Mexico.

But the second request, from the Colorado Springs-Denver area, resulted in another state tying with Arizona.

The Bryant brothers, W.C. and D.A., had come from Texas to serve as pastors of churches in Colorado. With a few others, they wanted to form an association of churches. Ray agreed to help, and the first association formed at a meeting in Denver.

By this time, work in nine states related back to the Arizona convention, which had almost tripled in size.

By the mid-1950s, the Arizona convention covered one-fourth the land area of the continental U.S. -- from the Mexican border to Canada -- and the Home Mission Board leaders, Ray and others knew it had to be broken up. Caretaking was too expensive and time consuming. In 1974, it covers Arizona and southern Nevada and has 232 churches with 81,638 members, according to the 1974 SBC Annual.

The Colorado convention was formed, drawing off four of the northern-most states; it began with more than 65 churches and 10,000-plus members -- where none had been 13 years before.

And Ray was offered the job of executive secretary. He accepted and was Colorado's leader until his retirement in 1962. Today, the convention covers only Colorado, as other conventions have organized.

During these same years, the California convention had been growing fast. By 1950, it had more than 250 churches and 34,000 members.

Northward, thanks to early work by such men as Leonard Sigle, a Northwest convention had been formed in 1948.

The need for expansion into the West and the vision of those who pushed for it are graphically evident in 1974 statistical tables of current state conventions in the SBC Annual.

The California convention, which includes northern Nevada, now has 916 churches and some 280,000 members; the Utah-Idaho convention, 67 congregations and 10,500 members; Colorado, 134 churches and 46,000 members; Kansas-Nebraska, 200 churches and 60,000 members; Northwest (covering Washington, Oregon, parts of Canada and northern Idaho), 240 churches and 46,500 members; and Northern Plains (covering Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming), 88 churches and 15,000 members.

Baptist work in Alaska and Hawaii began before either area had achieved statehood. The first Southern Baptist church in Alaska was First Baptist Church, Anchorage, organized in 1943. The Alaska Baptist Convention was organized in 1946 with messengers from three churches. In 1974, it has 37 congregations and almost 13,000 total membership.

SBC foreign missionaries sparked Hawaii Southern Baptist activity after the close of mission fields in the Orient in the 1930s and 1940s. The Hawaii Baptist Association,

organized in 1943 with five churches, became a convention in 1945, and the Home Mission Board assumed direction of the effort there after statehood, which came in 1959, although the Foreign Mission Board has gradually phased out funds and missionary personnel--a process which will be complete in 1975. The convention now has some 32 churches and 10,000 members.

Work in Minnesota and Wisconsin, currently affiliated with the Texas convention, now has 40 churches and 5,800 members, and work in Iowa, sponsored by the Missouri convention, has 42 churches and 6,000 members. Such areas are maturing into strong points of Baptist outreach and may one day become conventions.

The "Pioneer Movement" shifted into phase two in 1950 when, in spite of old line states' objections, the SBC moved to "serve as a source of blessing to any community or any people in the United States."

Thus, the door opened again. This time wider. Where once the support was in the hundreds, now it would soar into the millions. And Southern Baptists' attentions, confronted with the nationwide challenge, began swinging eastward. (BP)

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NEXT: The Move East

### Third and Last in a Series

The SBC "Pioneer Movement:" The Move East

By Everett Hullum Jr. and Kim Watson  
for Baptist Press

The story of expansion eastward represents an ambitious leap forward in the Southern Baptist Convention's historic "Pioneer Movement", which spurred its growth from a rural, old South setting to a nationwide denomination with 33 state conventions covering 50 states.

Growth westward, the SBC's first real effort at spreading its wings to evangelize America, had eased into a fairly well-tuned rhythm its phase one, easy-growth period was ending.

And the recognition of the shift to indigenous missions was already being felt in California, for example. But in the land east of the Mississippi River, the heady phase two of the Pioneer Movement was just beginning.

Beginning in the late 1930s, Southern Baptist churches had spilled across the Ohio River to begin missions in Indiana and Ohio. Now new jobs, created by the war industries and continuing in the boom that followed, magnetically drew hundreds of Southern Baptists from Appalachia, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas; they flooded the northern rims of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, poured into Michigan and western Pennsylvania and western New York.

In 1952, Ray Roberts, a steady, strong-willed SBC Home Mission Board missionary, went to start churches in Ohio. When he arrived, the state had one association with 19 churches -- six of which were actually in Indiana. Two years later, with the number of churches grown to 39 and membership totalling about 10,000, the Ohio Baptist Convention was formed. Roberts became its first secretary.

Southern Illinois, a state convention since 1907, meanwhile was spreading its influence northward into western Indiana.

From these two expanding epicenters, the Great Lakes pioneer thrust groped out in an unstructured, unorganized, uncoordinated sort of pincer movement.

Illinois Baptists began answering calls from as far as Keosha, Wisc., and as close as Decatur, just across the county agreement line that had separated Northern and Southern Baptist churches. The Pioneer Movement resulted in the Illinois convention growing to a statewide body from its original foothold in southern Illinois.

In less than 20 years, the 16 churches of northern Illinois grew to 160. The one association that had encompassed much of the Great Lakes region had been broken into seven.

Simultaneously, Ohio was reaching into Indiana and Michigan. Drawing from the strength of these two conventions, plus support from Kentucky and Arkansas Baptists,

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Indiana formed a state convention in 1958. With 111 churches and about 20,000 members, it organized as one of the strongest conventions in the region.

Michigan had constituted as a convention the year before with 52 churches, a four-fold increase in the six years since the first Michigan Baptist association had formed.

By the late 50s, Ohio also was moving eastward, sponsoring missions in western Pennsylvania and western New York.

By 1970, the Pennsylvania-South Jersey Convention formed with 50 churches and 9,000 members.

The Home Mission Board launched work in New York City in 1958, with the emphasis in Manhattan.

Ohio Baptists had earlier -- in 1955 -- helped Alabama pastor R.Z. Boroughs, who moved to Niagara Falls in 1954 to minister to some of his non-resident members, organize the first Southern Baptist church in New York. By 1969 the work had grown to 70 churches and 10,000 members; the New York convention was constituted with Paul James as its first executive secretary.

The Manhattan congregation, although never numerically strong, was a vital factor in what might be called the final thrust of the Pioneer Movement -- the penetration of New England -- serving as the source of many of the leaders.

The same year the Manhattan church was begun, 1958, Screven Memorial Baptist Church in Portsmouth, N.H., was experiencing birth pangs. Three years later, 1961, the first page of the final chapter of the Pioneer Movement story was written when Rosco Anderson, a layman from Florida, moved to Burlington, Vermont, on assignment from the Home Mission Board to begin work in the 50th state. In 1963, South Burlington Baptist Church was constituted and Southern Baptists became truly a national convention.

The pace of work in New England has been slow by most SBC standards, but it's progressing. The fellowship, now affiliated with the Maryland convention, numbers 39 churches and 6,000 members. Elmer Sizemore, who has led work there since 1962, estimates it will be five years before it's ready for regional convention status.

When it comes, the New England convention will join a phalanx of other Southern Baptist state or regional bodies in the east which grow stronger by the year.

From humble beginnings have come the Illinois Baptist State Association, now with 888 churches and more than 200,000 members; the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey, with 62 churches and almost 11,000 members; the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, with 242 churches and 61,000 members; the Baptist Convention of New York (including New York state, northern New Jersey and a small part of Connecticut), with 91 churches and more than 14,000 members; the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, with 389 churches and almost 100,000 members; the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists, with 53 churches and some 15,000 members; and the Baptist State Convention of Michigan, with 180 churches and 38,000 members. (All figures came from the 1974 SBC Annual)

Once "pioneers," they have become part of the warp and woof of the nationwide Southern Baptist fabric.

The fabric, however, has experienced periodic internal tension (now the subject of study by a seven-person committee authorized by the SBC last June in Dallas) to change the name of the convention to something more representative of its national scope.

Most resistance to change comes from the older, mainline SBC states, although differing opinions exist among Baptists in both older and newer areas. So far efforts at change have failed.

Many reasons are given but, basically, some contend the name "Southern Baptist" represents a theological position which transcends its regional connotation; others claim its geographical "parochialism" hinders their outreach.

At least two state conventions, Illinois and New York, have recently passed resolutions asking the committee to suggest a name more appropriate. At least one other, also in annual session, the Mississippi convention, resolved to oppose any change.

Regardless of what it's called, though, the SBC continues, page by page, to bring its Pioneer Movement saga to a conclusion.

Someday, historians may date the close of the Pioneer Movement when Iowa, the Minnesota-Wisconsin region, New England and possibly northern and southern Nevada (now associated separately with the California and Arizona conventions) achieve conventionhood.

On one level, the historians may be right. But, in some ways, the movement won't end until Southern Baptists have reached their goal of strengthening pioneer area work -- some still relatively weak in light of potential outreach -- to the point of having an SBC church within reach of every family in the United States. (BP)

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(BP) Photos on "Pioneer Movement" series mailed to all state Baptist Papers.

D.C. Convention Urges  
Ordination of Women

11/19/74

WASHINGTON (BP)--The District of Columbia Baptist Convention became the first regional or state body affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to call for the ordination of women as ministers on an equal basis with men.

In other actions, the convention (which is aligned with two national bodies, the SBC and the American Baptist Churches) also passed a resolution supporting the Supreme Court's position on abortion, called for a renewal of integrity in government and urged D.C. Baptists to share food supplies with the world's needy.

The convention tabled another resolution calling for President Ford to grant unconditional amnesty to deserters and draft evaders of the Vietnam war.

The statement on the place of women in the church acknowledged the vital role women have played in the past and urged that they be recognized as equals within local churches and the D.C. convention.

In addition to urging that "women requesting ordination as Baptist ministers be considered in the same manner as their male counterparts," the resolution also asked that women be named as deacons and lay ministers in local churches and called for the D.C. convention to provide equal opportunity for women to serve in leadership positions.

The abortion action put the convention on record as supporting the Supreme Court's controversial 1973 decision that a woman's right to privacy must take precedence over any state interest in the matter.

The high court stated that during the first trimester of pregnancy the decision to obtain an abortion must be left to the woman in consultation with her physician, that during the second trimester the state may apply certain regulations limiting access to abortion, and that in the final trimester the state may go so far as to prohibit abortion except to protect the life or health of the pregnant woman.

In calling D.C. Baptists "to demand of ourselves and our elected officials the highest standards of integrity," the convention stated that the events of Watergate demonstrate "that the political system has been abused, manipulated and undermined for personal and political gain."

The resolution further called on Christians to become involved in the task of reforming the political process.

On the question of world hunger, the convention's resolution pledged an effort to increase contributions to feed the starving and to adopt a lifestyle characterized by the spirit of

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On the question of world hunger, the convention's resolution pledged an effort to increase contributions to feed the starving and to adopt a lifestyle characterized by the spirit of moderation and sacrifice.

The resolution calling for unconditional amnesty was tabled after vigorous debate during which a wide variety of opinions was expressed.

Some proposed a statement urging conditional amnesty, but the resolutions committee rejected the idea, stating that it would be useless, in light of President Ford's recent action providing for "earned reentry" for deserters and draft evaders.

The convention elected as president John W. Laney, for 18 years the pastor of the Twinbrook Baptist Church in suburban Rockville, Md. Laney told Baptist Press he hoped that D.C. Baptists will remain committed to the special needs of the District of Columbia. He observed that some suburban churches belonging to the convention are not sufficiently oriented to those needs.

Elected as vice-president and president-elect was Mrs. Alliene Tilley of the East Washington Heights Baptist Church here. The D.C. convention has traditionally elevated its vice president to the presidency the following year.

The convention approved a total budget of \$691,500 for D.C. Baptist causes. Of that amount \$206,648 will go to the worldwide causes of the ABC and SBC, mainly to the SBC, a spokesman said.

The 1975 session is scheduled for November 13-14 at the Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church in Washington.

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Northwest Baptists Rename  
Paper; Top \$1 Million

11/19/74

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. (BP)--Registered messengers to the 27th annual session of the Northwest Baptist Convention officially changed the name of their statewide newspaper and voted a total budget which, for the first time, exceeds \$1 million.

Of that \$1,057,266 budget, \$555,555 is expected from Northwest convention churches through its Cooperative Program unified budget. Twenty-five percent of that amount, representing a three percent increase over the percentage given last year and a five percent over the amount given three years ago, will go to world missions through the Southern Baptist Convention's national Cooperative Program. The remainder of the total budget will come mainly from supplements from the SBC Home and Sunday School Boards.

In other action, the newspaper, the Pacific Coast Baptist, was renamed the Northwest Baptist, and William O. Crews, pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church, Portland, Ore., was elected president.

Next year's convention is set Nov. 11-13, at Royal Heights Baptist Church, Delta, British Columbia, Canada. The Northwest Convention, which covers Washington and Oregon, also works with some 25 churches and missions in Canada, a spokesman said. The Northwest convention reports 290 churches with 46,168 members.

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CORRECTION

On page 5 of today's mailing in the story entitled "Pioneer Movement: The Move East," insert a semicolon after the word "rhythm" in line two of graph two--and make the fourth word of line one of graph 7 read: expanding.

Thanks.

--Baptist Press