



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**Black-White Baptists Form
Organization in California**

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Hoping that the Baptist point of view might make more impact on California life, six Baptist church groups---four predominantly black and two predominantl, white--have formed a statewide commission.

The new Baptist Joint Commission of California represents more than 2,400 Baptist churches and one million members, spokesmen said.

The first project is a noncontroversial one, a three-hour bicentennial celebration planned for June 4 in San Francisco and June 8 in Los Angeles.

But leaders of the 30-member commission made it clear they will speak on issues of concern from a broad-based, basically conservative Christian standpoint.

E. V. Hill, black Baptist preacher from Los Angeles, said, "We've been silent on issues on which we should have been speaking out."

Speaking or acting as individual churches or separate state Baptist conventions, the Baptists in California have not been successful in garnering news media attention or in influencing state policy and public opinion, Hill asserted.

The six groups represented in the commission are The American Baptist Church of the Southwest, The California Baptist State Convention, the California State Baptist Convention, the Progressive Baptist Convention of California and Nevada, the Southern Baptist General Convention of California and the Western Baptist State Convention.

The unprecedented cooperation between Baptist groups in the state comes years after the black-white tensions of the 1960s.

"This is the first time a group of this magnitude has come together because of the Christ and not the crisis," said Hill.

Southern Baptist Jack O'Neal, the commission's executive secretary, said the aim was to bring together in a "reconciling way" the white and black Baptists in California.

Baptists of all types constitute the largest Protestant groupings in California and nation-wide. But it isn't simply a matter of black and white churches, because the Southern and American Baptists both have a considerable number of Spanish speaking, Oriental and other ethnic congregations in their ranks.

"We've got 26 different language groups among our congregation," said Jack Johnson, an El Monte pastor who is the current president of the Southern Baptist State Convention.

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Texas Baptists Urged to
Win Two Million Converts

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1/26/76

FORT WORTH (BP)--Texas Baptists have been challenged to win an additional two million Texans to Christ by 1980 with the aid of an extensive mass media campaign.

James H. Landes, executive director of the 2.2 million-member Baptist General Convention of Texas, issued the challenge in an urgent call to celebrate the nation's Bicentennial with a spiritual revolution.

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Speaking to thousands of church leaders in Fort Worth at the annual Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference, Landes said two million Texans must be won to Christ by 1980 just to keep pace with the exploding population.

Landes predicted that current trends indicate some 5.2 million people in Texas in 1980 will have no church affiliation.

A major part of the effort, said Landes, will be an intensive mass media campaign during 1977.

"I would like to see us, for the rest of the year, preparing to use all available means of the mass media," said Landes.

"Together we will move toward a great experience next year that will let every person--broken, beaten, downtrodden--know that somebody cares."

Other speakers at the three-day Evangelism Conference called for a return to spiritual values if this country is to be resurrected from moral and spiritual death.

The meeting drew 12,000 pastors and laypersons to Tarrant County Convention Center from around Texas and from surrounding states.

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Southwestern Seminary
Gets \$180,000 Grant

Baptist Press
1/26/76

FORT WORTH (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will receive a \$180,000 grant from the Sallie B. Holland Charitable Trust Fund.

A San Antonio native, Mrs. Holland had been a member of the First Baptist Church there since 1903, until her recent death. She was reportedly very interested in missions and the training of young ministers.

Besides the grant to the seminary, First Church in San Antonio received \$40,000 for use in missions projects.

The bequest, administered by the Baptist Foundation of Texas, has been placed in the seminary's permanent endowment funds, a spokesman said.

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Mrs. J. M. Crowe
Dies in Nashville

Baptist Press
1/26/76

NASHVILLE (BP)--Mrs. Edna Earl Elliott Crowe, wife of J. M. Crowe, recently retired executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, died Jan. 25 at Park View Hospital here.

Mrs. Crowe, 67, was born in King and Queen County, Va. She was graduated from Averett College, Danville, Va., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (WMU Training School), Louisville.

A member of Brookside Baptist Church, Nashville, said she is survived, in addition to her husband, by two sons, three daughters, three brothers, two sisters and 14 grandchildren.

Funeral services were conducted in Nashville.

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(BP) Photo will be mailed to state Baptist papers.

Cox Named Vice-President
of Homiletics Academy

PRINCETON, N.J. (BP)--James W. Cox, associate professor of Christian preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., was elected vice-president of the American Academy of Homiletics at its recent meeting at Princeton Theological Seminary here.

The organization consists of teachers of preaching in Protestant and Catholic seminaries in the United States and Canada, and "represents most of the major seminaries in the U. S. and Canada," a Southern Seminary spokesman said.

His election as vice-president also makes Cox president-elect of the national group. He will assume the presidency this December. Cox, who has taught at Southern Seminary since 1959, has been a member of the organization for 10 years.

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SBC Ministers' Wives
Schedule Conference

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NORFOLK (BP)--The Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Conference, auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, will meet at Freemason Baptist Church here at 12:30 p.m., June 15.

The Pastors' Conference meets June 13-14 and the main sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 15-17.

The Ministers' Wives Conference program will begin with a historical skit about a Baptist minister's wife and then center on some modern women pioneers, according to Mrs. Robert L. Franklin of Cairo, Ga., president of the conference.

The program will deal with the role of ministers' wives in the home and church and as an employed person or volunteer in the community.

Tickets will be available at \$4.50 each in booths in the Norfolk Scope Convention Center.

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Russian Baptist Preacher
Tortured to Death ?

Baptist Press
1/26/76

KESTON, Kent, England (BP)--A group known as the Council of Baptist Prisoners' Relatives in the Soviet Union has charged that the death of a 47-year-old Reform Baptist preacher "was deliberate . . . a result of torture," according to a report from the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism at Keston College here.

The Centre reported that Ivan Vasilievich Biblenko from the town of Krivoi Rog, died "under mysterious circumstances in the Ukraine."

Using documents from the Council of Baptist Prisoners' Relatives and from friends and relatives of the deceased, the Centre reported that Biblenko was arrested in 1972 because of his activities as a preacher and sentenced to three years.

"In the camp, our brother experienced continual acts of oppression, both from the camp administration and the KGB staff, and from the prisoners," one of the documents said. "The KGB workers continually tried to persuade him to collaborate with them. The prisoners, incited by the administration, beat him . . . He was threatened by incarceration in a psychiatric hospital."

The documents said Biblenko, who was finally released but kept under surveillance disappeared for two weeks after leaving on a bus, September 13, 1975, to go from Krivoi Rog to Dnepropetrovsk.

Two weeks later relatives, who had searched widely for him, were told that he had died on September 24 in a Dnepropetrovsk hospital of injuries received in a road accident.

The nature of the extensive wounds on the body and conflicting accounts of his condition when he entered the hospital, the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism reported, have caused friends and relatives to reject official reports of Biblenko's death.

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