



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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### Virginia Leads Official SBC Messenger Count

NASHVILLE (BP)--Virginia, the host state, registered the most "messengers" to the 119th annual session of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Norfolk, June 15-17, accounting for 3,172 (17.02 percent of the all-time record total of 18,637 messengers.

The official registration of 18,637, tabulated by the SBC Historical Commission and released by W. Fred Kendall, the convention's recording secretary, exceeded the previous record of 18,190 set in 1974 in Dallas.

North Carolina registered the runnerup total of messengers, with 2,429, or 13.05 percent of the total.

Others in the top 20 were Georgia, 1,361; Tennessee, 1,293; Alabama and South Carolina, 1,289 each; Texas, 1,128; Kentucky, 944; Florida, 936; Mississippi, 792; Missouri, 562; Louisiana, 533; Oklahoma, 458; Arkansas, 412; Maryland, 411; Ohio, 294; Illinois, 244; Indiana, 161; California, 135; and District of Columbia, 86. Other registrants ranged from one each from Puerto Rico and Idaho to 75 from New Mexico.

Forty-seven of the 50 states in which Southern Baptists have members were represented, in addition to D. C. and Puerto Rico. Only the states of Maine, Vermont, and Wyoming had no representatives at the 119th annual session of the 131-year-old SBC, the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

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A full state-by-state statistical breakdown has been sent to state Baptist papers by the SBC Historical Commission, Nashville; available to others on request.

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Baptist Seminary Damaged  
During Fighting in Beirut

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7/7/76

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--The Arab Baptist Theological Seminary and one missionary residence were hit during recent fighting here, but still no Baptists have been killed or seriously injured.

David W. King, Southern Baptist missionary, reported heavy fighting close to the seminary, including two direct hits on the roof of the main building and several hits on the seminary grounds. The blasts broke most of the window panes in the main building and damaged the contents of two rooms, but no one was injured.

The home of the William O. Hern family suffered three direct hits, destroying most of the furniture. The HERNs were not in Lebanon and the house was empty. King said the home would have to be rebuilt. King's own home received no serious damage, but he reported an olive tree near his house was "completely blown out of the ground."

The total number killed in Lebanon has now exceeded 20,000, according to King, who made his report during a telephone call to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board headquarters from Cyprus where his family had traveled by boat. They were enroute to Jordan for a few weeks.

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Southern Baptist missionaries remaining in Beirut are the James K. Raglands, Mabel Summers and Emma Cooke, all associated with the Beirut Baptist School which was to reopen the first week of July after being closed for two weeks.

"God has protected us in a marvelous way. We would not complain if we suffered some loss or material damage on our campus here," King had said earlier. "Because we believe that by simply being Christians we are not exempt from the sorrows and tragedies that accompany this life."

-30-

More Abortion Cases  
Slated Next Session

Baptist Press  
7/7/76

WASHINGTON (BP)--Despite its recent major decision on abortion, the U. S. Supreme Court served notice here that it will rule on the controversial subject again next year.

Sitting for the final time in its current term, the high court announced that it will hear abortion cases from Missouri, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania sometime after it convenes in October.

The court also applied its recent rulings on spousal and parental consent for abortions to state laws in Florida and Pennsylvania.

In another action, the court refused to set aside two lower court rulings supporting ban of massage parlors by municipalities. It declined to schedule for argument challenges to laws banning such establishments in Virginia and the District of Columbia.

The Missouri abortion case challenges the practice by St. Louis city hospitals of effectively denying women the right to an abortion by its policy of employing only gynecologists and obstetricians who are opposed to abortion and who therefore refuse to perform the procedure.

The Connecticut challenge involves that state's refusal to reimburse welfare recipients for expenses of abortion except in cases where the attending physician certifies that the procedure was "medically or psychiatrically necessary."

In Pennsylvania, the state has refused to reimburse women who have obtained legal abortions and who otherwise qualify for medical assistance under the medicaid program jointly administered by states and the federal government.

The high court also affirmed the decisions of two lower courts in light of its recent ruling that neither a husband nor a parent may veto a woman's right to have an abortion. The court invalidated Florida's requirement of such consent.

In a separate action, however, the justices upheld a Pennsylvania law requiring a woman's own written consent before an abortion is performed.

-30-

Illiteracy: A Problem  
For Everyone

Baptist Press  
7/7/76

By Mary Wimberly

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Illiteracy affects everyone, especially the one out of five adult Americans who are functional nonreaders.

A group of 42 volunteers from across the nation addressed themselves to that problem during an intensive two-week literacy missions workshop at Samford University, a Baptist school here.

Sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board in cooperation with Samford, the workshop was planned "to prepare people from all over the SBC to lead literacy missions in their state associations or churches," according to its director, Mildred Blankenship.

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"Most of these people are already involved in their local churches in some aspect of the literacy ministry. We equip them to train other volunteers," said Miss Blankenship, director of literacy missions for the Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

The literacy missions program is divided into three phases: teaching adults to read and write, tutoring school age youths, and teaching English to the foreign born.

"The ultimate goal is to teach the student to read the Bible," said Miss Blankenship. "But it doesn't mean that they have the plan of salvation crammed down their throats.

"When they ask why we are teaching them to read, it's easy for us to answer 'Jesus.' This contact opens the door for us to share Christ."

"I recall the story of a woman who had just accepted Christ was given a Bible. She handed it back, saying that it wouldn't do her any good because she couldn't read," related Miss Blankenship. "We're trying to help."

Acknowledging that there are psychological problems involved in adult illiteracy, Miss Blankenship said that most volunteers work with students on a one-to-one basis.

"Small groups in a social setting work well with the English for foreigners classes, however," she said.

The Samford workshop was the first time it has been held at a Baptist college. It had previously been held on seminary campuses.

"This arrangement at Samford is working well because it affords us the opportunity to offer undergraduate and graduate credit in education and religion," said Miss Blankenship. Some participants in the workshop are classroom teachers who will take their knowledge back to formal academic settings.