



BAPTIST PRESS

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**Phenomenal Growth Expected
To Continue in Philippines**

MANILA, Philippines (BP)--Baptist church membership in the Philippines has experienced extraordinary growth in the last two years and with a "Win One, Begin One" campaign well under way, another good year is expected, according to Southern Baptist missionaries here.

"A growth of 25 percent in one year in net membership is rather phenomenal in the history of missions," said Joseph B. Underwood, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's consultant for evangelism and church development. "This has happened for the last two years in the Philippines," he explained.

In 1972, 15,669 were baptized throughout the Philippines, Underwood said. This number had grown to more than 25,000 in 1975. There were 2,914 baptisms in all the Philippines in 1974, and 3,422 on the island of Mindanao alone in 1975. Preliminary reports indicate that the total baptisms for the two main islands in 1975 will be more than 5,000, Underwood said.

But growth for 1976 is expected to surpass even those figures. Earliest reports of the "Win One, Begin One" campaign indicate "unprecedented response to the preaching of the gospel by Baptists on the islands," according to Southern Baptist missionary press representative William T. Roberson.

Another Southern Baptist missionary, Grover F. Tyner Jr., wrote in a recent newsletter that "doors for spiritual advance have never been more open than they are today in the Philippines."

One missionary described the response in some areas as a continuing revival.

"In one small barrio (village), Southern Baptist missionary James Slack reports 160 decisions," Roberson said.

"In Midsayap, situated in the heart of an area where Muslim rebels move about with considerable freedom, over 100 made decisions and 33 were baptized recently," he added.

"This growth," said William R. Wakefield, the board's secretary for Southeast Asia, "is indicative of the continuing openness or receptivity of the people."

Wakefield said the growth is "definitely related to the close cooperation between churches, the Philippine Baptist Convention and the missionaries in placing the winning of Philippine people as their top priority."

The month-long "Win One, Begin One" campaigns are being held through mid-November on Mindanao and Luzon. Each Baptist is being encouraged to lead another person to Christ, and each church is being challenged to begin a new church.

Mission Work Proceeding
Normally in Thailand

BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)--Mission work is proceeding normally in Thailand since the October military takeover of the government, according to Southern Baptist missionary Ronald C. Hill.

Hill, chairman of the Thailand Baptist Mission (organization of Southern Baptist missionaries), said the situation is calm and church meetings are still being permitted. He did not indicate any changes in the work of the mission or churches.

In a telegram to William R. Wakefield, the Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Southeast Asia, Hill reported that schools are closed until the end of October. The coup occurred as a result of disturbances and fighting at Thammasat University here, according to reports.

In an earlier report, Southern Baptist missionary Hubert A. Fox reported a good deal of fighting and bloodshed had occurred but said the missionaries were not involved in any way in the fighting or disturbances.

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Portuguese Forming
Home Mission Board

Baptist Press
10/20/76

WISEU, Portugal (BP)--A record number of 178 "messengers" to the Portuguese Baptist Convention voted to form a three-member Home Mission Board (HMB), at their 43rd annual assembly here.

Five new churches were admitted to the convention to bring its number of cooperating churches and missions to 55. Two of the newly admitted churches are on the Azorian Islands.

An executive-missionary for the Portuguese HMB will be appointed "as soon as possible," according to European Baptist Press Service (EBPS). The HMB formation is a move toward more emphasis on evangelism and church development, EBPS said.

Manual Alexandre Jr., director of the Baptist Seminary in Queluz, was re-elected convention president.

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European Federation Council's
Hungary Meeting Is a First

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10/20/76

BUDAPEST (BP)--The first meeting of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) Council ever held in an East European Socialist Republic drew the organization's best attendance in history, with some 80 delegates and other participants.

Speakers and guests from several denominations and organizations, including Baptists, highlighted inter-church cooperation in Hungary.

Guests during the meeting, held in the newly-inaugurated Pentecostal church building here, included: Sandor Palotay, president of the Free Church Council in Hungary; Bishops Laszlo Bakos and Tibor Bartha of the Reformed Church, representing the Ecumenical Council in Hungary; Deputy Chairman Istvan Straub and Protestant department head Laszlo Pozsonyi of the State Office for Church Affairs; and Bishop D. Zoltan Kaldy of the Lutheran Church in Hungary.

Presiding was Alexei Bichkov, general secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR and current EBF president.

New EBF secretary-treasurer Gerhard Claas of Hamburg, Germany, told the assembly that the Budapest meeting "is the fulfillment of a dream," a theme carried throughout the meeting by speakers, according to European Baptist Press Service (EBPS).

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"We are here to think of our special situation," Claas said. "On the one hand, two-thirds of European Baptists live in Eastern Europe, and we would like to absorb some of the spiritual life of these churches . . . but the second side is that Europe is now the only continent where the total number of Baptists is decreasing.

"Are we therefore only traditional Christians, or are we new people living life in a new world through Jesus Christ?"

Bartha, president of the Ecumenical Council of Hungary, emphasized that shared ecumenical tasks means, in his opinion, strength rather than loss of identity.

"We appreciate the contribution of Baptists in Hungary . . . especially theological," he said, recognizing Baptists' proportionately large number forming many smaller congregations "tend to be more the Church, in the biblical sense."

"We all have the feeling that we are called to cooperation in our mission, which is to proclaim the gospel and to heal the wounds of mankind. Yet, I would repeat again and again that the level of love between Christians and the degree of effectiveness of their mission is connected, for there exists a relationship between the love we have for the brethren and the fulfillment of our duties," said Bartha.

Claas, in his closing address, said, "Sometimes we have spoken less about the Lord than about Baptists." He spoke through a Hungarian woman interpreter who is an ordained Methodist minister.

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Texas Convention Refuses
To Seat Charismatics

Baptist Press
10/20/76

SAN ANTONIO, Tex. (BP)--"Messengers" to the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT) voted here to deny the seating of four persons from two Dallas area charismatic churches.

This is believed to be the first time one of the 33 Baptist state conventions cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has voted to deny seats to messengers from charismatic or neo-Pentecostal churches.

The action was taken after the BGCT's credentials committee had recommended that the four be recognized as bona fide messengers to the convention's 91st session, a BGCT spokesman said.

Wendell E. King, pastor of North Temple Baptist Church, Dallas, challenged the seating of the four church members in the convention's opening session.

He said the four represented congregations in Dallas which he claimed have been disruptive to the fellowship and worship of other churches in the area.

The churches to which King referred are the Beverly Hills Baptist Church in Dallas and the Shady Grove Church in Grand Prairie, a Dallas suburb.

The "messengers" who were denied seating at the convention were Olen Griffing, pastor of Shady Grove Church; Calvin Grantham, associate pastor of Beverly Hills Church; and Heriberto Benevides and Monty Smith, members of the Shady Grove Church.

According to Baptist polity, the two churches can continue to be known as Southern Baptist by virtue of association and cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention nationally, even though they are no longer officially part of the Dallas Association or Texas Convention.

To deny them SBC recognition would take action of the national body of messengers in annual session, held each June.

"The charismatic practices of these churches have disrupted the fellowship of the Dallas Baptist Association and the fellowship of the North Temple Baptist Church," King said later.

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"Their worship practices appeal to emotional responses of people and their reactions detract from involvement in our churches," he said.

King pointed out that he does not wish to deny the two churches their "constitutional right to worship as the Holy Spirit leads. But, I have difficulty with their being called Baptists, and when I say this I'm speaking more in terms of defining Baptists in a traditional sense rather than in a definitive sense."

After the credentials committee passed along its ruling that King's challenge should be overruled, the decision was brought to a vote by messengers, and the committee ruling was overturned by a wide majority, according to reports.

Presiding was James G. Harris, BGCT president and pastor of the University Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

The BGCT messengers underscored a decision by the Dallas Baptist Association to disassociate both Shady Grove and Beverly Hills Churches in Oct. 1975, for what was termed "charismatic practices."

The BGCT last year refused to act for or against charismatics in convention session, even though two proposals referring to or alluding to neo-Pentecostals and charismatics were presented in resolutions.

After the credentials committee's recommendation was voted down, two representatives of Shady Grove and Beverly Hills churches responded in interviews.

Griffing said, "We have purposefully caused no breach of fellowship. I and the people of Shady Grove do feel that Texas Baptists, as a whole, are in danger of drifting from biblical principles and precepts they have historically held as dear."

Howard Conatser, pastor of Beverly Hills Church, said in a telephone interview from Dallas, "I'm surprised that the Texas Convention would take this action against the charismatic churches. Because of this I feel that the autonomy of the local church has been taken away.

"No longer can a Baptist church say it is free," Conatser said.

In presenting the credentials committee report, Presnall Wood, committee chairman and pastor of Park Place Baptist Church, Houston, said he believed the committee maintained the spirit of the BGCT constitution by recommending that the four be seated.