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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**Georgia Baptists Urge  
Openness In Church Life**

AUGUSTA, Ga. (BP)--Georgia Baptists, meeting in the city where the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1845, pledged prayerful support to native son Jimmy Carter as the nation's new president and reaffirmed their commitment to the church being open to all persons.

The historic resolutions were adopted three days after racial barriers were stricken in President-elect Carter's home church, Plains Baptist Church in southwest Georgia.

Former Georgia Governor Carter was mentioned in several speeches and side comments at the annual meeting of the Georgia Baptist Convention. A telegram sent to him in Plains pledged Georgia Baptists' "prayer and best wishes" and said "may you ever be used as an instrument of reconciliation and peace."

The resolutions committee, in presenting its statement on openness, referred to "recent publicized events (which) have focused attention on racial tensions" and noted that the convention, constituted of "messengers from churches committed to New Testament principles," should "speak to pressing issues of the day."

In reaffirming past Georgia Baptist stances favoring racial openness, the resolution said, ". . . the Lordship of Christ demands that churches support the New Testament principle that Christ lived and died for all persons and that all persons are, therefore, welcome into any and all expressions of the church."

The Georgia Baptist Convention also approved, without discussion, a lengthy statement reaffirming historic ties between the convention and its oldest institution, Mercer University in Macon.

That statement came from Mercer trustees, responding to a 1975 convention report calling for many steps to be taken to renew closer relationships between the university and Georgia Baptists.

The Mercer trustee statement said, "Mercer trustees assure the Georgia Baptist Convention that its collective voice has been heard and that diligent efforts have been made to comply with the convention's request, both in letter and in spirit."

Three years ago, the Georgia Baptist Convention appointed a special committee to seek to resolve longstanding tensions with Mercer related to such issues as its method of selecting trustees, objectionable movies on the campus, questionable advertisements in the campus newspaper, and the general feeling that Mercer was moving away from the mainstream of Georgia Baptist churches and denominational life.

Last year, that committee presented a lengthy report urging Mercer trustees to remember that the university belongs to the convention, and not the trustees, and requesting concrete actions to preserve a Christian atmosphere in all aspects of university policies.

Georgia Baptists also voted to initiate new ministries to mentally retarded persons and their families. The Georgia Baptist Children's Home was asked to consider starting group homes for mentally retarded people whose families cannot care for them.

The Georgia Baptist Foundation was urged to raise funds to provide financial aid for families needing help with care of mentally retarded persons. Associations were urged to establish day care centers for mentally retarded and churches were asked to minister in every way possible to families of retarded citizens.

The Georgia Convention approved a report calling on public school officials to use "only text books which represent the best in our culture . . . and which do not commend, endorse or glorify speech and conduct which is below generally approved moral and ethical standards of our communities."

This report was in response to a motion made in 1975 by Herschel A. Markham, pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, in Fairborn, Ga., about alleged evil influences in public school text books.

Markham made a similar appeal at Southern Baptist Convention sessions in 1975 and 1976. The day after the 1976 SBC session in Norfolk, he was arrested in downtown Atlanta and charged with "terroristic acts" or "threatening to blow up a federal building." He later clarified comments about having a "bomb" in his possession as meaning "a literary bomb."

In September, he was given a probated 12 month sentence in Atlanta. He resigned his church 10 days before the Georgia Convention met and did not attend sessions in Augusta.

Georgia Baptist messengers quickly defeated a move to change the system for electing their executive committee members.

Larry Stewart, pastor of First Baptist Church in Red Oak Ga., wanted to give associations authority to name their own members of the state convention executive committee, and he wanted larger associations to have more members than smaller ones. Stewart is president of Concerned Georgia Baptists, a state group affiliated with the ultra conservative Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship.

His motion was defeated after he spoke for it and one person spoke against it. About 40 persons voted for it out of almost 1,900 registered messengers.

The Georgia convention approved a 1977 Cooperative Program budget of \$10 million. After deduction of about 10 percent in shared promotion and administrative expenses, the budget will be divided equally between Georgia and Southern Baptist Convention causes.

Georgia also adopted a \$13,350,000 capital improvements and endowment program, to raise funds for buildings, endowment, scholarships and reserves at Georgia Baptist institutions.

William L. Self, pastor of Wieuca Road Baptist Church, Atlanta, was elected president of the Georgia Baptist Convention. A member of Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Self will preach the SBC sermon in Kansas City next June.

The Georgia convention will hold its 1977 session at Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta, Nov. 14-16.

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No Carter Ties Anticipated  
Graham Tells N. C. Baptists

Baptist Press  
11/18/76

FAYETTEVILLE, N. C. (BP)--Billy Graham doesn't expect to be a spiritual advisor to President-elect Jimmy Carter "because I'm not one of his close friends."

But the North Carolina born evangelist hastened to add in a news conference here that he certainly will pray for the next President because "he will need all of our support and all of our prayers as he faces almost unsurmountable problems not faced by other U. S. Presidents"

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Graham said, "All of us will be fortunate if there's no war in the next four years," adding that trouble spots include Middle East and southern Africa. He said he was also concerned about the Soviet arms build up and threats from OPEC oil producing nations.

The famed Southern Baptist evangelist said he was "very pleased with the Nov. 14 vote at the Plains (Ga.) Baptist Church, which ended racial discrimination, and noted that Carter's candidacy and election has given evangelical Christianity and Southern Baptists "high visibility" in Washington and elsewhere.

After Graham's closing message, the convention sent a wire to Carter pledging its prayers for him and his family as he becomes President, Jan. 20.

Even Graham noticed that the North Carolina convention session was a "little quieter this year." And it was, in fact, veteran observers couldn't remember when there had been a more harmonious session. Even with the peaceful atmosphere, registration was 3,327, considerably more than at last year's convention at Asheville, which elected Cecil A. Ray as general secretary-treasurer.

A \$12 million budget, plus another \$1 million challenge goal, was approved with no debate. One-third of it will go to the Southern Baptist Convention's worldwide missions causes.

Coy C. Privette of Kannapolis, N. C., was re-elected president. A woman, Mrs. A. LeRoy Parker of Greensboro, was re-elected second vice president. She is the second woman in North Carolina Baptist history to serve as one of the top officers.

The convention voted to let its president name his own parliamentarian. Until James M. Bulman of Oak Ridge, N. C., was defeated as parliamentarian last year, he had served 12 consecutive years. Campbell College President Norman A. Wiggins, an attorney, was re-elected parliamentarian.

A Committee of Nine, studying trustee representation, requested a year's extension of time because of a late letter from Grover J. Andrews of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in Atlanta.

He questioned the recommendations of the committee. The original committee report had recommended a limit of seven trustees from a single church. Some churches now have 12 or 13. The report also recommended that one-fourth of the trustees of institutions and agencies come from churches with less than 400 members. These churches comprise three-fourths of the 3,458 churches in the North Carolina Baptist Convention and have more than half the membership in the 1.1 million member body.

The convention also authorized a Committee of Eleven to study needs of the aging. It will report when the convention meets Nov. 14-16, Charlotte, N. C.

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Black, White Ala. Baptists  
Mix Politics and Religion

Baptist Press  
11/18/76

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Mixing politics and religion, more than 5,000 Alabama Baptists--both black and white and representing five different conventions and 1.3 million members--came together for an historic joint meeting to observe a special U. S. Bicentennial session at the Birmingham Jefferson Civic Center here.

Billed as a "festival of freedom" the program featured a mass chorus of 1,500 voices, a patriotic paean of praise, a sermon by a black Baptist pastor from New York, and a Bicentennial address by Oklahoma Governor David Boren.

Alabama Governor George C. Wallace also made a guest appearance, and earlier in the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist Convention, U. S. Rep. John Buchanan (R.-Ala.), a former Southern Baptist minister, urged all churches to open their doors to all men regardless of race, creed or color.

Buchanan, congressman of Alabama's sixth district, told the Baptists that President-elect Jimmy Carter's first test of leadership came on Sunday, Nov. 14, in the Plains Baptist Church.

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"There they struggled in a three hour meeting for the right decision" on whether to open their church to blacks, Buchanan said. "How I thank God for the right decision" to end racial discrimination, he said. "Shall John Buchanan or any other individuals deny the right to worship for any person for whom Christ died?" Buchanan asked. "God forbid."

The congressman said he believed Carter to be "a born again believer in Jesus Christ," and he urged the Baptists to "pray that he will be God's man." Buchanan also urged the Baptists to reach out and join hands with those about you.

Gardner Taylor, of Brooklyn, the first black and the first Baptist to be elected president of the New York City Council of Churches, told the joint session that two enormous ills--greed and racism--stand in the way of Christians making the nation's 200 year old promise of freedom and opportunity a reality.

Taylor, pastor of Concord Baptist Church of Christ, without mentioning either man by name, spoke of Martin Luther King, a black Baptist born in Georgia in 1929, and Jimmy Carter, a white Baptist born in Georgia in 1925, and how the "hand of God made it possible" for the first Southerner to be elected President since 1849.

Taylor spoke of the circumstances King went through to achieve his goals, which also liberated Carter to become President. He spoke of how they "found each other's hand and heart."

The South's patriotism has been known everywhere, Taylor declared, but he said "an albatross" has hung around the neck of a person from the South wanting to be President.

"We face a new day," Taylor noted, "a new hope and a new birth of freedom. The challenge," he declared, "is to determine that the last vestige of our dark night, going back to the Civil War, is behind us."

Gov. Wallace, a surprise addition to the program, received a standing ovation when he was introduced. He said the greatest need of the U. S. is "spiritual revolution or revival which ever you call it. The Bible belt is in an ascendancy and the old fashion values of moral goodness, which were practiced a hundred years ago, have come back in vogue," he explained. Wallace said there is a yearning for the "fundamental Christianity" which Baptists espouse.

In other action, the Alabama Baptist Convention passed a resolution for prayer and support of President-elect Carter, re-elected Dan Ireland, pastor of Jackson Way Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala., as president; and voted a \$13.3 million annual budget. Thirty five and a half percent of the state's Cooperative Program budget will go to worldwide Southern Baptist missions.

The convention also adopted resolutions opposing violence on television, pornography and alcohol abuses and resolved to support observance of the Lord's Day.

The 1977 convention is set, Nov. 15-17, at the Civic Center, Montgomery, Ala.

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Maryland Baptists Lash  
Racism and TV Programs

Baptist Press  
11/18/76

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist Convention of Maryland adopted a strong anti-racism resolution which commends Plains (Ga.) Baptist Church for ending racial discrimination and urged boycotts of both television shows which glamorize "crime, violence and perverted sexual values" and products of sponsors of the shows.

"Messengers" to the 141st annual meeting of the convention also praised the public media for coverage of Southern Baptists during the run of Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist deacon, for the presidency, and resolved to pray for and support Carter and other elected officials and urge Christians to participate in the political process.

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Besides commending the Plains Church, which voted on Nov. 14 to end an 11-year-old resolution barring blacks, Maryland Baptists also commended the "many churches in the Baptist Convention of Maryland that have faced this issue squarely and aggressively and have sought to manifest in their congregations an open fellowship that transcends race and any other barrier that divides man from his fellow man."

It urged that "our churches put forth every effort to win to Christ all peoples of all races and welcome them into the fellowship of the church."

The resolution quoted several Bible passages and said, "The evil of racial discrimination should not be tolerated in the Christian fellowship."

Lashing out at television programming, Maryland Baptists declared "strong opposition to the invasion of crime, violence and perverted sexual values in our homes through the television industry."

The resolution called on "all Christian parents of our state to screen carefully the TV shows that their children are allowed to watch" and called for boycotting of offensive shows and sponsors.

The call for boycott decried shows which "glamorize violence as an acceptable way of settling man's differences, which debase the biblical concept of human sexuality, and present deviation as the acceptable norm and make heroes of those whose lifestyle is committed to crime, violence and sexual misuse."

In a rather unusual action, the messengers passed a special resolution commending the convention sermon of Lewis McDonald, pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church, Bel Air, Md., as one of the "greatest convention sermons" they have ever had.

In the sermon, entitled "Can Our Kind of Church Win Our Kind of World?," McDonald called for both an emphasis on winning people to Christ and applying the gospel of Christ to their needs.

He noted that the most orthodox and evangelistic churches grow the most rapidly but in some instances they lack love toward people. He said some churches grow rapidly because they enlist persons but do not address themselves as ministers to the needs of such people as the emotionally ill, the alcoholics, divorcees and the poor.

Besides commending McDonald's sermon, the messengers passed a resolution urging Baptists at every level "to renew their efforts and increase their prayers and enlarge their witness and ministry to evangelize our world before the end of this century."

In other action, the convention elected a Baltimore physician, Dr. William B. Hillis of Johns Hopkins Hospital, as president and voted a total budget of \$2,011,508. Of that amount, \$1,377,000 is expected in Cooperative Program unified budget receipts from Maryland churches. Forty percent will go to worldwide Southern Baptist mission causes.

The 1977 convention is set Nov. 14-16, Heritage Baptist Church, Annapolis, Md.

Oklahoma Baptists Gear  
Up To Fight Pornography

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Baptist Press  
11/18/76

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--"Messengers" to the annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma appear to be gearing up for a fight to rid the state of pornographic literature following their recent success in defeating a liquor-by-the-drink amendment to the state constitution.

Three of the four resolutions passed in their annual convention here dealt with moral issues, and the convention's Christian Life Committee also received attention in a motion calling for it to be empowered and funded to lead out in a fight against pornography.

Richard Douglass, pastor of Putnam City Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, and a former missionary to Brazil, became the second consecutive Oklahoma City pastor to be elected convention president. He succeeds Charles Graves, pastor of Nichols Hills Baptist Church.

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The messengers also approved a \$6.75 million objective for the 1977 Cooperative Program unified budget, with 42 percent of that amount going to worldwide Southern Baptist Convention causes.

The convention also passed a resolution urging individual Christians to unite at every level against the portrayal of violence, vulgarity, sadism, and sex on television and in movies.

A second resolution spoke against pornography and called on associations of churches, churches, pastors and members to use every means at their disposal to fight pornographic literature.

One Oklahoma City pastor, Raymond Perkins of Western Hill Baptist Church, offered an amendment which he said would result in the convention doing more than just resolving about the situation.

He called for the state convention to establish some procedure for "direct action against smut." He later agreed to a change in wording of his amendment to ask the executive director-treasurer, Joe L. Ingram, and the Christian Life Committee to find ways to fight actively against pornography. The resolution was passed with the amendment.

Two other resolutions expressed appreciation for the convention host and commended the convention leaders for their leadership in a recent defeat of the move to bring liquor-by-the-drink to Oklahoma. The statement also put the messengers on record as desiring that present state laws be strengthened and clarified to eliminate totally the sale and use of liquor in Oklahoma.

The 1977 convention will meet, Nov. 14-16, at First Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla.

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Northern Plains Baptists  
Celebrate 25 Years

Baptist Press  
11/18/76

CASPER, Wyo. (BP)--Southern Baptists of the Northern Plains, celebrating 25 years of work in the four-state area, inaugurated a new executive director-treasurer and a new Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) executive director, and voted a \$594,734 budget in annual session here.

Roy W. Owen, formerly of the Colorado Baptist Convention, will succeed John P. Baker, who retires, Jan. 1, as executive director-treasurer of the Northern Plains Baptist Convention and as editor of the Northern Plains News. Mrs. Ray Gilliland of Rapid City, S. D., will succeed Miss Nicy Murphy as the convention's WMU chief executive.

Both Baker and Miss Murphy have been on the staff of the convention, which covers the two Dakotas and Montana and Wyoming, since the organization of Southern Baptist work there. The convention held dinners in their honor.

In other action, the convention voted to "pledge its prayer support" for national leaders, and re-elected Thomas Sherrill, pastor of North Hill Baptist Church, Minot, N. D., as president.

The total budget of \$594,734, includes a goal of \$238,022 in Cooperative Program unified budget receipts from Northern Plains churches, of which 16 percent will go to worldwide causes of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The 1977 convention will meet, Nov. 9-10, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Billings, Mont.

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