



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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## Pornography Legislation Called for in Mississippi

JACKSON, Miss (BP)--Messengers to the Mississippi Baptist Convention meeting here passed a unanimous resolution asking for effective legislation in the state against pornography, expressed appreciation for recent legislation in Mississippi which give clergy the right to "privileged communication," and passed a record \$8.5 million budget.

The pornography resolution was passed in response to a Mississippi Supreme Court ruling that reportedly says Mississippi laws are too broad to restrain the sale of obscene materials, although the United States Supreme Court has said that "contemporary community standards" may be defined locally instead of nationally, a convention spokesman said.

In the resolution commending the state legislature for its July, 1976, action granting privileged communication to Mississippi clergy, messengers noted:

"Whereas the emotional, mental and spiritual health of many of our citizens depends upon the free and confidential access to clergymen or spiritual advisors...this convention expresses its sincere appreciation to the legislature...for extending the right of privileged communication between persons seeking spiritual counsel and the clergymen with whom such communication is sought."

The \$8.4 million 1977 budget of Mississippi Baptists is 15 percent higher than that of 1976. Of the total, 32 percent will go to Southern Baptist causes worldwide through the Cooperative Program unified budget.

In other action, messengers elected Robert Hamblin, pastor of Harrisburg Baptist Church in Tupelo, Miss., as president.

The Mississippi Convention will meet Nov. 15-17, 1977, in Jackson, Miss.

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Calif. Votes Record Budget,  
Resolves to Pray for Carter

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SAN DIEGO, Calif. (BP)--Messengers to the 36th annual session of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California approved a record \$4.8 million budget, including a record \$2.6 million Cooperative Program unified budget goal and resolved to uphold President-elect Jimmy Carter in prayers.

Of the 1977 Cooperative Program goal for the California Convention, 36 percent will go to Southern Baptist causes worldwide.

The resolution to pray for President-elect Carter, a Southern Baptist deacon, instructed the convention's executive secretary, Robert Hughes, to convey to Carter "that we will uphold him in our prayers."

In other action, the convention appointed a committee to study salaries and suggest salary structures and policies within the convention's boards and agencies.

Messengers by-passed a recommendation of its executive board to grant raises to administrative personnel and voted instead to redistribute previously allocated funds to department directors and associates. However, six percent cost-of-living raises were granted to all employees.

A proposed resolution on abortion, described as "strongly worded," and an attempt to interpret what the Bible says about when life begins, were referred to the convention's denominational relations committee for further study.

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Messengers also approved a \$3,000 budget item for the Sacramento-based Committee on Moral Concerns, an interdenominational lobby group, made up of some 500 persons from several denominations--including a sizeable number of Baptists, a convention spokesperson said. The committee's representative in Sacramento is a former president of the California Convention.

Messengers elected William Hann, a Bakersfield, Calif., pastor, as president. Hann was first vice president last year and succeeded the former president who resigned in mid-term to accept a pastorate in another state.

Also messengers adopted a resolution commending the convention's employees and commissioned California Southern Baptist editor Elmer Gray to write an up-to-date history of the California Convention.

The California messengers will meet Nov. 15-17, 1977, in Sacramento.

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Ariz. Votes Record Budget,  
Asks Sutton to Stay

Baptist Press  
11/22/76

TUSCON, Ariz. (BP)--Arizona Southern Baptist Convention (ASBC) "messengers" meeting here in 48th annual session adopted a record budget, reelected their president and asked their executive director-treasurer, Roy F. Sutton, to continue in his post and not retire before 1978.

The convention will observe its 50th anniversary in 1978.

An annual operating budget of \$1,673,944 was voted by the 384 messengers, with 22 percent, or \$181,500 to be distributed through the Cooperative Program unified budget to Southern Baptist causes worldwide.

In sessions described as "non-controversial" and "highly spiritual in mood and emphasis," messengers reelected convention President Richard A. Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church, Phoenix, Ariz., to a second one-year term.

The action asking Sutton to stay in his post confirmed a similar executive board action, requesting that he stay on as the convention's chief staff executive through 1978.

The 1977 Arizona Convention sessions will be Nov. 15-17, in Casa Grande, Ariz.

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S.C. Baptists Commend  
Plains, Lash Govt. Intrusion

Baptist Press  
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SPARTANBURG, S.C. (BP)--South Carolina Baptists, in annual session here, commended Plains (Ga.) Baptist Church for its move to end racial discrimination and called for steps to be taken to end government interference at the Baptist College at Charleston.

In other action, "messengers" voted a \$9,750,000 Cooperative Program unified budget goal, including an \$8 million basic budget, passed a resolution opposing use of tax dollars to teach transcendental meditation (TM) in public schools, and elected Lloyd E. Batson, pastor, First Baptist Church, Pickens, S.C., as president. Some 35.5 percent of the budget will go to worldwide Southern Baptist mission causes.

The resolution focusing on racial tensions in Plains Baptist Church, the home church of President-elect Jimmy Carter, commended the Plains Church and "many churches in our own convention" which "have opened their membership to all races, ethnic and minority groups."

It assured them of "our prayers as they seek to follow the leadership of Jesus Christ in reconciling all broken human relationships."

Plains Church, which first closed its doors on a vote of the deacons when black interdenominational minister Clennon King presented himself on Oct. 31, voted to drop racial barriers on Nov. 14.

The action on the Baptist College at Charleston grew out of a situation in which federal officials called for ending of sectarian teaching and worship in facilities of the college funded by federal loans.

The convention accepted a report of its Government Funds Evaluation Committee which said the federal restrictions make it impossible to carry out the functions of the college as it relates to South Carolina Baptists and called for corrective steps.

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The convention adopted wording of the committee which asked the college's trustees to take steps and expressed the opinion that "none of our educational institutions should accept any further funds for acquisition or construction of buildings which would cause restriction of purpose."

Although the convention did not allocate the college any additional funds for building purposes, it urged the college to proceed with announced plans for a chapel and religion building not financed by federal funds.

College President John A. Hamrick told the convention he had \$900,000 in cash and pledges for such a building, estimated to cost \$2 million.

The convention also heard a report from a committee of 15 which is studying each of the convention's nine institutions and agencies and evaluating their relationship and service to the convention.

The resolution on TM was passed because of the feeling that it is "in theory and practice a religion" and should not be funded by public funds. The resolution, which was taken direct to messengers after the resolutions committee failed to act on it, appealed for strict adherence to separation of church and state.

Another resolution asked that all church staff members be considered for membership on state convention boards and committees. The resolution, which came from the convention's religious education conference, reflected a feeling that only pastors are generally given these places of service, a spokesman said.

Another resolution, brought to the floor by William Graham, pastor of Pleasant Dale Baptist Church, Lancaster, S.C., after no action was taken by the resolutions committee, reprimanded the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, for the content of a Bicentennial calendar which has been out of print since July.

The resolution said the calendar, which gave information and related activities on Easter and Advent traditions, "encourages the lighting of candles on Advent Week for shepherds, wisemen, angels and Bethlehem along with Lenten customs of eating hot cross buns--practices which tend to emphasize worship of people, places and things rather than God."

Graham, the framer of the resolution, is a former Roman Catholic who considered these practices were Catholic in origin, but a spokesman pointed out that they are of folk origin and have been practiced by all Christian groups down through the ages.

Next year's convention will meet, Nov. 15-17, 1977, Columbia, S.C.

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Arkansas Baptists Oppose  
Alien Immersion

Baptist Press  
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LITTLE ROCK (BP)--"Messengers" to the Arkansas Baptist Convention passed a resolution aimed at eliminating seating of messengers from churches which practice alien immersion and voted down a proposal to build a \$3.65 million office-parking building.

In other action, the convention voted a \$5,462,191 total budget, re-elected R. Wilbur Herring, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro, as president; and approved a recommendation to allow Arkansas' Baptist Student Union program to launch a \$1 million endowment campaign.

The convention adopted a motion by W.L. Jenkins of Adkins, Ark., that the convention seat only messengers from "regular Baptist churches which in doctrine and practice adhere to the principles and spirit of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement adopted by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and as is stated in Article 3, Section 1 of the Arkansas Baptist constitution."

A spokesman said the move was aimed at churches which accept baptisms from other denominations.

Besides electing Herring, Arkansas Baptists named Carl Overton, director of missions for the Central Baptist Association as first vice president; set aside some \$1.95 million for Southern Baptist Convention worldwide mission causes.

The 1977 convention will be held Nov. 8-10 in Little Rock.

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King Attends Plains'  
Worship, Asks to Join

PLAINS, Ga. (BP)--Plains Baptist Church here had its highest attendances ever in Sunday School and worship service one week after the members voted, Nov. 14, to open the doors to persons of all races.

Seated on the front row in the sanctuary was Clennon King, pastor of a non-denominational church in Albany, Ga. His application for membership after the service was turned over to a watchcare committee for consideration. The committee's makeup will be announced by the church on Nov. 28.

It was King and his stated intent to join the 415-member congregation to which President-elect Jimmy Carter belongs that brought the church into the national limelight in recent weeks.

Sunday School and the morning worship service were packed, observers said, with standing-room only in the estimated 300 capacity sanctuary. A large number of people were unable to get in for the morning worship.

Pastor Bruce Edwards preached a sermon that dealt with people thinking before they joined a church. Edwards said later reports that he had tried to convince King not to join Plains Church were inaccurate. Rather, Edwards said, even though the sermon fit King, it was not directed specially to him.

President-elect Carter had earlier attended the men's Bible class and reportedly prayed that the church would overcome difficulties "brought about by recent events."

Carter was also present for the morning worship service where he gave the opening prayer:

"Oh, Lord, help us to bind our church together in a close sense of commonality of purpose, so that the wounds that have come upon us will be healed rapidly," Carter said.

Consideration of King for membership in the church was expected to take a few weeks beyond the Nov. 28 date, one church member noted.

As the service ended, Carter and his Secret Service escorts moved toward the rear door of the church, toward King.

Carter did not speak but as the President-elect walked by King took Carter's hand and kissed it, according to one witness.

King was later quoted as saying that he would have kissed Carter's feet as well. The black minister also said "It would be an honor to be a member of America's Vatican. This will be the Vatican of America."

The church's members actually have been drawn into greater participation instead of being on the verge of splitting, as some reports have indicated, church leaders said later.

An observer said the traditional song of invitation for decision had been sung, and the benediction prayer was about to be said when King moved to the aisle and came forward to ask for membership.

One observer said a younger black man nudged King who then stepped out and walked toward Edwards, in the front.

Blacks attended the Plains Church long before King attempted to attend services or join the church, observers said, and blacks attended the Sunday evening service on Nov. 14.

A member of the Plains Church said some 300 letters have come in since a Nov. 14 decision opening the church to all races, and most of them have been complimentary and encouraging.

A few, however, have been derogatory and "downright filthy."