



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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77-79

President's Church Observes
Its 175th Anniversary

WASHINGTON (BP)--World Baptist leaders hailed the First Baptist Church here on the occasion of its 175th anniversary.

First Baptist Church, the oldest Protestant church in the nation's capital, has played a significant role in the life of Baptists since its founding in March, 1802.

David Y.K. Wong of Hong Kong, president of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), told the 500 members and guests at the anniversary dinner that "the status of Baptists in other lands has been elevated because the President of the United States is a Baptist, and he is a member of the First Baptist Church of Washington, D.C."

His excellency, Francis A. Dennis, ambassador to the United States from the Republic of Liberia, also a member of First Baptist, brought greetings from President William Tolbert of Liberia, a Baptist minister and a former BWA president.

Dennis reviewed the struggle for religious freedom in America, tracing it back to Roger Williams and other founders to the Baptist movement in this country. "The Baptist church became the champion for religious liberty and thus opened the way for all other faiths to worship according to their own dictates without fear of molestation by civil authorities," he said.

James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on public affairs, explained the close connection between the First Baptist Church and the development of the Baptist Joint Committee. Rufus W. Weaver, former pastor of the First Baptist Church, was the first to formulate plans for cooperation of the major Baptist groups in America for the preservation of religious liberty and separation of church and state. His efforts resulted in the establishment of the Baptist Joint Committee.

Weaver's successor, Edward Hughes Pruden, continued as a member of the Baptist Joint Committee and worked for its effectiveness as a voice for religious freedom, Wood said.

Pruden, pastor emeritus, reminded the congregation of major contributions of the First Baptist Church. From its founding, he said, the church had an ecumenical outlook, which it has maintained through the years. The church contributed to the cause of Christian education by participating in the founding of Columbian College, now George Washington University, and by beginning the first Sunday School in the nation's capital not many years after Robert Raikes started the Sunday School movement.

Further, Pruden pointed out, the First Baptist Church was actively involved in the missionary movement in America by starting new churches and through the efforts of Luther Rice who was a member of the church.

When Harry S. Truman was President, he was a regular worshipper at the First Baptist Church. In 1973, the church established a "Truman Award for Christian Service," given annually to a distinguished layperson in the congregation. The award this year was presented to John H. Shouse, a retired lawyer who served 28 years in the Department of Agriculture before his retirement in 1974.

The First Baptist Church was had 14 pastors during its 175 years of existence. Two of them served 76 years of the 175. Obadiah B. Brown, the first pastor, served 43 years, and Pruden, served 33 years until his retirement in 1969. The present pastor is Charles A. Trentham, who for 20 years was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Knoxville, Tenn., before moving to the nation's capital in 1974.

Daniel Resigns From
Sunday School Board

NASHVILLE (BP)--James H. Daniel, leader of the church program services group of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board since 1971, has submitted his resignation from that position effective upon the completion of current assignments.

In a letter to board President Grady C. Cothen, Daniel, 50, cited the current reorganization of the board's program areas and his belief "that the time is now right for me to explore other opportunities for maximizing the skills and traits that are uniquely mine.

"I have enjoyed working with the board that has contributed so much to the life of Southern Baptists around the world," Daniel said. "My association with the Sunday School Board has been a richly rewarding experience. I appreciate the leadership place the board holds in the Southern Baptist Convention. I know that under the leadership of Dr. Cothen and James Clark (executive vice president) the board will provide even greater assistance to churches as they seek to bring men to know Christ."

A native Tennessean, Daniel came to the board in 1962 as a program consultant. Earlier, he served as professor of elementary education at Belmont College, Nashville, and as professor of childhood education and educational administration at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

A graduate of Baylor University, Daniel holds the master of arts degree from George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, the master of religious education degree from Southwestern Seminary, and the doctor of education degree from North Texas State University, Denton.

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Brotherhood Announces New
Material, National Congress

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4/29/77

OLIVE BRANCH, Miss. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Brotherhood leaders agreed at a three-day meeting here to prepare new Brotherhood materials for the 1980s and sponsor a national Royal Ambassador (RA) congress and Baptist Men's conference.

The new materials, composed of a basic text book for church Brotherhood officers and supporting books for age level leaders, will be introduced at training sessions during the spring of 1979.

Glendon McCullough, executive director of the SBC Brotherhood Commission, said the new materials would suggest ways through action and study for carrying out the mission tasks of a church.

Forty Brotherhood leaders from 26 state Baptist conventions and the commission staff voted to conduct the Sixth National Royal Ambassador Congress during the summer 1979 in Nashville, Tenn.

The group also looked with favor on a national Baptist Men's conference, possibly during 1982, the 75th anniversary of the Layman's Missionary Movement, forerunner of organized Baptist laywork.

In a closing challenge, McCullough called on the conferees to take bold and aggressive stances as leaders of Brotherhood work.

Acknowledging the growing interest in the skills of Baptist lay people, McCullough urged Southern Baptist agencies to work as a team in matching the talents of lay people with the needs in United States and on foreign mission fields.

Bill Clemmons, a Baptist Men's consultant for the commission, said some agencies have "just discovered the layman" and should exercise caution in not using the lay persons then dropping them abruptly.

"We must remember that in Brotherhood we are concerned with involving men in missions every day of the year."

In other action, the Commission unveiled a plan for increasing circulation of six Brotherhood periodicals by 26 percent to 300,000 per issue.

Brotherhood leaders heard reports of Brotherhood growth following mission education dialogues with pastors and other church staff members in Georgia, Alabama, and the Northwest Baptist Convention.

W.L. (Wimpy) Smith, associate consultant on laymen overseas for the Foreign Mission Board, lauded state Brotherhood leaders for the laymen they enlisted for overseas projects while pledging to use them for future recruitment efforts.

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State Brotherhood leaders selected Lloyd Jackson, director of Baptist Men for Virginia Baptists, as their coordinator of the 1978 Brotherhood Leadership Conference.

Norman Godfrey, director of the ministries section, will represent the Brotherhood Commission.

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Crouch Criticizes 'Mild...
Soft-shelled Gospel'

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Many Southern Baptists seem "more concerned with saving the church as an institution than reaching the multitudes of people in our world with the redeeming love of God or changing the moral tone in our society," W. Perry Crouch said here.

Crouch, retired general secretary-treasurer, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, spoke at a two-day conference of Baptist leaders from 13 states, sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

"Our average Baptist church has very little to say about Christian discipleship or the application of the gospel to every day problems about us," the former pastor told leaders representing Christian social concerns in state Baptist conventions which have no fulltime Christian Life workers.

"In the face of the rise of crime, violence and fraud, the church has had little to say about the positive attitudes of the Christian," he continued. "Most of us have read articles in our news magazines and papers that suggest the world can no longer depend on the church to be the strong voice against evil in our world."

Speaking on "How Can We Get a Cutting Edge on Our Christian Faith?" Crouch charged that many Southern Baptists are not seriously attempting to love their neighbors as themselves.

"How can we change this tragic trend toward a mild, indifferent and soft-shelled gospel? he asked. "How can we help people understand that our Lord calls us to discipleship and to positive service in his kingdom now? What will it take to help us see what is happening to our homes, to basic honesty and to liberty itself?"

Crouch told the group that Southern Baptists must continue efforts in evangelism, "and at the same time, we need a fresh emphasis on the cutting edge of our Christian faith.

"We must reemphasize the work of the Holy Spirit, who can help us see the evils of our day, and have the courage to do something about it," he said. "When our gospel no longer cuts across the lines of pagan life, or the popular ways of an evil society, then it has ceased to be the gospel of Christ."

Crouch encouraged all state Baptist conventions to organize a state-level Christian life committee--if they are not already in existence--and assign staff and budget to them to help churches "present the cutting edge of our Christian faith to our people."

"Of course," said Crouch, "these truths should always be presented in a spirit of love, but the committee should always be willing to be scorned or persecuted for their views, but never willing to quit or hesitate because their ethical teaching is unpopular."

The committees, he emphasized, "should not speak 'for' Southern Baptists but 'to' Southern Baptists about the application of the Gospel."

Foy Valentine, executive secretary for the Christian Life Commission, commenting on the meeting, called it "a 'first' for the Commission," He said it was "designed to encourage the leadership of Baptist state convention Christian life committees and other similar committees... I am particularly excited by the excellent response and keen interest."

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Go North
Young Men

Baptist Press
4/29/77

LOUISVILLE (BP)--The chief executive of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio urged Southern Baptist Theological Seminary students here not to put geographical boundaries around their calling to ministry.

Ray E. Roberts, executive secretary of the convention, speaking to a seminary chapel audience during Missions Emphasis Week, cited the "tremendous challenge" available in Ohio and other northern states where Southern Baptist work is relatively young.

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He urged the students to consider serving in the north rather than the south when they graduate.

"By the most conservative estimates of the Home Mission Board, living in Ohio are more than seven million people who have no relationship with God whatsoever," he said.

"We have more than 500 congregations (in Ohio) but we still have cities without a Baptist witness," he said, urging them not to "put geographical boundaries around your calling until you have through prayer discovered the place of God's choosing for you."

Ohio is one of seven states cooperating in a North Central Missions Thrust, which got underway in 1974 with the goal of doubling Southern Baptist work in the area by 1990. A recent report said 109 new churches have been started in the areas since 1974 in Ohio, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota--an average of a new church every 10 days.

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Michigan Baptists Launch
Historic Evangelism Effort

By Jack Parrott

Baptist Press
4/29/77

SOUTHFIELD, Mich.(BP)--With the added incentives of Southern Baptists' Bold Missions effort and the 20th anniversary of SBC work in Michigan, Baptists in Michigan have launched this Spring the largest evangelistic undertaking in the state's Baptist history.

Central crusades in six key cities and follow-up simultaneous revivals are underway in most of the convention's 200 churches. On the first night of the six central crusades, more than 4,000 people gathered to hear Southern Baptist evangelism leaders.

Over 200 Southern Baptists from the Baptist State Convention of Michigan's "partnership states" of Oklahoma, Florida, Kentucky, and Arkansas joined the central crusade teams to lead in local church revivals.

Michigan Evangelism Director James O. Coldiron said, "I believe more Michigan Baptists will gather for the two weeks of evangelistic thrust than have ever gathered for a Baptist meeting in Michigan before."

Some 40,000 Southern Baptists are in churches affiliated with the Michigan convention, which was organized 20 years ago by eight churches affiliated with the Motor Cities Association (constituted six years earlier in 1951). The first Southern Baptist church in Michigan opened its doors in 1923 in Jackson. The church, Gorham Baptist, still exists and is one of the leading churches in the state convention.

As part of SBC's Bold Missions effort to evangelize the world by the close of the 20th Century, Michigan churches hope to evangelize every person in the state by 1990 and to double the number of churches by the same year. That's part of a North Central Missions Thrust in which Michigan and six other states (Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin and Minnesota) are cooperating to double their work.

Already Harold C. Crane, Michigan's state missions director, reports launching of five new missions and constituting of five churches in the state. With a projected goal of 57 new missions in 1977, 82 locations for missions have been pinpointed and surveyed by area directors of missions. Forty of those areas have received the formal support of existing churches in the beginning of the new work.

Over two years ago, Coldiron and Robert B. Wilson, the Michigan convention's executive director-treasurer, began contacting the partnership states about sharing in the evangelistic mission thrust in 1977. The Michigan convention voted official support for the thrust and designated 1977 as the "Year of Evangelism".

Every Baptist--including pastors, music directors, and laypersons--from the southern partnership states came to Michigan at their own expense, some taking vacations from their jobs. In addition, special personalities, such as Ann Marie Fairchild, Austin Brown, the Amason Brothers, and the Sunshine Singers, paid their own expenses to come to Michigan for the crusades.

More than 100 decisions for Christ were made in the opening days of the crusade with stories conversion plentiful. The number of recommitments and request for special counseling ran high each night.

Twenty years ago less than 2,000 Southern Baptists who could be pinpointed lived in Michigan. In 1977, thousands of Michigan Baptists have joined with their sister churches from the South in a bold effort to evangelize Michigan for Christ.