



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 18, 1977

77-204

Va. Baptists Discuss
Gays, Abortion, Death

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. (BP)--Virginia Southern Baptists confronted the issues of homosexuality, abortion, death with dignity and President Jimmy Carter's Vatican envoy and passed a record \$7.6 million budget in annual session here.

In other action registered "messengers" to the 154th session of the Baptist General Association of Virginia elected Chevis Horne, pastor of First Baptist Church, Martinsville, Va., as president, and set aside 38 percent of their budget for worldwide Southern Baptist Convention causes.

The Virginia Baptists expressed opposition to Carter's appointment of an envoy to the Vatican or "the international headquarters of any other religious body" and stipulated that the resolution be forwarded to Carter, a fellow Southern Baptist,

They voted to accept homosexuals "as persons of worth without our approving their sexual behavior or relaxing our resolves to speak out against sinfulness." They also affirmed the Biblical truths about "the essential heterosexual orientation of human beings," but expressed opposition "to the forms of discrimination that abridge the constitutional rights of persons on the basis of sexual preference."

The resolution further encouraged Baptist churches "to maintain open communication with homosexual persons to provide pastoral, psychiatric and legal counseling when possible to eliminate unwarranted prejudice, superstition or myth and to remain steadfast and faithful in ministry to such persons, seeking to lead them to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

The abortion statement, as did the homosexual resolution, sought to take a balanced view of both sides of a hotly debated issue. "Christian individuals will want to exercise gentleness, patience and openness in the debate that surrounds the abortion dilemma, taking care not to use rhetorical overkill, emotional manipulation and legalistic judgements in responding to those who must bear the burden of so grave a decision," the statement said.

It urged pastors and church leaders to provide "specific guidance in the responsible use of contraception and to discourage the selection of abortion as a method of birth control. It also asked congregations "to provide accepting and forgiving communities to support women who are pregnant out of wedlock so that alternative courses of action may be explored without undue social pressure or stigma.

The abortion statement further urged Christians to provide an atmosphere of love and pastoral care and forgiveness in dealing with persons deciding on both sides of the issue. It also discouraged Christians "from judging non-therapeutic abortions as immoral... without regard to the particular context and circumstances in which that decision is made--for example, a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest."

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The death with dignity statement called for "a strict separation between the process of certifying death and the process of authorizing organ transplantation." But it urged legislation which "protects the rights of the patient by giving legal recognition to a person's advanced authorization to suspend maintenance medical treatment when that patient is terminally ill or injured."

It also urged protection for the physician and health care institution "by providing immunity from civil or criminal liability when a licensed physician elects, with informed consent, to withhold maintenance or heroic measures in treating the terminally ill or injured."

The 1978 convention will be Nov. 14-16, Oakland Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va.

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N. C. Baptists Disallow
Federal Construction Funds

Baptist Press
11/18/77

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP)--North Carolina Southern Baptists voted to double their Cooperative Program budget gifts and baptisms by 1982 and voted not to permit Wake Forest University to accept federal funds for capital improvements on the campus.

The National Science Foundation had given the school's biology department a \$299,600 research grant, a portion of which was designated for construction. Wake Forest felt the construction was necessary for the research but the state convention's Service Rendered Committee felt that use of federal funds for that purpose would violate the convention's policy on separation of church and state.

The convention, accepting the committee's recommendation, allowed Wake Forest to accept the grant for research but not use any of it for construction.

In other action, registered "messengers" to the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina elected Mark Corts, 39, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, as president, and approved a study committee's report that the state convention's general board establish a "separate organization" to minister to the state's aging persons.

They also approved a recommendation declaring it is "desirable" that at least 25 percent of members of state convention boards and committees come from churches with 400 members or less. Nearly three-fourths of the churches in the state fall into that size category.

Messengers voted a record two-phase Cooperative Program unified budget--\$13.5 million for phase one, with 34 percent of that going to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) worldwide mission causes, and a second phase of \$1.25 million, with 50 percent earmarked for the SBC.

The actions to double gifts and baptisms were part of two special reports on missions support and church growth. The missions support report calls not only for increasing Cooperative Program gifts to \$24 million per year by 1982 but also escalating it to \$96 million by the year 2000. Messengers also voted to establish a state-level missions offering, beginning in 1979.

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Northern Plains Baptists
Break Statistical Records

Baptist Press
11/18/77

BILLINGS, Mont. (BP)--"Messengers" to the Northern Plains Baptist Convention here learned they had set records in baptisms, Southern Baptist Cooperative Program gifts, budget size, Sunday School enrollment, and attendance at their own convention.

While the entire Southern Baptist Convention increased its contributions to its unified budget by 11.16 percent in 1976, the Northern Plains convention, the third youngest affiliated body, increased its giving by 40.36 percent.

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Logan C. Atnip, chairman of the Southern Baptist mission organization in Rhodesia, wrote Saunders that in the Bulawayo area where he works a number of church members are taking part in special prayer for Rhodesia between 5 and 6 a.m. daily.

Atnip is suggesting that churches throughout the Baptist Convention of Rhodesia and Southern Baptists in the States join in this prayer effort. "No doubt many people in the States, including church groups, are praying for the situation here in Southern Africa," Atnip wrote. "If they knew of the emphases that we are making here, maybe they would join us."

He believes it will encourage both groups of Baptists, those in Rhodesia and those in the U. S., to know that the other group is praying. Eighty-four Southern Baptist missionaries are assigned to work in Rhodesia. Their work is primarily among the black population.

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Bold Spirit Prevails
In Utah-Idaho

Baptist Press
11/18/77

BOISE, Idaho (BP)--A "tremendous" spirit, fired by excitement for Bold Mission Thrust, prevailed here at the annual session of the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention.

Five new churches were seated and 26 new pastors were recognized, both records for the young convention, which organized in 1964. At the time of the 1976 convention, there were 17 pastorless churches, but that number was cut to seven this year.

In other action, "messengers" tabled a resolution against the ordination of women as deacons and pastors until the 1978 convention, Nov. 14-15, at the First Southern Baptist Church, Salt Lake City, Utah.

The excitement of Bold Mission Thrust, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) effort to reach the entire world for Christ by the year 2000, carried into the budget process when the convention adopted a \$633,504 budget, earmarking 20 percent of that for the SBC's national Cooperative Program unified budget, and voted to increase their share of their own "pioneer" convention support by one percent.

John Baker, retired executive secretary of the Northern Plains Baptist Convention, was elected interim missions director for the Utah-Idaho Convention, and Bruce Gardner, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Idaho Falls, was elected convention president.

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Heart Attack Claims
William R. Hintze

Baptist Press
11/18/77

PHOENIX (BP)--William R. Hintze, president of Grand Canyon College, a Southern Baptist school here, died Nov. 17 of an apparent heart attack during a faculty-student basketball game on the campus. He was 52.

Hintze, seventh president of the 28-year-old school, became president in 1973. He joined the school in 1968 as professor of religion and had served also as vice president of academic affairs and interim president. Before coming to Grand Canyon, he was a missionary to Ecuador.

When he became interim president in 1972 he announced a series of goals for the school which, a college spokesman said, were all completed before his death. They were to increase enrollment to 1,200 students (it grew from 772 to an even 1,200 this year), develop financial stability and make the school operate in the black (as it has done for the past three years), complete a new science building, upgrade faculty salaries, and make the curriculum more relevant.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara Laughman Hintze of Phoenix, a daughter and three sons. A memorial service was to be held at the college for the family, faculty, staff and students on Nov. 21, with funeral services later that day. Burial will be in Phoenix.

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Survey Identifies Fastest
Growing SBC Churches

ATLANTA (BP)--Morningside Baptist Church of Valdosta, Ga., is the fastest growing church in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), according to a Home Mission Board study.

The fastest growing churches in the denomination were identified during a two-year computer study of Uniform Church Letters, the report most SBC churches submit each year, detailing data on membership, baptisms, other additions, organizational enrolment and giving.

The study was done at the request of "Home Missions" magazine, the Home Mission Board's monthly magazine. A full report of the study and interviews will be published in the December, 1977, issue.

In addition to Morningside, the top 15 fastest growing churches are: 2. Pinehurst, Columbus, Ga.; 3. Oak Ridge, Spring, Tex.; 4. First Indian Rocks, Largo, Fla.; 5. Glenview, Fort Worth, Tex.; 6. Williams Boulevard, Kenner, La.; 7. Westside, Natchitoches, La.; 8. Green Acres, Warner Robins, Ga.; 9. Allandale, Austin, Tex.; 10. Broadway, Memphis, Tenn.; 11. Eastwood, Tulsa, Okla.; 12. Two Rivers, Nashville, Tenn.; 13. First, Gahanna, Ohio; 14. Calvary, Joplin, Mo., and 15. First, Springdale, Ark.

In addition, the study identified 425 churches across the nation as being the top 1.5 percent in growth in the denomination.

The survey measured only quantitative--numerical--growth, by comparing statistics from 30,029 churches which submitted Uniform Church Letters for both 1972 and 1976. Comparison was on the basis of eight indicators, half reflecting numerical growth and the other half indicating percentage growth.

The indicators--both numerical and percentages--were baptisms, other additions, Sunday School enrolment and total membership. No effort was made to analyze qualitative growth, which is largely subjective.

After the top 425 were identified, questionnaires about themselves, their community and their ministry were sent to pastors and laypersons in each church. Some 277 churches responded, reflecting a 65 percent response rate.

In addition, pastors, staff members and laypersons from the top 15 churches were interviewed by writers from "Home Missions" in an effort to determine the how and the why of their growth, as well as the nature and ministry of the church.

The results from the 277 churches were tabulated to determine common characteristics of the fast growing churches, and this profile of a typical fast-growing church emerged:

It is predominantly white (88.3%), middle-class (92.3%), family-oriented and located in a white, fast-growing suburban area. Composed primarily of people 30 to 50 years of age, the church has more than 300 members--generally blue-collar, clerical or mid-management level employees. Income ranges from \$10,000 to \$20,000 annually and education averages high school or better.

The profile of a typical pastor of a fast growing church also surfaced: He is dynamic, hard-working, experienced--having held several pastorates during his 10 years or more in the ministry--and possessor of exceptional leadership skills. He generally has some seminary education, although formal training ranges from high school to doctoral level degrees. He is a dynamic preacher who commonly uses expository methods. He believes personal visitation is the most effective evangelistic tool.

A strong, deep thread of Biblical authority runs through the top churches in growth. Ninety-eight percent of the lay persons responding to the questionnaire describe their pastor as "Bible-believing, evangelistic."

Each preacher in the top 15 says his preaching is expository, with word-by-word, verse-by-verse exegesis occupying a large part of the pulpit ministry. Conversely, most of the top 15 pastors do not preach "social issue" sermons, although they say they have preached on topical issues such as abortion, homosexuality and liquor-by-the-drink.

The survey and interviews also revealed Southern Baptists generally are less effective evangelistically than they have been. Philip Jones, Home Mission Board research consultant, says: "The baptism rate per 100 members is a sort of efficiency index that allows a comparison of the effectiveness of evangelism. In 1900, there were five baptisms for every 100 members. By 1976, the baptism rate per 100 had dropped to 3.01."

Part of the inefficiency, the survey showed, may come from the 12.5 percent of SBC churches who baptized no one in 1976. According to Uniform Church Letter data, 4,390 churches had no 1976 baptisms. By contrast, the top 15 churches in the study accounted for 2,924 baptisms, a thriving rate of 11.01 per 100 members. In fact, the fastest growing churches averaged 85 baptisms each, far outstripping the SBC average of six baptisms per church.

In the interviews with the top 15, pastors were asked to give reasons for the growth of their churches. "Hard work," says Gary Folds, pastor of Morningside church, the fastest growing congregation in the convention. "Work!!! Pray!!! Love!!!," says Dwight S. Andre, pastor of Westside church in Natchitoches, La.

Harold O'Chester of Allandale church in Austin, Tex., says "prayer, expansion, leadership, discipleship, evangelism, strong visitation" are the reasons his church exploded from 1,463 members in 1972 to 3,026 in 1976.

Pastor Jerry Davis of First Church of Gahanna, Oh., has an even simpler explanation: "People need a vision. They have had problems and live in a world in a mess. They want a positive worship experience and need a renewed vision of what God can do. They hunger for sweet loving fellowship."

Most of the pastors of the top 15 think the key to growth is leadership. Most describe themselves in terms like undershepherd, equipper, pastor. Most also feel they are responsible to God for the growth, nurture, outreach, direction and ministry of the church, feeling they are God's man, in God's church, in God's time.

Many pastors of fast growing churches see themselves as teachers, responsible for providing Christian discipleship training for their people. An overwhelming number--96.7 percent--feel Sunday School and Church Training are among the most essential approaches for equipping members for witness.

Pastors also prefer Bible study and new member orientation as discipling methods. Of other methods, 43 percent say lay evangelism schools are effective, but only 30 percent selected Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) as efficient in disciple training. Several do not have Brotherhood or WMU organizations. Others have a woman's group, but say it focuses on evangelism visitation rather than mission study.

Because most pastors believe Sunday School and Church Training are the most effective discipling methods, they also indicate the Baptist Sunday School Board is the denominational entity most helpful in stimulating growth. Most also use its literature, although a few say they blend in other materials.

Growth in the fast growing churches generally is centered on internal growth, rather than extension growth. Only three of the top 15 churches have started missions in the past five years.

Of the 277 churches responding to the questionnaires, only 79, or 28.5 percent, have started new work since 1972. Of those, a majority, 60 have started only one mission in the five year period; nine have started two; four have begun three; two have initiated four; and only three have planted more than five missions. The remaining 198 have started no mission at all in the past half decade.

For the most part, the survey reveals fast growing churches concentrate on making people feel welcome. Almost all laypersons--98 percent--feel their church is a warm, friendly place where visitors are made to feel at home; 96 percent say they "feel very rewarded" by worship services; 75 percent do not feel their church has too many meetings.

According to interviews and the survey, pastors and people of the fastest growing SBC churches strongly equate evangelism with growth. Pastors, who list "winning the lost" as a priority, believe visitation evangelism, public evangelism (in worship services), Sunday School classes and revivals are the most effective means of reaching people for Jesus Christ. Many have other ministries--bus, radio and television, day care, recreation and other techniques--for outreach and inreach.

While the pastors weren't asked about missions giving, several mentioned they are firm believers in the SBC's Cooperative Program unified budget. Statistics emphasize that. The typical fast growing church gives more per capita tithes and offerings than do SBC churches in general: \$196.69 per capita per annum as compared to the SBC average of \$137.33.

A higher percentage of the budgets of the fast growing churches go to the Cooperative Program: 6.2 percent as compared to 5.6 percent for all churches. Laity is about evenly divided over whether more of the church's budget should go to missions: 43 percent say it should give more while 45 percent say it should not.

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S. C. Baptists Reject
Merger of Colleges

Baptist Press
11/18/77

COLUMBIA, S. C. (BP)--A committee recommendation that North Greenville College be merged with Furman University was rejected by South Carolina Baptists meeting in annual session here.

The proposal, coming after a study by a 15-member committee, cited declining enrollment and financial problems at North Greenville as reasons for the merger.

North Greenville is a junior college with 450 full-time students, 35 percent fewer than in 1969.

Furman University, located in Greenville only 14 miles from the junior college, has 3,200 undergraduate and graduate students. Both schools receive substantial convention support.

The convention held to a moderate course in adopting resolutions on abortion, homosexuality, Bible infallibility, beverage alcohol, and drugs.

It affirmed the 1963 Southern Baptist statement of Baptist Faith and Message as its position on the Bible, and commended it to all who teach the Bible.

Messengers opposed "abortion on demand," approving abortion only as medically necessary to protect the life and health of the mother.

Baptist Hospital in Columbia was accused of being "in the abortion business with Cooperative Program money," by Gary Brum of Cayce, S. C., who appealed for passage of a resolution opposing all abortion for any reason. William A. Boyce, hospital administrator, replied that in 1976 Baptist Hospital had 2,500 live births and 60 abortions. "Each abortion was for sound medical reasons," he said. "There were no abortions on demand."

The resolution on homosexuality said the practice of homosexuality, is contrary to God's plan, opposed it's acceptance as a lifestyle and expressed love and concern for people of homosexual inclination. It also expressed concern for people who have been subjected to ridicule and threat of bodily harm because of their opposition to homosexuality, although it did not mention singer Anita Bryant, who has reportedly been threatened because of her stand against homosexuality.

The convention approved a capital funding program for its institutions through 1982 of \$9.1 million. This includes \$2.4 million for development of White Oak Conference Center, a new 1,100-acre center on which \$2 million has been expended. It will be in partial use by 1979.

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The convention adopted a \$10 million budget for 1978, an increase of approximately \$1 million. It increased its budget support of the Southern Baptist Convention by one percent to 35½ percent, or \$3,550,000, for 1978.

James K. Lawtan, of Anderson, a former pastor, director of missions and vice president of Anderson College, was elected president. He retired from Anderson College in 1972.

The 1978 convention will meet Nov. 14-16, in Myrtle Beach, S. C.

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Spiritual Concerns May Spark Church-State Debate

WACO, Tex. (BP)--Social scientists are beginning to realize the importance of a person's spiritual well-being, as well as physical, mental, and psychological concerns, according to David O. Moberg, chairman of the department of sociology and anthropology at Marquette University.

This "spiritual well-being" movement may create a potential arena for future church-state debate in the United States as it plays an increasing role in government programs for the aged and ill, said Moberg, speaker for the 1977-78 J. M. Dawson Lectures on Church and State at Baylor University. He specializes in the sociology of religion and social gerontology--study of aging.

"Quality of life" research conducted under government's auspices has tended to omit or bypass consideration of religion as a significant part of social well-being because government researchers were trying to steer clear of church-state conflicts, Moberg said. The situation is now being modified.

In other lectures presented in the series, Moberg discussed the consequences of religious pluralism, a society with many religious groups and communities. He said that religious pluralism is one effect of an "open society" and of the civil liberties movement.

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Harmony Greeted Tennessee Baptists

Baptist Press
11/18/77

BEARDEN, Tenn. (BP)--Harmony was the order as Tennessee Baptists met here at their annual convention to pass a \$10.55 million Cooperative Program budget and elect Bill Sherman, pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church, Nashville, president.

The convention designated 34 percent of their Cooperative Program budget to worldwide Southern Baptist causes.

No resolutions were offered for consideration by the 1,657 "messengers" present. The resolutions committee expressed some disappointment that the convention declined the opportunity to comment on current concerns such as homosexuality, the woman's movement, pornography, and television programming.

The 1978 convention will be Nov. 14-16 at the Woodmont Baptist Church, Nashville.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Please insert the following graph in the (BP) story mailed 11/17/77, entitled Anita Retained But Won't Be Only Citrus Personality. After graph four ending, "may appear soon in selected markets"...add this as graph five: Art Darling, director of public relations for the commission, has been ordered to answer no questions from news media personnel concerning Bryant's contract renewal, at least until the commission's Dec. 14 meeting here.

Thanks, Baptist Press