



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Alabama Baptists For Bold Mission, Black-White Effort

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--In word and deed, Alabama Baptist State Convention has accepted the challenge of Bold Mission Thrust with the adoption of a record \$14 million budget and a pledge from the heads of each of the convention's agencies and institutions to support the massive evangelistic outreach effort of Southern Baptists to proclaim the message of Christ to the entire world.

During the convention, dominated by Bold Mission emphases, the 1541 "messengers" also adopted program "Good News Alabama," which calls for cooperation of both black and white Baptists in developing plans for sharing the gospel with every person in Alabama by 1980. A massive media blitz will be used to implement the effort.

In other business, the messengers named a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Pastors' Conference and former SBC vice president as its new president. He is Harper Shannon, pastor of Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Messengers also voted to commit the convention to seek loans of more than \$6 million for the development and acquisition of retirement centers in Dothan and Tuscaloosa.

They refused to accept a recommendation from their Committee on Constitutional Study, which called for the convention to consist of "cooperating churches" as evidenced by program support and/or bonafide financial contributors in keeping with the purpose and work of the convention.

Resolutions in support of the national Day of Prayer and Bold Mission Thrust were adopted, along with one asking for confidentiality privileges for ministers.

A resolution concerning the Christian family declared that the International Women's Year (IYW) movement does not speak for many Alabama Baptist women and said some issues espoused by IWY are contradictory to the Biblical way of life.

Another resolution deplored the "daring trend to magnify vulgarity, marital infidelity, profanity and blasphemy," urging churches and people to become more vocal in letting television networks and station advertisers and local movie theaters know of their objections.

Alabama Baptists 1978 budget designates 35 1/2 percent, or \$3,372,500, of its Cooperative Program unified budget funds to SBC causes. In addition 43.2 percent, or \$432,000 of a \$1 million challenge goal in excess of the Cooperative Program budget is set aside for SBC causes.

The convention will meet Nov. 14-15, 1978, at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile.

Fla. Baptists Vote On
Associations, Bryant, Gays

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (BP)--Florida Baptists demonstrated a split for missions, approved what has some aspects of a connectional form of government between associations and the state convention, commended the Florida Citrus Commission, and voted resolutions commending Anita Bryant and opposing homosexuality.

"Messengers" voted a record \$8 million budget, attended a commissioning service for nine foreign missionaries, and took actions undergirding the Southern Baptist Convention's Bold Mission Thrust to proclaim the message of Christ to the entire world in this century.

They also commended a fellow Southern Baptist, President Jimmy Carter, for his application of Christian principles in government, sending "greetings and assurances of prayer," and elected Cornelius B. Davis, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Lakeland, as president.

A bylaw change, which takes a position not traditional among most Southern Baptists, inserted a phrase in the constitution of the Florida Baptist State Convention which says that the state nominating committee "shall solicit nominees from the executive committees of the (district Baptist) associations (of churches)." (A spokesman said the associational nominees are not mandatory.)

However, another motion, which requested associations to reciprocate by allowing the state convention to have some input in the selection of officers in each association to better correlate work, was withdrawn after loud protests.

The vote raises the question, a spokesman said, of whether the convention has violated its own constitution, which says it will not be limited or restrained by any authority or decision of any Baptist body in the promotion of its work.

A spokesman said that the convention bylaw on selection of board members has been changed five times since 1952, bouncing back and forth between some sort of associational connection and complete convention autonomy. Associational connection was last eliminated in 1976 after being in effect for three years.

The resolution on Anita Bryant declared that she "has taken a positive and courageous stand for the integrity of the family" and that she "has a high Biblical and moral concern for the teaching of our children." The convention resolved "to pray for her and to encourage her in her right to free expression (on the homosexuality issue) as a concerned Christian and as a citizen."

The convention accepted a position statement on homosexuality, calling it "contrary to the teachings of the Bible" and declaring that it is "a deterrent to psychological and emotional health and causes divorce, emotional trauma, sexual unfaithfulness and role confusion for children and young people."

It said, "Homosexual activity should not be given sanctity, status or special privileges by the laws of the community" but added that homosexuals, as individuals, "have intrinsic value in the eyes of God and that a positive program of rehabilitation, through guidance and counseling, should be provided."

The resolution on the Florida Citrus Commission commended it for extending the contract of Bryant, who has been under fire for her stand against homosexuals as role models for children.

Other resolutions by the convention opposed television programs detrimental to the moral climate of the nation and went on record in opposition to topless and bottomless entertainment.

The convention took no action on the ordination of women, but Davis, the new convention president, expressing his personal view, said women should not be ordained to be pastors of churches because, "I do not think the scripture qualification would allow a woman to pastor a church."

However Davis said he would approve ordination of women for jobs as hospital or prison chaplains or other Christian vocations if ordination were one of the requirements for such positions.

The 1978 convention will be Nov. 13-15 in Lakeland.

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Christian Life Commission
Claims Victory Over 'Soap'

Baptist Press
11/21/77

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, leader among religious groups opposing ABC-TV's soap opera parody "Soap", is claiming victory.

"Sensing it's mistake, ABC has sent word to its affiliates that it is making radical changes in 'Soap,'" Harry N. Hollis Jr., director of family and special moral concerns for the commission told the Baptist Convention of Maryland.

He said that thanks to a diligent protest around the country, "ABC has pulled away from its goal to make 'Soap' a forerunner of things to come on TV.

"It remains to be seen whether this bland, boring, mediocre show will survive, but ABC will long remember the sting of 'Soap' in its eyes," he continued. "I believe ABC has already lost up to \$1 million and maybe more on 'Soap' due to reduced revenues. Not only has it lost money, it has also lost the respect of many ABC affiliate managers, sponsors and viewers, who reject the idea that people who have sexual problems should be ridiculed."

The Christian Life Commission began a concentrated effort against "Soap" and similar morally objectionable shows even before the first episode aired. Executive Secretary Foy Valentine had previewed 'Soap' and declared it "prime time pollution."

Hollis, who also previewed 'Soap', told Baptist Press that a "Help for Television Viewers" campaign in which 50,000 packets of material were mailed to help people cope with television as it is and change it where it needs to be changed, "triggered a grass roots letter writing campaign to ABC and sponsors of 'Soap.'" An ABC spokesman admitted that the network office was receiving 6,000 to 7,000 letters a week protesting "Soap." The flow has since decreased to about 1,000 letters a week.

The campaign was so effective that the Christian Life Commission now claims: All the original sponsors of "Soap" withdrew support; ABC has lost at least \$1 million from unused and reduced commercial time; the network has resorted to giving at least one potential sponsor free commercial time and others reduced rates.

"Many people in the TV industry are protesting the power of pressure groups to force television to change," Hollis told the Maryland Baptists. "There is a pressure group which the industry had better fear--that pressure group is the American people. We are angry about television's immorality and we are determined to bring about change."

That change can happen, Hollis said, because "more and more American people are saying: 'Never again will we knowingly pay for immoral TV shows by buying products, the cost of which includes ads for such shows. We will not subsidize violence; we will not subsidize sexual exploitation; we will not subsidize the vulgarization of life; we will not pay for moral pollution.'"

Hollis said that since "Soap's" content is being altered, the commission's efforts

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will be increased to deal with topics such as the impact of television ads on children, using television to teach pro-social values and provide religious inspiration and instruction, and to research the idea of changing the system of advertising so that sponsors will know in advance on which shows their ads will appear.

Hollis also lashed at the Federal Communications Commission, saying that the "cozy relationship" the FCC has with the television industry will not be tolerated when the "FCC loses sight of its primary responsibility to regulate on behalf of the American people at whose pleasure they serve."

Hollis said writers of such shows as "Soap" were "lazy" when they complained that censorship stifled them instead of working to write more creatively.

"The best way to avoid censorship is by being responsible in your writing," he said.

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Arizona Baptists Elect
First Woman Officer

Baptist Press
11/21/77

CASA GRANDE, Ariz. (BP)--Messengers to the annual Arizona Southern Baptist Convention elected their first woman officer, passed a resolution opposing homosexuality and commending Anita Bryant, and made a change in its constitutional method of electing its executive director-treasurer.

Other action in the annual session included voting a record \$1.06 million budget, electing Wayne North, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Tucson, as president and proclaiming support of the Southern Baptist Convention's Bold Mission Thrust to take the message of Christ to the entire world by the end of the century.

Mrs. Val Harvey of First Southern Baptist Church, Glendale, Ariz., was elected second vice president of the convention, which serves Arizona and southern Nevada.

Encouraging "Anita Bryant and other Christians for their courageous stand against the evils inherent in deviant moral behavior," the Arizona convention affirmed "that biblically homosexuality and deviant moral behavior are a sin, and not an alternate lifestyle (Romans 1:24-32)."

Noting that "a campaign is being waged to secure legal, social and religious acceptance of homosexuality and deviant moral behavior at the expense of personal dignity," the resolution said that success for those advocating such behavior would "have a devastating consequence on family life in general and our children in particular."

The convention amended its constitution to provide that any future executive director-treasurer first be approved by a two-thirds favorable vote of the convention's executive board and then by a two-thirds favorable vote of messengers at either an annual or special convention. The current executive director-treasurer, Roy F. Sutton, retires Dec. 31, 1978. A search committee is seeking his successor.

In other action, messengers approved giving 23.5 percent of their annual budget to worldwide missions through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program unified budget, and commended C. L. Pair, editor of the Baptist Beacon, state Baptist paper, for "his courageous public protest against ...television immorality and violence..."

The 1978 annual convention, which will observe the 50th anniversary of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, is set for Nov. 14-16, at First Southern Baptist Church, Phoenix.

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Kentucky Baptists Affirm
Local Church Autonomy

FLORENCE, Ky. (BP)--Kentucky Baptists reaffirmed their historic position on the authority of the local church when they refused to pass a resolution opposing the ordination of women during their 140th annual convention here.

The resolution was introduced by Bob Winstead, pastor of First Baptist Church, Prospect, Ky. His church is not a member of the South District Association which earlier this year voted Beech Fork Baptist Church, Gravel Switch, Ky., out of the associational fellowship for ordaining Suzanne Coyle.

When "messengers" clearly underscored the autonomy of the local church, Winstead introduced a substitute resolution, specifically opposing women for ordination in Baptist churches. That too was defeated.

A "Resolution on Ordination" was passed declaring that Baptist ecclesiastical bodies do not exercise authority over the local church and that individual churches have different beliefs about ordination.

Therefore, the resolution stated that "the place of authority for ordination is centered in the authority of the local church under the authority of scripture. Churches ordain. Conventions do not." It went on to say that the "recognition of the ordination and the utilization of those thus ordained is also the prerogative of the local church."

Messengers earlier elected the first woman in history to a convention office when they voted Mrs. T. L. (Betty) McSwain as second vice president by acclamation. She is the wife of the pastor of Hurstbourne Baptist Church, Goldboro.

John Kruschwitz, pastor of Highland Hills Baptist Church, Fort Thomas, was elected president.

A committee charged with the responsibility of studying the convention's child care program raised several questions in its second year report of a three-year in-depth study.

The committee's report at least hinted at the possibility of dissolving the trustee relationship of the Board of Child Care sometime in the future. Operations might then be placed directly under the executive board. No action is required until after the final report in 1978.

The convention adopted a record \$9.5 million budget for 1978, with 34 percent designated for world missions through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program.

In earlier action, the convention's executive board named Verlin C. Kruschwitz chairman of a 15-member search committee to find a successor to Franklin Owen, executive secretary of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's executive board, who retires Dec. 31, 1978. The executive board also initiated plans for addition to and renovation of the Baptist Building in Middletown, Ky., amounting to \$900,000.

The 1978 convention will be held Nov. 14-16 at the First Baptist Church, Owensboro.

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Calif. Baptists Dismiss
Church, Note New Convention

Baptist Press
11/21/77

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (BP)--Messengers to the Southern Baptist General Convention of California refused, in annual session here, to seat messengers from Shaw Avenue Baptist Church, Fresno, because it accepts alien immersions and practices open communion.

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The convention also declared it would offer tangible help and encouragement to a Nevada Baptist Convention, which will be formed Oct. 16-17, 1978, and go into existence in January, 1979. The convention will be formed from about 50 Southern Baptist churches now related to the Arizona and California conventions. Earlier, the Arizona convention passed a similar action.

In other action, the convention commended Bob Greene and Anita Bryant Greene, opposed homosexuality, took a strong stand on abortion, re-elected William Hann, pastor of Truett Memorial Baptist Church, Long Beach, as president, and approved a \$5.68 million budget. The budget allots 26 percent to the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget and includes \$40,000 for the establishment of a communications and public relations office under the direction of the convention's executive secretary.

The three Shaw Church messengers were challenged under Article 3, Section 3 of the convention's constitution, which has caused problems in California since it was voted into the constitution in 1949, nine years after the convention formed.

An effort in 1973 to amend the constitution failed, but messengers will get another chance in 1978, when they will deal with two amendments proposed this year.

One would amend Article 3, Section 3 simply to read "a messenger shall be elected and certified by the churches cooperating with this convention." That would, in effect, eliminate the prohibition on alien immersion and open communion now in the article.

That amendment, proposed by Richard Witkey of San Pablo, notes that the current wording of Article 3, Section 3, violates another section of the constitution which prohibits the convention from exercising ecclesiastical authority over the churches.

Another proposed amendment, by Ed Collier of Garden Grove, would add definitions of alien immersion (immersions from churches "not of like faith and order") and open communion ("the open invitation to all present to participate in partaking of the Lord's Supper"). He would define "like faith and order" as "another Baptist church of similar beliefs."

The convention commended the husband-wife combination of Bob Greene and Anita Bryant Greene, both Southern Baptists, for their efforts in the controversy over homosexuality and praised the Florida Citrus Commission for renewing Anita's contract as an advertising personality for fruit juice.

The resolution on homosexuality labeled it as a sin and as contrary to biblical teachings and affirmed "opposition to the employment of homosexuals as school teachers, law enforcement officers, probation and juvenile officers" and in any other place of "public employment dealing with minors."

It objected to the efforts of "militant homosexuals to secure their peculiar rights at the expense of the rights of parents, the family, and the society as a whole," but called for Christians, "through love and compassion for all persons, seek to become channel through which God's redeeming grace and transforming power can work change in their lives."

The action on abortion took a position against "indiscriminate abortion" and declared "strong opposition to abortion on demand and all governmental policies and actions which permit it."

Next year's convention will be Nov. 14-16, 1978 in Anaheim, Calif.

Mississippi Baptists Protest
Auxiliary Regulation By IRS

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Mississippi Baptists, in annual session here, passed a resolution protesting an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulation which is "attempting to define what religious bodies and agencies could or could not be classified as "integrated auxiliaries" of the church.

Lewis Nobles, president of Mississippi College, Clinton, said the ruling, made in January, "is an attempt to define what is the mission of the church."

The resolution, passed unanimously, called the regulation a violation of the United States Constitution and "an administrative intrusion into the freedom of religious life in America, where the Congress could not tread by the dictates of the First Amendment."

In other action, the Mississippi Baptist Convention, with 1,139 voting "messengers," passed a resolution concerning family relationships which affirms that "the restoration of happy and biblical family relationships is one of the most critical, moral imperatives of our times."

Messengers also voted to send telegrams of support to singer Anita Bryant and of appreciation to the Florida Citrus Commission for renewing her contract as spokesperson for the growers. Miss Bryant's contract renewal had been in doubt because of her identification with the homosexual rights issue.

They also re-elected Robert Hamblin, pastor of Harrisburg Baptist Church in Tupelo, as president and passed an \$8.6 million budget for 1978, 32 percent of which will go to worldwide Southern Baptist causes through the Cooperative Program.

Messengers were introduced to a Bold Mission Thrust effort by Southern Baptists to present the gospel message to all the people in the world by the end of this century. Among projects related to the Bold Mission Thrust is a state effort called "Good News Mississippi," in which black and white Baptists in the state will work together to provide training for evangelism for members of both Southern and National (black) Baptist churches.

The 1978 convention will meet at First Baptist Church in Jackson, November 14-16.

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South Carolina Baptists
Gear Up To Meet Disasters

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11/21/77

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--Southern Baptists here are gearing up to meet disasters with effective ministry.

A 10-member committee, appointed by the executive committee of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, will receive training in first aid and other skills, then will tap volunteers and help them receive similar training.

Over the next year a list of available trained volunteers will be prepared. When disaster comes, teams may be dispatched to the scene within hours, according to Larry Bryson, director of the convention's missions department.

A \$20,000 cash fund is being established which can be released in a disaster zone very quickly as local workers determine needs.

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A Van-Tastic Story
About Bold Missions

By Nancy McGough

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A willingness to drive long hours and lots of stamina have enabled a group of seminary students to be pioneers for Bold Mission Thrust, the Southern Baptist Convention's effort to proclaim the message of Christ to all the world by the year 2000.

The seminarians, who spend their weekends in Michigan, helping plant churches and nurture missions, are students through the week at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In between, they have seven long hours of driving each way with brief stops at gas stations and coffee shops.

Five members of the group use a van provided by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. The Michigan Baptist Convention provides gasoline, and the seminary provides honorariums.

"These students are making a sacrifice. They have a beautiful spirit," says Russell Bennett, the school's director of supervised ministry studies.

He believes the group is actualizing the goal of Bold Mission Thrust and notes the north central states of Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan have become special emphases of this project.

The group includes six men and one woman. Two men, Herb Copeland, who serves in Romulus, and Ernie Moulton, who serves in Grand Haven, have their families in Michigan and are away from them during the week.

"That's the hardest part," says Moulton, who is pastor of the 50-member Peach Plains Baptist Church.

He has been commuting two years. Because he lives on the other side of the state from the students riding the van, he drives. Last year he drove alone, but this year he is accompanied by Albert Willett, who serves at Kalamazoo.

The pressures of commuting so many miles each week are great, but Moulton feels his education and his ministry are worth it.

"The church may be small, but every member is aware of his importance to the church. I think there is a greater feeling of being part of the body of Christ there than in most churches," he says.

Joanne LeGette, the only woman in the commuting group, was a summer missionary with the Home Mission Board in Port Huron, Mich., and is able to continue her work through this special program. In the summer she helped start a mission, which held its first worship service July 24 under a tree in the yard of one of the member's homes. It is now meeting in a school, with an average attendance of 11 to 16.

She feels her work is rewarding because, "I know I have been called to a certain area and I'm doing what God has given me to do. And I see needs that I can help provide for."