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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Richard T. McCartney, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) L. Bracey Campbell III, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

November 17, 1978

78-188

Ga. Baptists Tackle Doctrinal Issues

JEKYLL ISLAND, Ga. (BP)--Thorny questions of collegiate governance and theological freedom, perennial issues among Baptists, reared their heads at the annual meeting of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Georgia Baptists also debated policies related to ordination of women, approved \$14 million 1979 Cooperative Program budget, and adopted Bold Mission Thrust goals for Georgia Baptist churches and agencies.

William A. Powell of Buchanan, Ga., editor of the "Southern Baptist Journal," an independent publication, brought a surprise motion asking presidents of Georgia Baptist colleges to prepare a list of church affiliations of non-Baptists on their faculties and to publish their lists in the Georgia Baptist state paper, "The Christian Index."

Powell's motion was quickly approved with absolutely no debate, but then messengers reconsidered the action.

The following day a messenger moved that matter be reconsidered, saying, "It may be illegal and it may hurt our schools." A brief but intense debate followed, highlighted by an emotional statement by Kirby Godsey, new executive vice president of Mercer University, Macon, Ga.

"Yes, there are legal problems, but the real problem is alienation," Godsey said. "I believe that Baptist people and Georgia Baptist schools belong together. We need to believe in each other, to hold each other up...I don't believe this motion helps us to work together or to believe in each other."

Billy R. Anglin, pastor at Bonaire, Ga., and a long-time critic of Georgia Baptist colleges at annual state conventions, said, "I have waited 18 years to hear men from our colleges cry out for the convention and the colleges to work together. We have come to that point. I urge defeat of that motion."

Godsey and Anglin prevailed and less than 100 messengers voted for the motion which had been approved one day earlier without debate. Powell did not speak during the debate on the second day. He is noted among Southern Baptists as editor of the ultra-conservative publication launched about five years ago to ferret out alleged liberalism in the Southern Baptist Convention.

In another matter related to Baptist schools, the Georgia convention approved, without discussion, a report from its executive committee reaffirming authority of trustees at each school to deal with such matters as professors being required to sign the statement of Baptist Faith and Message.

After the report was approved, a messenger expressed personal disapproval of the report saying, "If we do not have strong control of our Baptist schools, then we are in a dreadful way."

Searcy S. Garrison, Georgia Baptist Convention executive secretary, responded that to require any specific doctrinal creed would make accreditation relationship difficult.

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NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Then a motion, passed by a decided majority, instructed the executive committee to restudy the "problems relating to educational institutions and the Baptist Faith and Message," a statement passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963.

Ordination of women as deacons and preachers drew some fire at the Georgia convention again in 1978, as it did in 1977.

A messenger from a same section of the state where Bill Powell lives wanted the convention to go on record as being opposed to ordination of women and to tell denominational employees not to take part in such ordinations. Six denominational employees participated in the ordination of a female Baptist chaplain at Rockmart, Ga., in 1977.

The convention resolutions committee brought out a report which reaffirmed ordination "solely as a local church matter," but urging that denominational employees "prayerfully consider the beliefs of the majority of Georgia Baptists" before taking part in female ordinations.

When that report was presented, a brief but spirited debate resulted in all of it being defeated except the section reaffirming that ordination is solely for local churches to decide. The Georgia convention took a similar position in 1977.

The \$14 million Cooperative Program will be divided so that about 45 percent goes to Georgia causes and 45 percent to SBC causes. About 10 percent is equally shared for joint Georgia and SBC promotion and administration expenses.

The Georgia convention also adopted resolutions urging release of Russian Baptist minister Georgi Vins and his son, Peter, from prison, and support for the SBC Christian Life Commission in its efforts to improve content programming on television.

Jim N. Griffith, pastor of Beech Haven Baptist Church, Athens, Ga., was elected president of the Georgia convention, which will hold its 1979 session, Nov. 12-14, at Bull Street Baptist Church, Savannah, Ga.

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Tennessee Refuses To Oppose
Sunday School Board Action

Baptist Press
11/17/78

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Tennessee Baptists in annual session increased their Cooperative Program giving, elected a new president, honored their retiring executive secretary-treasurer and refused to oppose a recent Baptist Sunday School Board literature decision.

Elected "messengers" approved an \$11.8 million budget, with 34.5 percent earmarked for world mission causes through the national Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program. The amount to SBC causes is a one-half percent increase and is the second year of percentage increase after 16 years of donating 33.3 percent nationally.

The new convention president is W. Fred Kendall II, pastor of First Baptist Church, Union City, whose father was executive secretary-treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, 1956-1972.

During floor action, a motion was defeated to oppose the Baptist Sunday School Board's recent decision to include passages from two translations, including the King James Version, in their Life and Work series, after once having deleted the King James Version from that particular series.

In opposing the return of King James to the quarterlies, James Stroud, pastor of the Third Creek Baptist Church, Knoxville, said, "I'm concerned this action gives the impression that the best version available today is the King James Version, which is the least reliable of all modern versions."

Stroud is a vocal supporter of the Mid America Seminary, a private, conservative seminary in Memphis not affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. He said his concern was that SBC agencies often "overreact" to the vocal minority and end up disappointing the silent majority.

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Bill Dotson, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Martin, Tenn., disagreed with Stroud, saying the Sunday School Board action was a "healthy" response to a grass roots request. "The fact that they were willing to put two translations in the Life and Work series indicates they are listening to at least two viewpoints within the convention," Dotson said.

The other two Sunday School literature series, Bible Book and Convention Uniform, both include the King James Version for their biblical comments. King James will be reinstated in Life and Work in 1979.

A motion was defeated to include the national Cooperative Program percentage as a regular factor in the determination of overage funds. That means the Tennessee Executive Board will continue to decide at its December meeting how to disburse overages. The Tennessee Baptist Convention has received gifts beyond its budget for 15 of the past 17 years. This year the overage is \$481,000.

Messengers appointed a seven-member committee to investigate the causes of world hunger and report to the 1979 convention how Tennessee Baptists can use their resources to help alleviate the problem.

A reception was held honoring retiring executive secretary-treasurer Ralph Norton and his wife. Norton retires Dec. 31 and will be succeeded by Tom Madden.

The 1979 convention will meet Nov. 13-15 at East Park Baptist Church in Memphis.

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Mississippi Opposes
Alcohol Advertising

Baptist Press
11/17/78

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The Mississippi Baptist Convention elected Bill Causey as president, passed a 1979 budget goal of \$10 million, and voted resolutions opposing alcohol advertising, the legal definition of intoxication and excessive entanglement of church and state at its annual meeting in Jackson.

Causey, a native of Greenville, Miss., is pastor of Parkway Baptist Church in Jackson.

Elected "messengers" designated 32.5 percent of the budget income for Southern Baptist Convention causes through the Cooperative Program.

Resolutions against alcohol called for a halt to advertising alcoholic beverages in any medium; requested the U.S. Surgeon General to declare that alcoholic beverages are hazardous to health; and encouraged state legislatures to reduce the blood alcohol content to .1 percent before one can legally be declared intoxicated, instead of the current .15 percent.

The church and state resolution called for increased Baptist awareness and response to "any issues that would erode our freedoms and further entangle us with government control or interference." It expressed concern with "continued encroachment by bureaucratic guidelines" and "increasing burdens of government regulations that interfere with free exercise of the mission and ministry of our churches and institutions."

The 1979 convention will meet Nov. 13-15 at the First Baptist Church, Jackson.

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La. Baptists Pick McGuffee,
Oppose Homosexuality

Baptist Press
11/17/78

BATON ROUGE, La. (BP)--The Louisiana Baptist Convention named the tax assessor of Catahoula Parish as president, voted a \$10 million Cooperative Program budget and took a strong stand against homosexuality during the convention's annual meeting in Baton Rouge.

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The convention also adopted resolutions opposing immoral television programming, legalized gambling, child abuse and pornography and urged premarital chastity as a means of avoiding the need for abortion.

Elected "messengers" to the convention re-elected G. O. McGuffee of Harrisonburg, La., as president, and voted to send 33 percent of its state Cooperative Program budget through the national Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program for worldwide mission causes.

The homosexuality resolution, sterner than one passed in 1977, said, "Homosexuality is neither glamorous nor legal in the eyes of God and must therefore be viewed as a cancer eating away at the family structure as God's holy institution. We, as a body, abhor the very thought of homosexuality and view the practice as unnatural, offensive and totally contrary to the teachings of God's Word."

The convention also adopted ambitious goals for 1979 to help achieve the Bold Mission Thrust plan of Southern Baptists to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to the world in this century.

The goals included 20,000 increase in Sunday School enrollment, 20,000 baptisms, 5,000 increase in church training enrollment and beginning of 50 new areas of work, such as churches, missions, preaching points and Sunday Schools.

The convention also supported a circulation goal of 90,000 for the "Baptist Message," Louisiana state Baptist newspaper, and appointed a committee to deal with design, development, funding plans and construction for a new Louisiana Baptist Convention Conference Center to be located on a 671-acre tract of land about seven miles west of Alexandria, home of the convention's state offices.

The 1979 convention will meet Nov. 12-14 in Monroe, La., at Parkview Baptist Church and the local civic center.

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Michigan Legal Age
Could Signal Trend

Baptist Press
11/17/78

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Although the results of most state issues got lost in the national scramble for Senate and Congressional offices during the November elections, a Southern Baptist spokesman on alcohol education and action claims that a vote in Michigan may signal a trend toward raising the legal drinking age.

By a 57 to 43 percent margin, Michigan voters approved a referendum to raise the drinking age to 21, reversing action taken six years ago which lowered the legal drinking age to 18.

The vote is significant, believes John A. Wood of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, because "it demonstrates that something can be done to combat the growing problem of alcohol abuse among young people."

"People are discovering that education is not the total answer to the problem of alcohol abuse," Wood explained. "Society is beginning to recognize that we have relaxed too many of the controls over alcohol and that we need a moratorium on any further relaxation as well as a fresh look at additional controls."

Many college-age youth have serious problems with alcohol, according to Wood. "Professors have noted that students are drinking during the day, which makes meaningful learning impossible," he said. "The pressures on high school students, as well as college students to drink are tremendous."

Although Wood believes the majority of citizens would vote for measures similar to Michigan's referendum, 25 states, including such Southern Baptist "strongholds" as Texas, Tennessee and Georgia, still have legal drinking ages below 21.

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"What is often lacking is the organization and hard work necessary to make a change in the law," Wood said. "The active involvement of Southern Baptists and other concerned citizens could make a difference in some of these states."

Public opinion in favor of changing Michigan's legal drinking age was sparked by a report released several years ago by the state's Highway Safety Research Institute which showed a dramatic increase in traffic fatalities among 18 to 21 year olds after the legal age was lowered to 18.

A broad-based "Coalition for 21" was formed, spearheaded by Allen Rice III, a United Methodist clergyman who directs the Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems. The coalition eventually secured enough signatures to get the referendum on this year's ballot.

Although the November vote was viewed as good news for persons concerned about alcohol abuse, it came as bad news to alcohol dealers. Bar owners in Michigan estimate that up to 20 percent of their overall business since 1972 has come from 18 to 21 year old drinkers.

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Oklahoma Baptists
Reject Hall of Fame

Baptist Press
11/17/78

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Oklahoma Baptists turned down establishment of an Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame and broke with tradition by re-electing their president to a second consecutive term.

In other action, elected "messengers" at the annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma voted an \$8,450,000 budget, of which 57 percent will go to the national Southern Baptist Cooperative Program, and commended the University of Oklahoma's president and board of regents for actions opposing homosexuality.

Messengers soundly defeated the hall of fame proposal, made in a motion by Hugo Lindquist of Oklahoma City and seconded by Joe L. Ingram, executive director-treasurer of the Oklahoma convention.

One pastor said he opposed it on a Scriptural basis that "the first shall be last" and others said the real holy hall of fame is in the "Lamb's Book of Life" (heavenly roll of Christians) and that it would be slanderous for man to select a hall of fame.

Lindquist rose after the defeat to declare that in light of the vote Oklahoma Baptist University should no longer award honorary doctor of divinity degrees, but he did not make his statement in the form of a motion and no action was taken.

A university spokesman later said OBU has awarded no honorary degrees since 1976.

The re-election of Jerry Don Abernathy, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Tulsa, as president was only the second time since 1941 that an Oklahoma Baptist president has been elected to consecutive terms.

Messengers voted to instruct the "Baptist Messenger," the convention's weekly news publication, to reprint Abernathy's presidential message, which spoke out for upholding the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible and declared that denominational organizations must remain subservient to the local church, the foundation of Baptist strength.

The motion on homosexuality commended the University of Oklahoma board of regents and President William Banowsky for opposing efforts of gay students to gain official recognition on campus. Banowsky, newly inaugurated as the school's president, is a Church of Christ minister.

The 1979 convention will meet Nov. 13-15 at Immanuel Baptist Church, Tulsa.

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Kentucky Baptists Seek
Legal Action on Tax Status

OWENSBORO, Ky. (BP)--In a session preceding the annual meeting of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, the convention's executive board authorized legal action designed to remove the state Baptist office building in Middletown from the tax rolls of Jefferson County.

The action did not require approval of the Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting.

The county tax assessor placed the building on the tax rolls several years ago on grounds that it was not a church used for regular worship. Kentucky Baptists took no legal action at that time, partly because a print shop was operated in the building.

The executive board decided the legal action was appropriate since printing operations discontinued in Sept. 1977.

The explosion of a helium-filled balloon against the ceiling of the sanctuary of First Baptist Church, Owensboro, Ky., was called "the most explosive element" of the opening session of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, which followed the executive board meeting. It was the remnant of a state missions fair emphasizing the Southern Baptist Bold Mission Thrust goal to proclaim the message of Christ to the world in this century.

The hottest debate of the week--and a mild one at that--centered around whether to allow the Kentucky Baptist Board of Child Care to spend up to \$2 million in unrestricted funds. After wrangling over the issue in two business periods, elected "messengers" to the convention voted to permit the board to appropriate the money without restriction.

Messengers adopted a series of mild resolutions. One supported the flow of information on world hunger, another commended the state racing commission for disallowing thoroughbred racing on Sunday, and one expressed opposition to the sale and use of alcoholic beverages in Kentucky State Park.

T. Hicks Shelton of Paducah was elected president of the convention. He is part time missionary of West Kentucky Baptist Association and retired Kentucky Baptist evangelism director.

The convention adopted a 1979-80 budget of \$10.7 million, including a basic operating budget of \$8.8 million, a Bold Mission challenge goal of \$1.2 million and \$700,000 in anticipated additional revenue. Thirty-five percent of state receipts will go to worldwide mission causes of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The 1979 convention will meet Nov. 13-15 at Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky.

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Michigan Baptists Call
For Minority Leaders

Baptist Press
11/17/78

CLIO, Mich. (BP)--Elected "messengers" of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan re-elected their president and adopted a \$1,636,919 budget during their annual meeting at First Baptist Church, Clio.

David Ray, pastor of North Prospect Baptist Church in Ypsilanti, will serve a second term as president. Messengers designated \$184,760 of their budget to world missions through the national Southern Baptist Cooperative Program.

Messengers also adopted a resolution calling for an attitude of missions outreach that "specifically and pointedly" involves minorities in leadership positions.

The 1979 convention will meet Nov. 13-15 at Normandy Road Baptist Church, Royal Oak.

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Northwest Convention
Changes Statement of Faith

SEATTLE, Wash. (BP)--The Northwest Baptist Convention voted a major constitutional change regarding its statement of faith, set plans in motion for seminary satellites and adopted Bold Mission Thrust goals for 1979-82.

Elected "messengers" to the convention, which covers Oregon and Washington and has some churches in Canada, voted to delete the convention's current statement of faith and replace it by the statement of Baptist Faith and Message adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963.

Throughout its 30-year history, the Northwest convention's constitution has included a statement of faith which each church was required to accept prior to its petition for membership and seating messengers at the convention. It declared that churches could accept only persons baptized by "a New Testament Baptist Church."

The statement of Baptist Faith and Message, which Northwest churches will also have to accept under this year's action, calls only for baptism of believers by immersion without mention of the church in which baptism occurred.

In other action, the messengers voted a record budget of \$1,905,610, including a goal of \$1,100,000 in state Cooperative Program receipts from Northwest Baptist churches. They voted to increase by one percent the amount of the Cooperative Program goal going to national Southern Baptist causes, bringing the total amount to 29 percent. That's a nine percent increase over the last seven years.

The budget includes an advance total of \$100,000 to begin special projects, including seminary satellites in cooperation with Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

Ambitions goals for Bold Mission Thrust, the Southern Baptist plan to proclaim Christ to the world in this century, include a 10 percent annual increase in baptisms, a 10 percent annual increase in Sunday School enrollment, beginning of 35 new church-type missions annually, a one percent annual increase to Southern Baptist causes through 1982, a \$2 million Cooperative Program goal by 1982 (more than double the 1978 increased receipts), and a 25 percent annual increase in the three special mission offerings.

Roy Belcher, pastor, Quinalt Baptist Church, Kennewick, Wash., was elected president, succeeding Allen Schmidt, Royal Heights Baptist Church, Delta, British Columbia, Canada.

The 1979 convention will meet Nov. 13-15, Rodeway Inn, Springfield, Ore.

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Filipino Witnesses
Among 80,000 Hogs

Baptist Press
11/17/78

MARIKINA, Philippines (BP)--Nick Arellano works to the constant sound of "oink, oink." He's the chaplain at a piggery in Marikina, Philippines.

Located about two hours from Manila in an isolated area, the piggery covers nearly 500 acres and houses 80,000 hogs. But it's surprisingly clean. Seven hundred men live and work there. Arellano is their chaplain.

The idea of a piggery chaplain originated in the Chinese Baptist Church in Manila where several piggery managers and the owner's brother are members. The church now sponsors Arellano's work.

A 1977 graduate of Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Arellano has held weekly Bible studies in the men's dormitories and Sunday worship services and fellowship in his apartment for a year and a half. Thirty men have become Christians and one new Christian resigned his manager position to attend a Bible school. He says he feels the Lord calling him to full-time service.

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BAPTIST PRESS

*460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219*

LYNN MAY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 9TH AVE NO
NASHVILLE TN 37203

NOV 21 1978