



BAPTIST PRESS

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Tennessee Baptists Call Special April Convention

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A special session of the Tennessee Baptist Convention has been called for April 5 to deal with the financially troubled Belmont Plaza, a highrise apartment complex for senior adults.

Belmont Plaza has been in trouble since November 1978 when it was discovered that excess funds from a bond sale could be used only for construction and not for operating expenses as originally intended.

Belmont Plaza was built by the Tennessee Baptist Service Corporation, and is technically a separate entity from the state Baptist convention. But the Tennessee Baptist Convention gave birth to the corporation, elects its directors, set its debt limit at \$5 million, and must approve additional spending. But as stated on the bond agreement, the state convention claims no responsibility for the corporation's indebtedness.

Of the \$5 million raised through a bond sale, \$456,000 remains unspent and unuseable.

The executive board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention voted to use up to \$180,000 from an emergency fund to meet principal and interest payments to the bond holders and for utility costs and security of Belmont Plaza to keep from defaulting before the called convention.

Directors of the Tennessee Baptist Service Corporation have indicated they will ask Tennessee Baptists for a \$1.5 million letter of credit at the special session which could be used to borrow additional funds. They also will ask for assurance that the service corporation will receive a minimum of \$100,000 per year from the state's Cooperative Program budget, beginning in November. They had originally assured Tennessee Baptists that no Cooperative Program funds would be sought or needed.

The convention's executive board rejected an administrative committee recommendation to authorize a financial campaign for the service corporation.

William H. Coles Jr. of Nashville was appointed chairman of a special committee to explore all possibilities of dealing with the troubled complex and bring a report to the first specially called session in the 105-year history of the convention. Coles is vice president and division manager of the First American National Bank in Nashville.

The expensive housing complex was completed Feb. 1. The service corporation is asking approximately a \$22,000 founder's fee to move in and a monthly maintenance fee of approximately \$500, depending on the size of the apartment.

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Allen Rejects Statements
From California Bishop

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MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Jimmy R. Allen does not agree with the assessment of the Anglican Bishop of California that "the greatest deterrents to human rights and freedom are Bible-thumpers like Anita Bryant and John Briggs."

In a Feb. 18 front-page article in the San Francisco Sunday Examiner, Allen defended the stands of Miss Bryant of Florida and Senator Briggs of California, who led initiatives in their states to limit the rights of homosexuals.

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Rebutting the statement made earlier by C. Kilmer Myers, San Francisco bishop, Allen said, "There is overwhelming concern among Southern Baptists about the permissiveness in present day society and the giving of social approval to lifestyles we believe the Bible condemns. Homosexual lifestyles simply don't fit into the Southern Baptist mode."

Allen, in San Francisco as a Mission Week speaker at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, told Examiner reporter Bill Burkhardt, that Southern Baptists believe there is a "healthy pattern of heterosexuality that the Bible clearly teaches."

"We believe that we ought to have compassionate concern for all persons, no matter what their ways of behavior are, but we ought not approve of lifestyles the Bible tells us are destructive and against society as a person," the Baptist leader explained.

In the article, Allen disagreed on a number of other points with Bishop Myers, who has become noted for his liberal stand on some controversial issues.

Myers, in a diocesan convention late last year, hinted that fundamentalists are being seen more and more as a "source of political power--votes."

"They represent a formidable bloc in American political life," he said, "and State Senator John Briggs, for one, has realized this. This political force operating under the cloak of a distorted Christianity could lead us to facism, American style. It could instigate witch hunts. We must beware of it."

Concerning Southern Baptists being a formidable voting bloc, Allen explained, "We encourage people to become involved with the political processes as citizens. We do not try to produce a Baptist bloc of votes on any given issue."

"We do speak to issues and speak to conscience, but we expect each individual to respond to that and to join whatever political structure forwards his understanding of the moral things healthy for the community."

Concerning the Bible, Myers said in the story, "The Bible is our book. The Bible was born out of the experience of the church. We must not let the fundamentalists steal our book. Their claim is that only they know how to read and understand it."

"It was, they say, dictated to human automatons who, taught by the Holy Spirit, wrote it from Genesis to Revelation. They delight in 'proof texts,' quoting them whenever it suits their purpose."

"Some persons," Myers persisted, "seem to be claiming that the Scriptures are inerrant. They are in my opinion, adherents of a false Christianity. Anglicans have no infallible Book or person."

"We do not have a doctrine of authority like the fundamentalists and the Romans. We seek, we search, we balance and we weigh--knowing always that we are finite, sinful human beings."

In response, Allen stated, "We have an ambivalent feeling there because we also believe in the authority of the Bible. We are in agreement about that, but we are just not that simplistic about how you deal with the authority of the Bible."

"We believe the Bible is the authority. We would see eye-to-eye that it is without error, that it is truth without error. But we are not mad at anybody about it and we are trying to do a positive sharing and that's the difference."

"We would," Allen countered, "reject the effort to shred the Bible by scholars in order to say that it wasn't written by so and so at such and such time. To make a patchwork creation out of the Bible is abhorrent to us. We believe the Bible was not only inspired by God through human personality, but that its processes have been protected so that it is trustworthy."

Despite their differences, Allen did agree with Myers on several points, one of which was that more and more young people today are making their way back into the church.

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New Golden Gate Degree
Receives Accreditation

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MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--The master of theology degree program at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary has received preliminary accreditation from the Association of Theological Schools.

The new program, offered to students next fall, will include training in biblical, historical, theological and missiological studies, and pastoral ministries.

Robert L. Cate, chairman of the seminary's advanced study committee, was delighted at the judgment, saying, "We are extremely excited about the preliminary accreditation our degree program has received even before it has gotten underway."

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Ellen W. Sampey Dead
At 94 in Birmingham

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2/26/79

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Ellen W. Sampey, 94, died Feb. 20 in Birmingham, Ala., following a lengthy illness. Mrs. Sampey was the widow of John R. Sampey, who served as president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1929-1942.

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Bryant Picked 'Most Admired'
In 'Good Housekeeping' Poll

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NEW YORK (BP)--Southern Baptist activist Anita Bryant has been voted Most Admired Woman in the annual poll taken by Good Housekeeping magazine, for the second year in a row.

Many of the letters written in connection with the survey indicated that even persons who do not agree with Miss Bryant's views on homosexuals admire her for having the courage to express them in public.

Another Southern Baptist, First Lady Rosalynn Carter, was ranked seventh in the annual poll.

One reader wrote about Miss Bryant, "She is the kind of spirited woman we need more of. Whether you stand with her or against her, you have to hand it to her for courage in hanging in there despite criticism and loss of income."

Another commented, "All Americans should be able to speak freely. I don't agree with her, but I don't agree with the people who say she shouldn't speak out, either."

Events surrounding Miss Bryant's appearance at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in Atlanta in June was named the top Baptist news story of 1978 by Southern Baptist editors.

Other women who ranked high in this year's Good Housekeeping poll were; 2. Betty Ford; 3. Pat Nixon; 4. Mother Teresa of Calcutta; 5. Barbara Jordan; 6. Beverly Sills; 7. Rosalynn Carter; 8. Phyllis Schlafly; 9. Muriel Humphrey; 10. Queen Elizabeth II.

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Sowder Felt No
Danger In Iran

DALLAS (BP)--Mike Sowder, former missionary journeyman to Iran, said he never felt any personal danger nor was he ever threatened personally during the recent violence there.

Sowder returned to the United States Feb. 2 from Tehran where he had been youth director of the Baptist church serving American business families and military in the Iranian capital. Henry Turlington, pastor of the church, and his family, were evacuated Feb. 18 from Tehran.

Sowder said he never felt in any serious danger, even when the first mass march by anti-Shah forces passed immediately under his apartment window.

"The Iranians were never belligerent toward us," he said. "As more and more of them got caught up in the spirit of the revolution they became anti-foreign and occasionally someone would shout at you, but I never felt any threat."

Sowder at first stayed in an apartment operated by Iranians. They were torn, he said, by feelings of opposition for the Shah but were not entirely sympathetic to the idea of an Islamic state. "We were sympathetic to their problem and tried to express our concern," he said.

Later he moved in with a military family and returned to the United States with the woman and her two sons when they were evacuated. The two boys were the last of his youth group--the rest had already returned to the United States.

Sowder said the experience had been a valuable one for him. "It has made me more aware of things in the world--broadened my view--especially in the area of seeing other people's needs."

Sowder is awaiting reassignment as a missionary journeyman, the SBC Foreign Mission Board program that sends young college graduates to foreign missions posts for two years.

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'Sky' Writing Pen
Money for Student

Baptist Press
2/26/79

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A seminary student found that a popular pen keeps its promise--even at more than 18,000 feet atop a mountain in east Africa.

Louis R. Cobbs Jr., a second year social work student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, and his wife Brenda, will soon be \$25 richer for verifying the claim on the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, in 1975.

The Cobbses received a letter recently from Wells-Riche-Green, Inc., informing them that after receiving a signed authorization the company will send \$25 for the right to use their testimonial letter on a Bic pen radio commercial.

Cobbs wrote the company a year ago that a Bic pen had worked for a group of missionary journeymen on Gillman's Point, Kilimanjaro's main peak at 18,635 feet.

The pen's slogan claims to write first time every time.

The journeymen used the pen for a ledger book, which people sign after successfully making the extremely difficult climb to the top.

Cobbs is from Richmond, Va. His father is Louis R. Cobbs, secretary for missionary personnel of the SBC Foreign Mission Board.

The \$25 promises to come in handy for more than a fresh supply of Bic pens. The couple's first child is due in March.

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