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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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80-183

**California Baptists Celebrate
Past, Reflect on the Future**

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (BP)--Messengers to the Southern Baptist General Convention of California 40th annual meeting dispatched burdensome business matters with uncharacteristic speed to turn their attention to the past and future.

The 1,362 messengers celebrated the 40th anniversary of the convention as they returned to the area of the birthplace of the SBGCC.

Knotty business items with which the convention dealt were:

--Refused to seat messengers from the Church of the Living Word, formerly Coronita Baptist Church of Corona, at the recommendation of the credentials committee. The committee presented five specific reasons against seating the messengers, with the primary one the church now advertises itself as "non-denominational."

--Narrowly defeated a proposed amendment which would have specified the convention's executive board have at least one representative from each association among its members.

--Grappled with continuing problems on the definition of what constitutes a cooperating church. A convention-appointed study committee submitted a new proposal which uses a three-point criteria to define a cooperating church.

Since 1948, the convention has argued about definitions of cooperation and has changed the constitution four times.

The new proposal, which must be proposed one year and voted on the next, defines a cooperating church as one in sympathy with the purpose of the convention, which contributes financially to the work of the convention, and which has not adopted articles of faith in conflict with the SBC Baptist Faith and Message statement.

Messengers adopted a \$7.5 million budget for 1981, with a goal of \$4 million in contributions from the 1,200 congregations of the state. Of that, 27.25 percent will be shared with the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program, up a quarter of a percent from 1980.

In stark contrast to prior years, messengers adopted nine resolutions in less time than they took to re-word one resolution last year.

With no discussion, they reaffirmed previous stands against homosexual rights, urged members to participate in politics dealing with moral issues, and urged Congress to restore \$20,000 in tax credits under the Foreign Earned Income Act of 1978.

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Messengers agreed to "oppose any effort on the part of homosexuals to gain favorable and legal minority status in employment and housing," and called for prayers for the American hostages in Iran and for the new administration in Washington.

W.A. Burkey, pastor of First Baptist Church of Fairfield, was elected president, and the 1981 annual meeting will be held Nov. 10-12 in Monterey.

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Michigan Baptists Link
With Tennessee Convention

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11/17/80

MARQUETTE, Mich. (BP)--Messengers to the Baptist State Convention of Michigan voted to enter into a sister state relationship with the Tennessee Baptist Convention during their 23rd annual meeting.

The vote to link up with the stronger convention came at almost the same time as the Tennessee convention, meeting in Johnson City, was voting to enter the relationship.

Michigan Executive Director Robert Wilson said: "This is the most significant action that our convention has taken since I have been executive director." Wilson, who has served in Michigan since 1956, has been executive since 1971.

Under the linkage agreement, Tennessee churches and associations will work together to expand Baptist work in the northern state.

The meeting in Harvey Baptist Church marks only the second time in the history of the convention that the annual session has been held in the Upper Peninsula.

Messengers adopted a \$1,889,786 budget, of which \$955,431 will come from the 194 churches and 41 chapels of the convention. Of the budget, 25 percent —\$238,858—will go to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program, an increase of a half percent from 1980.

Milton Wood, pastor of Gorham Baptist Church of Jackson, was elected president.

Messengers adopted 11 resolutions ranging from concern about the Foreign Earned Income Act of 1978, which in effect forces Southern Baptist foreign missionaries to pay double income tax, to an expression of gratitude to President Carter for his Christian witness.

None of the resolutions dealt with doctrinal integrity or SBC President Bailey Smith.

The 1981 annual meeting will be at First Baptist Church in Trenton, Nov. 11-12.

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New Mexico Convention
Recognizes Retirees

Baptist Press
11/17/80

FARMINGTON, N.M. (BP)--Bob J. Bacon, pastor of Del Norte Baptist Church of Albuquerque, has been elected president of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico.

Messengers, meeting in their 68th annual session, adopted a record budget of \$1,636,000, 29 percent of which, \$474,440, is earmarked for worldwide missions causes through the Southern Baptist Convention unified budget, the same percentage as last year.

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The convention recognized three retiring staff members with an aggregate of 73 years' service: C. Eugene Whitlow, director of communication division, 14 years; Edward E. Storm, director of education division, 28 years, and Charles Polston, associate in the education division, 32 years.

No controversial issues surfaced during the five-session meeting.

The 1981 convention meets at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, Nov. 3-5.

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Utah-Idaho Urges
Income Exclusion

Baptist Press
11/17/80

CLEARFIELD, Utah (BP)--Messengers to the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention reelected Louis Demster, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Caldwell, Idaho, as president.

The 180 messengers also passed a \$873,698 budget, with \$259,378 anticipated income from convention churches. Of the latter amount, 20 percent will be forwarded for world missions through the national Cooperative Program, the same percentage as last year.

In what was described as a "prayerful" meeting, messengers learned that baptisms increased 23 percent over the previous year. They passed a resolution urging Congress to restore the \$20,000 income tax exclusion for missionaries and other charitable workers overseas.

The 1981 meeting will be Nov. 10-11 at Calvary Baptist Church in Boise, Idaho.

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Mexico City Crusade
Brings 1,000 Decisions

Baptist Press
11/17/80

MEXICO CITY (BP)--A crusade involving 43 of the 46 churches in Mexico City launched a two-year evangelism program Nov. 2-9, with more than 1,000 professions of faith reported in early stages.

Through Nov. 7, some 1,026 people had accepted Christ as their savior. Crusade officials estimate the final figure will be at least 1,500.

Thirty-two evangelists from Texas, Arkansas, New Mexico and California, plus five choirs with 157 members from the United States, assisted Mexican evangelists in the Baptist program of urban evangelization for Mexico City.

All 46 Baptist churches in Mexico City are now participating in the program, which during 1980 accounted for the distribution of almost two million tracts, 7,800 New Testaments and thousands of handbills.

The churches now are working with new believers using specially prepared follow-up materials.

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Kentucky Baptists Meet Amidst Takeover Talk

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. (BP)--References, mostly veiled, of takeover attempts of Southern Baptist institutions and programs floated around as Kentucky Baptists held their 143rd annual meeting.

Numerous references were made, particularly in a report by Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Secretary-Treasurer Franklin Owen, the convention sermon by Edwin F. Perry, pastor emeritus of Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, and a resolution expressing concern.

Messengers, however, avoided controversy on another issue which had been heralded as one of the key issues. Without apparent dissent, the 1,089 messengers listened to first reading of a change in their constitution which would set giving to the Cooperative Program as a test of messenger qualification.

The issue had drawn spirited discussion before the convention, but the Constitution and Bylaws Committee changed the recommendation to take most of the sting out of the opposition.

As proposed, the change would have put Cooperative Program contributions as the key test for messenger qualification. As modified and adopted, each church in the convention is entitled to two messengers if it is in "friendly cooperation" and a "bonafide contributor" to the work of the convention.

The change qualifies one additional messenger for each 250 members or \$250 in contributions through the Cooperative Program.

The change, according to convention observers, both strengthens the Cooperative Program and "rewards" churches which are generous in their contributions through the unified giving program of state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Under amending processes of the convention, the change is read without vote in one convention and then voted on in the following annual meeting. It must pass by a two-thirds margin.

In a report, executive Owen warned messengers of the danger of Southern Baptists becoming a "two party convention," and referred to "a partisan movement...organized and identified... as a party among us."

He referred to efforts by a group headed by two Texans, Paul Pressler, an appeals court judge from Houston, and Paige Patterson, president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, to gain control of boards of institutions and agencies to enforce adherence to a belief in the "inerrancy" and "infallibility" of the Bible.

In his convention sermon, Perry mentioned an "active campaign" to take control, but maintained: "No, my friends, the battle is not for the Bible, it does not need our defense; it needs our proclaiming. The battle of this group is to achieve complete control within the next eight years or less. By their attitude and clearly announced goals, they have placed the integrity of our electoral process under attack."

Perry, who has been a leader of the "moderates" in Kentucky, reminded messengers that Baptists historically "were leaders in religious liberty and in the doctrine of soul competency," and quoted Thomas Jefferson, "'Uniformity of conscience is coercion and coercion is the greatest of all tyrannies over the mind of man.'"

He added: "At our best we Baptists have held that beliefs, our religious faith, were too precious and too personal to allow even the weight of a feather of coercion to be tolerated. Most of us still believe it to be so."

Perry was leader in presenting a resolution which expressed concern over the "takeover" attempt and urged sending of messengers to the 1981 Southern Baptist Convention in Los Angeles.

However, the resolutions committee softened the resolution and it was passed urging churches to send messengers to all conventions.

The inerrantists-moderates fight surfaced in the election of the president. Bill Whittaker, pastor of First Baptist Church, Murray, was elected. After rumors identified him as the favorite of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, a group committed to inerrancy and the ferreting out of "liberals" in SBC institutions, Whittaker told a press conference he has friends within the group whom he will not disown, but added he is not now, nor has he ever been, a member of the organization.

In other business, the convention lauded the Western Recorder, journal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and its editor, C.R. Daley, for keeping Kentucky Baptists informed.

The convention adopted a record \$15.2 million budget for 1981-82, comparing with the current budget of \$12,782,752. Of this amount, 65 percent will be used for state causes and 35 percent will go to worldwide causes through the SBC Cooperative Program. The percentages are the same as last year.

The 1981 convention will be held Nov. 10-12 in Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.

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High Court Strikes Down
Ten Commandments Law

By Stan Hasteley

Baptist Press
11/17/80

WASHINGTON (BP)--Kentucky's law requiring the posting of the Ten Commandments in the state's public schools was struck down here Nov. 17 by the U.S. Supreme Court, despite the fact that oral arguments in the case were not heard.

The 5-4 decision reversed two Kentucky courts which had upheld the controversial 1978 statute calling for the display of a copy of the decalogue in every public school classroom.

In its unsigned four-page ruling, the nation's high court held that the Kentucky law violated the First Amendment's no establishment of religion clause because its purpose was religious, not secular.

Nine years ago, in a case challenging state funding of parochial schools, the court established a three-part test for state laws dealing with religious questions. The first requirement was that the law in question have a secular rather than religious purpose. Second, the "primary effect" of the law must neither advance nor inhibit religion. And third, the court held, the law must not foster "an excessive government entanglement with religion."

The Kentucky law failed the secular purpose test, the court majority declared, because "the preeminent purpose for posting the Ten Commandments on schoolroom walls is plainly religious in nature."

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In its earlier decision upholding the law, an equally divided Kentucky Supreme Court held that by affixing a "secular purpose" disclaimer in fine print beneath the posted Ten Commandments, the state had met that requirement.

But the nation's highest tribunal disagreed, ruling that "the Ten Commandments is undeniably a sacred text in the Jewish and Christian faiths, and no legislative recitation of a supposed secular purpose can blind us to that fact."

While acknowledging that the last six of the Ten Commandments deal with "arguably secular matters," including honoring one's parents, murder, adultery, stealing, false witness and covetousness, the first four commands contain purely religious injunctions, the court declared.

Nor did the fact that the Kentucky law required private funding for the plaques save it from violating the Constitution, the high court continued. "It does not matter that the posted copies of the Ten Commandments are financed by voluntary private contributions," the majority held, "for the mere posting of the copies under the auspices of the legislature provides the 'official support of the state...government' that the establishment clause prohibits."

Two of the dissenters from the decision, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Harry A. Blackmun, objected on technical legal grounds, saying the high court should have heard arguments before announcing a decision.

Two others, Potter Stewart and William H. Rehnquist, objected to the decision itself.

A Baptist constitutional expert, John W. Baker, legal counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, said the apparent rationale for the court's expedited decision was that arguments presented in written briefs as well as the record developed in the case "sharpened the constitutional issues to the extent that the court was able to reverse the Kentucky Supreme Court without the formality of hearing oral arguments."

During the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention last June, messengers were asked by the resolutions committee to approve a statement expressing approval of a plan to make the Kentucky practice nationwide. The proposed resolution was disallowed when messengers unanimously disqualified the Louisville, Ky., woman who presented the resolution. The disqualification action came after the convention's credentials committee held that Claudia and Tom Riner were "not in friendly cooperation or sympathetic with the purposes" of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Mrs. Riner, a member of the Kentucky House of Representatives, has led the organization which fought for the Kentucky law and has urged adoption of similar statutes by other states.

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Sherman Says Employees
Might Lose Their Jobs

Baptist Press
11/17/80

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. (BP)--Some denominational employees could lose their jobs if "inerrantists" are successful in their goal to take over the Southern Baptist Convention, says Nashville pastor Bill Sherman.

Sherman, pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church, told about 150 persons, mostly pastors, attending an informal meeting during the Tennessee Baptist Convention's annual session, they had no danger of losing their jobs, but denominational employees could be forced out. He

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specifically noted that the Southern Baptist Journal, newspaper of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, had stated state Baptist newspaper editors were "the most dangerous enemies" to their takeover of the convention.

Sherman, who was chairman of the SBC committee on boards at the 1980 convention, said he fears the present committee on boards will try to replace trustees of SBC institutions who will be up for reelection to their traditional second terms at Los Angeles in June. If that occurred for just two or three years, a group from an adamant single theological position could control the boards of trust for all SBC agencies and institutions.

Sherman, instrumental in forming an informal coalition of moderates to counter the announced intent of the "inerrantists" to take over the SBC, said there are two events by which to judge the crisis the denomination faces: the dumping of "mid-termers" by the current committee on boards; and the 1981 committee on committee's attempt to "stack the 1981 committee on boards with those of only one theological position."

Pat Landrum, pastor of Brighton Baptist Church, cautioned Sherman at the meeting that the moderates not "build ourselves a boat similar to theirs." Landrum said, "I don't want to be in the boat with (Paul) Pressler and (Paige) Patterson (two leaders of the announced takeover), but I don't want to do things their way." He said he did not want to become part of any political machine.

Doug Watterson of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, said that for the first time in Southern Baptist life, some are saying, "If you do not agree with my position, you cannot serve on our boards, work for our denominational agencies, or teach in our seminaries."

He added, "You can trust Pressler and Patterson to do exactly what they say. They're going to remove and to replace the leadership of our convention."

Herman Jacobs of Johnson City warned, "If we get divided on theological issues, our mission program goes down the drain. I don't think we ought to doubt each other's salvation and say you can't serve."

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Long, Chafee Promise Help
On Income Tax Exclusion

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press
11/17/80

WASHINGTON (BP)--Two U.S. senators declared in Capitol Hill news conferences they will work for passage of legislation in this session of Congress to restore the \$20,000 income exclusion for employees of religious and other charitable workers overseas.

Sen. Russell Long, D-La., spoke for the legislation in a Nov. 13 news conference, and Sen. John H. Chafee, R-R.I., followed suit on Nov. 14, joining with five representatives of organizations with charitable workers abroad.

Chafee and Long said they will push to get the legislation, which has bipartisan support, through the shortened lame duck session of Congress.

Chafee said if proper legislation cannot be passed in the short time left, he will push for a legislative extension of the filing deadline beyond the Dec. 15, 1980, date set by the Internal Revenue Service. He said he believes legislation would pass in the next session of Congress to "cover all Americans overseas—not just charitable workers."

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Several legislative remedies have been sought since the Foreign Earned Income Act of 1978 accidentally eliminated the \$20,000 exclusion for charitable organizations.

But they have bogged down, and earlier bills expected to solve the problem probably won't make it in this session. Now Chafee and other congressmen, prompted to act by escalated protests, are looking for legislative means to get the job done in the closing days of Congress.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks, one of five persons joining Chafee in the news conference, said, "Immediate action to restore the exclusion—rather than just another extension—is urgent because the board and other organizations must plan budgets and worldwide ministries which would be curtailed by increased financial burden."

But Parks said the extension would be better than having to pay \$1 million to IRS for 1979 and another \$1 million for 1980 if the session closes with no action at all.

Four others at the news conference—Phil D. Strickland, acting director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission; Wallace J. Campbell, president of CARE; Jean Chenard, senior director of operations for Catholic Relief Services; and Joe Price, general counsel for the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service—echoed Parks' concerns.

Strickland, asked by the Foreign Mission Board to help in an eleventh-hour effort to push for congressional action, expressed "cautious optimism that Congress will take long overdue action." He cautioned that "Congress may not have time in the final days of the lame duck session to totally resolve the problem."

Parks joined him in urging Southern Baptists and others to continue to press congressmen for action in this session to restore the exclusion of \$20,000 or more.

As it stands now, the Foreign Mission Board, which already pays \$1 million in income taxes each year to foreign governments on salaries of more than 3,000 missionaries in 94 countries, would have to pay \$1 million a year in U.S. income taxes. CARE and Catholic Relief Services would have to pay about \$250,000 each. The total tax bite on charitable organizations with workers overseas would amount to about \$25 million.

"At a time when the need for relief services around the world is growing and the size of the U.S. foreign aid dollar is shrinking, we cannot allow increased taxes to undercut the effectiveness of our private sector relief efforts," Sen. Chafee told the news conference.

"Instead, we should promote the good will of our private charities around the world. It represents the American spirit at its finest and most generous."

Parks quoted a legislative report of the Senate Finance Committee which declared that "charitable employees in developing countries are performing services which the United States has a special interest in supporting."

Parks said, "We concur with this view because, although we are a religious organization which seeks to meet spiritual as well as physical need, we feel the service of our missionaries enhances good will between the U.S. and other nations."

D.C. Baptists Address
Controversial Issues

WASHINGTON(BP)--Delegates to the 104th annual session of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention addressed three controversial topics.

In a resolution on prayer by persons of differing faiths, the delegates noted that "God is sovereign, and that he hears and answers prayers from whomever he wills," and urged Baptists to "build relationships with our Jewish friends."

The resolution did not specifically mention SBC President Bailey Smith and was approved in place of one which repudiated Smith by name for his statement last summer that "God does not hear the prayer of a Jew."

The delegates expressed concern about the religious right, acknowledging "the right and Christian duty of these groups to address political concerns from the viewpoint of their own Christian conviction," but "rejecting as arrogant and inaccurate the claims of such groups and individuals to speak exclusively for God, the Christian church, or Baptists-at-large."

In a unanimously-passed resolution, the delegates cited historic Baptist commitment to the freedom of the individual to "approach God" and "express his interpretation of God's word." Noting the current dissension and divisiveness in the SBC, the resolution called on Baptists "to join together in the spirit of Christian love and forbearance, majoring on our common beliefs and goals while respecting the right to hold differing views."

In other resolutions, the delegates urged the Baptist Sunday School Board to establish a Baptist bookstore in the D.C. area and called on Baptists to become actively involved in combating world hunger.

C. Wade Freeman Jr., pastor of Capitol Hill Metropolitan Baptist Church in D.C., was elected to a one-year term as president of the convention. Two laywomen, Vivian Nielson of Calvary Baptist Church and Polly Blalock of Wheaton Baptist Church, were elected vice president and secretary respectively.

The 364 delegates approved a budget of \$849,067, of which \$210,000, or 24.7 percent, will go to SBC causes through the national Cooperative Program.

The 1981 meeting will be held Nov. 12-13 at First Baptist Church, Gaithersburg, Md.

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Kansas-Nebraska Baptists
Challenged To Start Work

Baptist Press
11/17/80

BELLEVUE, Neb. (BP)--President Doyle Smith challenged Kansas-Nebraska Southern Baptists to increase the number of churches in the convention by at least 200 within the next two decades.

The challenge came as the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists held their 35th annual session in First Baptist Church in this suburb of Omaha last week.

Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Great Bend, Kan., was reelected president of the convention.

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Messengers adopted a record budget of \$2,045,964, the first time they have budgeted in excess of \$2 million. Of the budget, \$1,130,800 will come from the 240 churches and chapels of the two-state convention.

Messengers increased the percentage the state contributes to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program, going up one percent to 23 percent.

Missions, both within the convention and worldwide, occupied the attention of the 348 registered messengers. They heard reports from 20 college students—members of Baptist Student Unions in the two states—on a mission trip to Africa this past summer. The students and the state convention raised funds for the trip, which was made in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

In his challenge, Smith urged the planting of many small churches rather than the development of super churches, pointing out many smaller churches have better baptismal ratios—the number of members contrasted to the number of converts—than do many of the churches which receive national attention.

Messengers considered seven resolutions, none dealing with controversial issues within the denomination. Among the resolutions were ones rejecting pari-mutuel betting in Kansas and another urging printed warnings on alcoholic beverage bottles.

The 1981 annual meeting will be in Nall Avenue Baptist Church in Kansas City, Kan., Nov. 10-12.