



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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80-191

Woman Is President Of Nevada Convention

RENO, Nev. (BP)--For the fourth time in Southern Baptist history, a woman is president of a state Baptist convention.

Beverly McLeroy, 37, of Las Vegas, was named president of the Nevada Baptist Convention in a special called meeting of the convention's executive board after the president, Adrian Hall, also of Las Vegas, resigned to join the professional staff of the state convention.

McLeroy was elected vice president of the newest convention affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention at the annual meeting in Las Vegas Oct. 27-29.

She is the wife of Jim McLeroy, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Las Vegas, and has been a member of the 12-person executive board since January 1979.

"I am excited about it," she told Baptist Press. "I do enjoy working with our state staff. It is a real opportunity for me.

"I think it is significant for women that someone can hold this position that traditionally has been a man's job. I am not a women's libber, but I think it is significant for women to see they can serve in the convention as well as in the churches."

McLeroy is the fourth woman to serve a state convention as president.

Two of the others—Allene Tilley and Letha Casazza—were elected presidents of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, which is dually aligned with the SBC and with the American Baptist Churches in the USA.

American Baptist churches, with 1.3 million members, traditionally have been more open to leadership roles for women. Six women have been president of the convention, starting with Bible translator Helen Montgomery in 1922.

However, there has never been a woman president of the 13.4 million-member Southern Baptist Convention, although women have been vice presidents and have had key committee and board assignments.

The only other woman to be president of a state convention was Mrs. Virginia Parker, who succeeded to the top elective post in 1974 when then president A.R. (Rudy) Fagan resigned to become executive director of the SBC Stewardship Commission. Mrs. Parker, wife of the pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, served for six months and, according to Florida tradition of a single term, was not nominated for a full term.

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McLeroy said she became president "with no advance warning." Hall, pastor of College Park Baptist Church for four years, became director of Sunday School work for the 76-congregation convention a month after he was elected.

"He had been approached back in August about taking the position, but had said no. He told me he had second thoughts, but did not make the decision to accept the job until after our convention," McLeroy said.

She admitted the vice presidency of the convention is "sort of an honorary position," but added succession is "automatic under our constitution. If the president resigns or moves away, the vice president becomes president."

All of her peers on the executive board, she said, "have been very positive. I have worked with them for two years. There is no resentment, or none I am aware of."

Ernest B. Myers, executive director-treasurer of the Nevada convention, explained McLeroy will be both president of the convention and chairman of the executive board, which "makes it a pretty powerful position even in our state."

Myers said he is "right excited about it. She was chairman of the personnel committee last year. She is very capable; just tops."

He added he hopes she will allow herself to be nominated for a second term when the convention meets in 1981.

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Court Accepts Challenge To
All-Male Draft Registration

By Stan Hastey

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Sex discrimination cases figured prominently in recent Supreme Court actions, including a challenge to the all-male military draft registration law.

In what may prove to be the most emotionally volatile case it handles this term, the high court agreed to decide if last year's draft registration law illegally discriminates against men by requiring males only to register for a possible draft. A lower federal court in Pennsylvania already has ruled that the 1979 statute violates the due process clause of the Fifth Amendment.

But the federal government, whose appeal was filed with the court by Solicitor General Wade H. McCree Jr., argues that registration of men only does not constitute invidious and unconstitutional sex discrimination.

One of the ironies surrounding the challenge to the law is that the Carter administration originally proposed draft registration legislation to include women, a provision rejected by Congress. The Department of Justice must now defend the law before the high court.

Although no date has been announced for oral arguments in the case, the justices are not likely to make a final ruling until late in the term, perhaps by June 1981. Meanwhile, young men born in 1962 will register as scheduled in January. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr. earlier delayed implementing the lower court ruling overturning draft registration pending Supreme Court disposition of the case.

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Another possible outcome in the heated controversy would be action by President-elect Ronald Reagan asking Congress to cancel the program when he assumes office. Such a move would be consistent with his campaign position against peacetime registration.

In a second sex discrimination action, the high court agreed to review a case appealed by the federal government in the wake of a lower court ruling striking down Department of Education regulations on sex discrimination in employment by educational institutions.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. After passage of the 1972 law, the Office of Education (now Department of Education) issued regulations extending coverage to educational institutions' salary scales.

Title IX has received widespread publicity because it requires educational institutions to provide equal funding for programs and activities, such as athletics for women.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled earlier this year that Title IX does not cover employment discrimination by education institutions even though they receive federal aid. The case reaching the high court for review involves Seattle University, a Roman Catholic institution.

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Urban Evangelism Urgent
To Save Devastated Cities

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ST. LOUIS (BP)--American cities are "spiritual Hiroshimas" and it will take courageous ministries to restore the devastation.

Such graphic descriptions of the plight of America's cities as that by Jimmy Allen, SBC Radio and Television Commission president, marked the first national congress on urban evangelism attended by 140 denominational evangelism leaders.

During three days of meetings in 24 strategy groups, participants sought an effective, holistic methodology for ministry in the city. Listed among the ingredients of such a ministry were involvement in community and political affairs and a courageous, "hang tough" attitude.

Shared statistics illustrated the urgent need for effective city evangelism. Sixty to 70 percent of the American prison inmate population comes from an urban background. The group was reminded that many people become Christians during their teen years and that 72 percent of American highschoolers live in 60 cities.

The cities themselves, with massive office and apartment buildings, surround and overwhelm the urban church structures. But conference participants were urged to influence these institutions through personal witnessing and political involvement.

"We must learn how to touch with sympathy and compassion the ulcerated sores of the cities," said John Havlik, director of evangelism education and writing for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. "We need to keep the love of God in our hearts, be optimistic and operate on the three principles of faith, hope and love."

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Other participants lamented church members content to live in the suburbs and pray for the city. But one conference speaker's suggestion that guilt be developed in those persons was challenged by participants, who changed the word to "empathy."

"We hope to produce a body of thoughtful data on the task of evangelizing urban areas," said Dale Cross, Home Mission Board director of metropolitan evangelism strategy and organizer of the conference. He said data compiled at the meeting will be reproduced in book form.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary President Bill Pinson, whose school emphasizes the "human laboratory" adjacent to it in the San Francisco Bay area, said "we don't have a thing to brag about. We have much to weep about when it comes to the cities and our Southern Baptist life."

Pinson's address on the urban mindset concluded that cities are not monolithic structures, but are groupings of many individual mindsets. The common denominator, he said, is that Christ died for each of us.

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Baptist Relief Effort Mounted
For Victims of Italian Quake

By Susan Cahen

Baptist Press
12/2/80

ROME (BP)--Hunger and relief funds sent by Southern Baptists to aid victims of Italy's Nov. 23 earthquake will be used to provide food, clothing and semi-permanent housing, Southern Baptist missionary Stanley Crabb said.

Southern Baptist missionaries and Italian Baptists, using churches as collection points, have amassed truckloads of clothing and foodstuffs to distribute to victims of one of Italy's worst natural disasters.

Crabb reported supplies have poured in and missionaries have had great freedom of movement in the stricken area to distribute the supplies to those left homeless by the devastating quake. Six truckloads of goods are on their way from Baptists in Austria.

Two days after the catastrophe, the entrance hall of the Baptist Mass Media Center was filled with incoming goods. The Federation of Evangelical Churches, made up of Methodists, Waldensians, Lutherans and Baptists, sent two trucks to help move relief supplies to the south. A large tent used in evangelistic revivals was set up in Senerchia. Southern Baptist missionary Marylu Moore, currently overseeing relief efforts there, arrived in that little town before other relief workers, even before the military, Crabb said.

The tent at Senerchia will be Baptists' main distribution point and will remain there for three months. The tent is manned 24 hours a day by doctors and nurses.

Crabb cited numerous examples of people helping in the relief effort, both on their own and assisting Baptists in theirs. A Christian radio programmer gave Baptists a truckload of milk and the Ford Motor Co. lent them three trucks to use for a week to distribute what eventually became six truckloads of goods.

The U.S. military from a nearby base provided helicopters to transport goods and gave 100 tents to be used for temporary housing.

Crabb said he expects housing to be the most pressing need in future work with the victims. He and missionary Bob Hollifield planned a three-to-four day survey trip to visit all the Baptist churches in the area as well as the tent in Senerchia to determine immediate and future needs of the people and what Baptists can do to contribute to the rehabilitative work. Immediate needs for clothing have been met and there have been reports of the homeless burning clothing for warmth.

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Baptists will probably concentrate their future efforts on some sort of prefabricated housing, Crabb surmised. Some 250,000 persons were left homeless in this poorest section of Italy, an area of seven million persons living in many small, old towns.

Thirty of these towns were leveled, Crabb reported, and others 70 to 80 percent destroyed with the remaining 20 to 30 percent requiring major repairs. Although the government has officially listed only about 3,000 confirmed deaths, Crabb believes the death toll will go much higher.

So far he knows only one Baptist was killed—a woman in San Gregori Magno. When a truckload of goods arrived in that town on the Friday following the quake, they found the Baptist church building 70 percent destroyed and unusable but still standing. They located one of the elders of the church and gave him the truckload of clothing to distribute to the people who had moved outside the town.

A survivor was found in the town the day before, Crabb said, seven days after the quake. The woman had taken food and crawled into a cedar chest when the first shocks of the quake began and had survived until rescue workers found her there a week later.

One of the biggest problems facing the relief efforts now is the accumulation of a hard, driving snow. Although many don't realize it, he said, some of these higher areas have as much snow as the northern areas at the base of the Alps.

The government has offered to evacuate residents of 126 of the worst-hit cities and towns to coastal areas and pay for them to be housed in resort hotels until other housing can be arranged but many are refusing to leave their homes.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has sent \$15,000 in hunger funds and \$15,000 in disaster relief funds to be administered by missionaries and Italian Baptists. "Further requests for aid are expected and certainly will receive immediate consideration," says J.D. Hughey, the board's area director for Europe and the Middle East.

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Louisiana College
Receives Endowment

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PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--Louisiana College has received \$364,618 from the estate of an Alexandria, La., widow to endow scholarships for students preparing for a Christian vocation.

Robert Lynn, president of the Southern Baptist college, says the endowment from Martha A. Reynolds, who died in December 1979, will produce approximately \$30,000 annually for the scholarships. She was a Presbyterian and long-time resident of Alexandria.

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