



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 13, 1981

81-79

Auchmuty Challenging  
Committee on Boards

By Dan Martin

**BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)**--James A. Auchmuty Jr., is challenging the Southern Baptist Convention committee on boards for its failure to renominate him for a second term as a trustee of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Auchmuty, pastor of Shades Crest Baptist Church in suburban Birmingham, served one four-year term as a BSSB trustee, but was not renominated for a second term when the committee on boards met in Nashville March 23-24, even though messengers to the 1980 SBC in St. Louis recommended second terms for trustees who had "served well" during first terms.

The pastor, who also is national alumni president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, will publicly contest the report of the committee on boards when it is presented to the 1981 annual meeting in Los Angeles. He also is planning to challenge the "function and procedure" of the committee.

Auchmuty, who said he is "outraged" by the sequence of events which led to his being "bumped" from the Sunday School Board, added: "I have been labeled both a heretic and a liar. In a reversal of the age-old maxim that a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty, I have had to, in fact, prove my innocence."

Auchmuty said he received a letter from E. P. Wallen, pastor of Vineland Park Baptist Church in Hueytown, and one of two Alabama representatives on the committee on boards on Feb. 9, inquiring about Auchmuty's "view of the Bible."

The letter said Wallen and Perry Calvert, a Huntsville insurance agent, and the other Alabama member, were attempting to comply with Resolution 16 on doctrinal integrity passed at the 1980 St. Louis meeting "to ensure that our nominees to serve on the various boards are in agreement with the view of the Bible stated in the resolution," which said the Scriptures are infallible and without error.

Auchmuty responded that "individually and corporately, privately and publicly, I have affirmed the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963," and added that Sunday School Board trustees "meeting in Nashville in regular session on Jan. 28, 1981, unanimously reaffirmed the aforementioned statement and its specific reference to Resolution 16. I was present and voted."

Auchmuty says he called Wallen April 2 to inquire about the status of his renomination, and was told Wallen "made a personal, arbitrary decision not to recommend me for a second term in the interest of including others in leadership positions."

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Fred Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, was nominated in Auchmuty's place. Wolfe was to have served on the 1980-81 committee on boards from Texas, but resigned to return to Alabama before he served. The Mobile pastor has been named as one of the Alabama representatives on the 1981 committee on committees.

In a letter to the committee on boards members April 17, Auchmuty raised questions as to whether his letter to Wallen had been available to the committee when it deliberated his case. He included a copy of the correspondence to each member.

Wallen then wrote on April 24 to the members of the committee, saying the decision not to renominate Auchmuty "was not arbitrary. Rather it was and is our considered opinion that he is not supportive of the admonishment stated in Resolution 16 on doctrinal integrity."

Wallen also claims in his letter that "Auchmuty authored articles appearing in the Alabama Baptist which, in my opinion, clearly contradict his implied claim to support, in full, Resolution 16."

The Hueytown pastor also wrote Auchmuty "failed to mention that he hosted a meeting of 'The Friends of Missions' headed by Dr. Cecil Sherman of North Carolina," whom Wallen said "has publicly declared that he does not believe in an inerrant and infallible Bible."

Auchmuty, in a letter to the committee on May 4, said the first article he wrote for the Alabama Baptist appeared in 1974, and the last "on September 11, 1980. If these articles are the determining factor, then I was a marked man on his (Wallen's) hit list at least five months and maybe as long as seven years prior to the date of his query and six months before the committee meeting....It would not have mattered what I said...."

In the same letter, he asked if meeting with Sherman "makes me anymore his theological twin or clone than it made Bailey Smith, who also had a meeting" with Sherman. "I insist on being judged on my own beliefs and statements and on evidence germane to the central issue."

He has sent copies of all the articles in question as well as other materials to Claude Kirkpatrick, chairman of the committee on boards, asking him to "implement with all deliberate speed the appellate process that will rectify the situation," and suggesting that "at a minimum... a proper forum be assembled at which all the evidence be presented and reviewed. If nothing more, such a meeting will affirm both my personal integrity as well as that of the committee."

Auchmuty, however, is pessimistic about whether he can receive redress from the committee because he says the committee will not meet again after the March meeting. Procedures adopted at the meeting, he says, "tie the hands" of the six-person subcommittee which will meet at 9 p.m. Sunday, June 7.

Both Auchmuty and Kirkpatrick agree the only items to be handled by the small group will be nominating replacements for persons who have either died or moved since the report was made.

"I have tried to work within the system only to discover there is none," Auchmuty said. "The only thing to do is to go directly (to the convention); if they want a fight, they are going to have one."

"I think it is grossly unfair when this kind of unfairness is exposed and there is no redress. I was tried and found impure without a hearing," he said, adding that the report of the committee on boards will be challenged and "the unfairness of the whole procedure will be exposed."

He did not say, however, who will lead the challenge.

He has been supported by the church of which he has been pastor nine years, and by staffers at the church. The congregation, on May 6, unanimously adopted a resolution affirming Auchmuty's doctrinal integrity and Christian character and called on the committee to make a "public statement...to correct any erroneous impression as to the doctrinal position" of the pastor.

Auchmuty said he is working with others to prepare materials for a bylaw standardizing committee procedures to "guarantee fairness to everybody concerned and continuity from year to year."

Because of the short time until the June meeting of the SBC, Auchmuty is uncertain whether the proposal will be made in Los Angeles or at the SBC Executive Committee when it meets in Nashville Sept. 21-23.

"We are identifying what the procedure currently is and are working to come up with a viable alternative that will guarantee honesty, fair play and continuity," he said.

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Wallen Says Auchmuty  
Action 'Not Personal'

Baptist Press  
5/13/81

HUEYTOWN, Ala. (BP)--The decision not to renominate James A. Auchmuty Jr., to the Baptist Sunday School Board was not personal, but was doctrinal, says a Hueytown pastor.

E.P. Wallen, pastor of Vineland Park Baptist Church, was one of the two Alabama representatives on the 1980-81 Southern Baptist Convention committee on boards which did not reappoint Auchmuty, pastor of Shades Crest Baptist Church in suburban Birmingham, to a second four-year term on the BSSB.

Wallen said: "This is not a personal vendetta against Dr. Auchmuty. I do not know him. I have never met him face to face. We have a doctrinal difference."

Wallen said he sent a questionnaire to prospective nominees, including those eligible for renomination, asking for "his or her view of the Bible," in reference to a strong resolution on doctrinal integrity, adopted at the 1980 SBC in St. Louis.

In his response, Auchmuty said he "individually and corporately, privately and publicly" affirms the Baptist Faith and Message statement of 1963, which includes a section proclaiming the Bible has "truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."

Wallen said: "We did not feel he had given us a clear-cut answer to our specific question. My position on the matter is simple. I do not believe someone saying they believe the Baptist Faith and Message statement clarifies their position on the scriptures. It has been interpreted to mean whatever who is using it wants it to mean."

The Hueytown pastor added he believes the Baptist Faith and Message statement should be redefined, and added he did not necessarily look for Auchmuty to use the terms "inerrant and infallible," but "did expect a commitment to scripture as the authoritative rule of everything we do...."

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He added he believed the "spirit of the (1980) convention was to get a commitment on (Inerrant and Infallible) scripture" and Resolution 16 was an effort to get nominees to boards of trustees who are "in total and absolute agreement with the resolution."

"It would have been inconsistent for us to have appointed someone not in total and absolute agreement with it," he said.

Perry Calvert, an insurance agent and chairman of the deacons at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, and the other member of the committee on boards from Alabama, said: "I had no objections to Dr. Auchmuty based on his letter. It (the letter) satisfied me; I had no objection to him."

Calvert said Wallen objected to Auchmuty, and a compromise was effected, naming Fred Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, to the BSSB in place of Auchmuty.

"We (the Alabama delegation) had to be in agreement. Brother Wallen felt strongly, so I was happy to nominate Fred Wolfe as a compromise. If Brother Wallen had been in favor (of renominating Auchmuty) I would have gone along. It was not a big issue with me," Calvert said.

Wallen compromised on another candidate: J. Wayne Flynt, chairman of the history department at Auburn University and a former professor at Samford University, a Baptist-affiliated school in Birmingham.

"We were not satisfied with his answer doctrinally," Wallen said, but added Flynt was reappointed to the Historical Commission "because there is not a better historian in Alabama. And, anyway, they don't have that many employees."

Both Calvert and Wallen said they are "surprised" by the controversy.

"I had no idea this would be the mess it is," Calvert said. "I am extremely disappointed it has come to this. To me it is a four-year term and reappointment is not automatic. I am disappointed in Jim Auchmuty."

Wallen said he believes Auchmuty is the "point man for a movement...to discredit Adrian Rogers....I feel like by attacking this committee, they are calling into question the integrity of Dr. Rogers. (Rogers, immediate past president of the SBC, appointed the committee on committees, which in turn nominated the committee on boards. Rogers is an inerrantist.)

"This system (of nominations) has always worked well in the past," Wallen said. "Why are they questioning it now?"

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Board Faces Cost Realities,  
Returns Hospital to Anglicans

Baptist Press  
5/13/81

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board decided in its May meeting it can no longer afford to operate the financially pressured Baptist Hospital in Gaza.

Board members voted \$170,000 to keep the hospital open until Jan. 1, 1982, when it will be returned to an Anglican administration. The Anglicans' Church Missionary Society of England had operated the hospital before Southern Baptists took it over in 1954.

Southern Baptist missionaries will be allowed to continue working at the hospital after the property is handed over to the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem as the representative of the church missionary society.

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But the board voted to keep operating the 60-student Baptist School of Health Sciences, adjacent to the hospital. Students in the school will receive their clinical training in the hospital. Last year 13 students made decisions to accept Christ as savior.

The agreement with the Anglicans, worked out earlier in Gaza by the hospital's board of trustees and Foreign Mission Board representatives, also permits a Baptist witness to continue in the hospital and through a church that meets there.

Despite reminders of continuing financial limitations, the Richmond meeting also provided some notes of optimism.

Evelyn Linebery of Midland, Texas, a niece of the late L.R. Scarborough, presented a \$300,000 check to start an endowment fund for partnership missions in memory of her uncle, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1914-45 and author of "With Christ After the Lost," a Baptist classic on evangelistic outreach.

The Scarborough fund, which she said might need to be doubled, tripled or even quadrupled if inflation continues, will help finance cooperative evangelistic work involving Baptist churches in this country with those related to Baptist work overseas.

Linebery, a member of First Baptist Church, Midland, has been one of the chief supporters of World Evangelism Foundation, the Dallas-based group which is phasing out as the Foreign Mission Board expands its partnership missions program. She and her husband, Tom, own ranchlands in Texas and New Mexico.

Seventeen new missionaries, including pastor Tom Elliff and his wife, Jeannie, of Tulsa's 5,000-member Eastwood Baptist Church, were appointed missionaries during the meeting and two special project medical workers were employed. Mrs. Elliff is SBC President Bailey Smith's sister-in-law.

Treasurer Carl Johnson reported that the board's Cooperative Program receipts for the first four months of 1981 are up 18.2 percent over the same period last year. He also said the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, though lagging slightly in percentage behind last year, stands at \$44,101,253 with two and a half weeks remaining before books are closed. The total already is more than \$3.4 million over the amount given last year.

The board also heard a warning from George Hays, area director for East Asia, that the high cost of land and buildings "may call for rethinking of the concept of church as Southern Baptists have known it." The Japan Baptist Convention, for example, has urged its churches to start missions "whether or not there is any hope of ever having land or building," he said.

President R. Keith Parks, just back from a 10-day visit to six countries where Southern Baptists have work in western South America, said he was impressed with the openness of this area to the gospel, the maturity of national Baptist leadership, and the challenge and opportunity for strategic planning, especially in the large cities.

Those appointed as missionaries were: Sam and Joyce Huckaby Catoe of South Carolina, assigned to Benin; Paul and Collis Hill Charlton, Florida and North Carolina, respectively, to South Brazil; Tom and Jeannie Thomas Elliff, Texas and California, to Zimbabwe; Dick and Judy Charlton Garrett, California and Texas, to Mexico; Mike and Ann Elliott Lopez, Georgia and North Carolina, to Taiwan; Bruce and Barbara Dunn Robertson, South Carolina, to the Philippines; Jeff Shadowen, Louisiana, to Ecuador; Steve and Shirley Taylor, Alabama, to Zimbabwe; and Charles and Darlene Rotch Williams, Alabama, to Japan.

Two special project medical workers were employed: Cindy Whiteaker of Missouri was assigned to Gaza; and Helen Roller, California, to Thailand.

Board Names Bullock  
Volunteer Coordinator

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Ed Bullock, director of the brotherhood department of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina for 15 years, has been named coordinator in the volunteer department of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Beginning June 1, Bullock will coordinate the placement of short-term volunteers, such as construction and relief crews, and choirs who go overseas for several weeks up to four months. He will work with about 3,000 people a year, said Ronald Boswell, volunteer department director. Boswell will continue to coordinate volunteers going to work in evangelism and church development, while Bullock will work with most other short-term volunteers.

"Ed has done a tremendous job in North Carolina using volunteers," said Boswell. Bullock led and enlisted many volunteer groups for the Foreign Mission Board while in North Carolina.

Bullock, who is also executive director of North Carolina Baptist Men, is a graduate of Wake Forest University, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been pastor of two North Carolina churches.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Thailand Refugee Work  
To Receive \$315,000

Baptist Press  
5/13/81

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--As part of a continuing response to refugee needs in Thailand, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has appropriated \$315,000 for basic relief efforts through 1981 and to assist Burmese refugees and Thai families displaced by fighting along the Cambodian border.

Hunger funds amounting to \$200,000, plus \$50,000 in general relief funds, will be used in Cambodian and Vietnamese refugee camps. The Thailand Baptist Mission is the lead agency in Kamput, a camp of approximately 17,000 Cambodians, and has key support roles at another Cambodian camp and two Vietnamese boat camps with a combined population of more than 20,000.

Though not as much in the news now as a few years ago, Vietnamese boat people continue to arrive at camps along the Gulf of Siam. Hunger and relief funds are used at the two camps where Baptists work to provide food and "survival kits" for new arrivals. These kits contain cooking utensils, soap, toothbrushes, towels and other necessities.

Funds for the other camps will be used in feeding programs, hospital operation, vocational training and other projects.

Since January, baptisms have averaged 40 per week in the four camps. Because leaders believe many Cambodians will be returned to their own land, emphasis in the two Cambodian camps is on training these Christians before they return.

An agricultural development program will use \$35,000 in hunger funds to assist Thai people displaced by the war along the Thai-Cambodian border. Their homes and possessions were lost in the fighting and many found their land confiscated. Although the Thai government moved them a few miles back from the border and gave them some undeveloped land, they have no funds to get crops started.

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The Thailand Baptist Mission, with missionary Doug Ringer assuming primary responsibility, will help approximately 250 Thai families start cultivation of about 2,000 acres. The area chosen for the program has been one of the most responsive to the gospel in eastern Thailand. Many small groups of Christians exist in the area and leaders believe this effort will strengthen their witness and work.

Another \$30,000 in hunger funds will provide basic food supplies to hill tribe people who have crossed the border from Burma into Thailand. Over one-half of them are Christians and a great majority are Baptists, according to Earl Goatcher, refugee relief coordinator for the mission.

The appropriations were part of nearly \$400,000 in relief funds released by the Foreign Mission Board during April, pushing the total allocated so far this year 129 percent ahead of the amount allocated by this time last year, said John R. Cheyne, the board's relief ministries consultant.

The increase is significant, he said, because it represents an expansion of work, especially developmental projects, rather than a response to a major crisis.

Because Southern Baptist giving to relief causes has increased so dramatically—it almost doubled in 1980—Cheyne says it has been difficult to plan wise use of the money as rapidly as it has been given. But appropriations now are beginning to catch up with contributions.

Giving in 1981 is 15 percent lower than for the same period of 1980. He attributes the drop not to a decline in Southern Baptist interest in hunger and relief causes, but to the fact that there was no major crisis in the news, such as the Kampuchean (Cambodian) refugee crisis last year.

Cheyne said he has given attention to developmental projects on his trips to the field and that missions (organizations of Southern Baptist missionaries in each country) have become more sensitive to the possibilities of developmental work and are giving it more emphasis.

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HMB Makes Staff Changes,  
Appoints 54 to Missions

Baptist Press  
5/13/81

ATLANTA (BP)—Home Mission Board directors elected a new staff member in mass evangelism, approved changes in responsibilities for two other staffers and appointed 54 people to mission posts during their May meeting.

Richard H. Harris was named associate director of the mass evangelism department. James N. Lewis Jr. was elected assistant to the vice president of the missions section. Jerry B. Graham was named associate director of the church extension division.

Approved were eight missionaries, 16 missionary associates and 30 persons who were granted language and church pastoral assistance.

Harris will come to the board from Burgin Baptist Church, Burgin, Ky., where he has been pastor since 1977. He was pastor of Maxey Baptist Church, Paris, Texas, 1973-1977, and he is a graduate of Cumberland College, Eastern Kentucky State University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He will join the board June 27.

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Lewis will move to the missions section post from the language missions division, where he has been assistant director, 1975-1979, and associate director, 1979-1981. He has been minister of youth for churches in Tennessee and Kentucky, pastor of North Fork Baptist Church, Frankfort, Ky., and director of work with internationals for the Baptist Convention of Maryland. Lewis is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His move will be effective May 15.

Graham will switch to the church extension division from the missionary personnel department, where he has been associate director since 1978. He was associate director of the board's associational administration service, 1976-1978, and he has been director of missions for Baptist associations in Maryland and pastor of churches in Texas and Virginia. Graham is a graduate of the University of Corpus Christi and Southwestern and Southern seminaries. He will change jobs June 1.

Named missionaries were George and Gwen Arthur of Dexter, Mo.; Walter and Shirley Grindstaff of Phoenix, Ariz.; David Powell Holden III and Connie Holden of Kansas City, Mo.; and Jim and Jan McDowell of Forrest City, Ark.

Appointed missionary associates were Duane Cook of Castle Hayne, N.C.; Michael and Carla Dixon of Louisville, Ky.; David and Jeanette Heydt of Rochester, Minn.; Patty Lamb of Fort Worth, Texas; Lester and Donna Meriwether of Mill Valley, Calif.; Norris and Carolyn Norman of Fort Worth, Texas; Don and Martha Tenan of Bedford, Texas; John and Delma Wilkes of La Vale, Md.; and Joe and Rosa Lee Wiggins of Ardmore, Okla.

The Arthurs will move to Maryland, where he will be director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association. He is a graduate of Wayland Baptist College and Southwestern Seminary, and has been pastor of churches in Texas and Arkansas. He also has been director of missions for Cane Creek-Stoddard Baptist Association in Missouri.

The Grindstaffs will remain in Arizona, and he will be director of missions for River Valley Baptist Association. He has been pastor of churches in Illinois, Texas, Iowa and Arizona, and is a graduate of Southeastern (Okla.) State College and Southwestern Seminary.

The Holdens will move to New Orleans, La., where he will become assistant director of Friendship House, a Christian social ministries center.

He has been an HMB summer missionary and missionary associate and pastor of churches in Missouri.

The McDowells will relocate in Salem, N.C., where he will be Christian social ministries director for Pilot Mountain Baptist Association. McDowell has been a social worker and pastor of churches in Kentucky. He is a graduate of Memphis State University and Southern Seminary.

Cook was appointed to serve with his wife, Marsha, who is Christian social ministries director for Wilmington (N.C.) Baptist Association. He is minister/director of Cape Fear Gospel Rescue Mission in Wilmington.

The Dixons will move to Lanai, Hawaii, and he will be a church planter apprentice. He is a graduate of Ashland Community College, the University of Kentucky and Southern Seminary, and has been a social worker and childcare worker. He served in the Peace Corps in Costa Rica and Colombia.



The Heydts will remain in Rochester, where he is chaplain at hospitals served by the Mayo Clinic. He has been pastor of churches in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey and South Carolina and a chaplain intern in South Carolina. Heydt is a graduate of Lancaster Bible College, Grace College and Burton Theological Seminary.

Lamb will become a church planter apprentice and relocate in Lake City, Pa. She has been a summer church planter in New Mexico and music director for churches in South Carolina. She is a graduate of Baptist College at Charleston and Southwestern Seminary.

The Meriwethers will stay in the Bay Area of California. He will be the Christian social ministries field consultant in literacy missions for the western part of the United States. A graduate of Louisiana State University and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, he has been youth director for churches in Louisiana and California and associate pastor in Louisiana.

The Normans will move to Salmo, British Columbia, Canada, and he will be a church planter apprentice. He has been a school teacher in Tennessee and a field representative for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He is a graduate of the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma and will graduate from Southwestern Seminary this month.

The Tenans will relocate in Bradford, Pa., where he will be a church planter apprentice. A graduate of Angelo State University and Southwestern Seminary, he has been a sales manager for a department store.

The Wilkes couple will work in Rawlings, Md., and he will be a church planter apprentice. He has been a chaplains assistant in the U.S. Army and a minister of music and youth for churches in Alabama. He is a graduate of Mobile College and Southwestern Seminary.

The Wiggins couple will move to New Mexico, and he will be pastor/director of Baptist Neighborhood Center in Albuquerque. Wiggins has been pastor of churches in Oklahoma since 1957, and he has been director of special ministries for Enon Baptist Association in Oklahoma.

Approved for language pastoral assistance were Charles Leroy and Betty Alexander of Denver, Colo.; Pedro and Cecilia Rodriguez of Los Angeles, Calif.; Oscar and Lydia Sanchez of Mill Valley, Calif.; Moses and Marilyn Valdes of Immolakee, Fla.; and Sam and Ann Young of Denison, Iowa.

Granted church pastoral assistance were Wesley Clark Cobb Jr. and Anita Cobb of Gallup, N.M.; Thomas and Sharon Fishell of Roscommon, Mich.; Daniel and Sandra Forsee of Wilmington, Del.; Mike and Helen Hicks of North Pole, Alaska; and Bill and Roma Johnson of Palmetto, Ga.

Also Billy and Rostell Lynch of Vernon, N.J.; Gary and Darlene Maroney of Westlake, La.; Jim and Jimmie Smith of Ruffs Dale, Penn.; John and Cynthea Stair of Indiana, Pa.; and Art and Marlene Wells of Wartburg, Tenn.

In other matters, HMB directors accepted resignations from three board staffers.

Charles Hancock, director of the personnel development department, will move to California and enter private counseling practice. Hubert Hurt, director of transcultural outreach, will join the Florida Baptist Convention as director of its language missions department. Kirk Hadaway, data development researcher, will join the staff of the Center for Urban Church Studies in Nashville.

Historic SBC Manuscript  
Discovered at Foreign Board

By Erich Bridges

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—A historic manuscript recording the birth and pioneer years of the Southern Baptist Convention has been discovered in the archives of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The manuscript—the original, handwritten book of minutes of the convention from 1845 to 1863—will be presented by Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks to the Southern Baptist Historical Commission in a special ceremony during the June 9 - 11 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Los Angeles.

Printed proceedings of all the early conventions are contained in Southern Baptist Convention archives, but Lynn May, executive director-treasurer of the Historical Commission, said he knows of no other handwritten or typed minutes from the period.

Authenticated by the Historical Commission and the Virginia Baptist Historical Society, the manuscript is the earliest known record of the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention at Augusta, Ga., in May 1845. It also contains the rules of order, preamble and original constitution of the convention, drafted and approved by messengers in Augusta.

Kirke White, Foreign Mission Board records manager, uncovered the manuscript while reorganizing board archives last fall. "I found this old, dirty brown volume, and I just assumed it was old Foreign Mission Board minutes," White said. "But as I looked inside, I began to realize that it was an SBC document."

The minutes partially fill a large, thick ledger book. Within the crumbling covers, iron gall ink (commonly used then) records the first two decades of the convention.

The first four years of convention proceedings, 1845-49, were apparently transcribed from older, handwritten notes, since the ledger book itself was not obtained until 1849. A resolution adopted that year, found on page 41 of the minutes, directs the convention secretaries to "obtain a suitable book, and have recorded, in a fair hand, the proceedings of the meeting which organized this convention, and all the minutes of its meetings. . . and that said book be placed under the care of the Foreign Mission Board."

That explains the location of the book at the board. What remains a mystery is why the minutes end, literally in mid-sentence, in 1863. White speculates that the havoc and confusion created by the Civil War may account for the lapse. After the 1863 gathering in Augusta, the convention did not meet again until 1866.

"I'm excited by this record, and I'm excited that we discovered and identified it," White said. "It's more than history. It points up the intent of the forefathers when they came together, the priority they placed on missions."

He stressed the preamble of the constitution, which states in part: "We, the delegates. . . met in convention in the city of Augusta, Georgia, for the purpose of . . . organizing, combining and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort for the propagation of the gospel. . . ."

Such statements "reflect the mission base from which we started," said May. "I hope we can keep the focus on that."

The manuscript, which has suffered some water damage and mold growth, is being cleaned and rebound in calfskin. It will be placed in the convention archives, housed at the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn., following the Los Angeles presentation. Microfilm copies will be stored at the Historical Commission offices, the Foreign Mission Board and the Virginia Baptist Historical Society.