



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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81-174

Northern Plains To Sponsor New Wyoming Convention

GREAT FALLS, Mont. (BP)--Messengers to the annual meeting of the Northern Plains Baptist Convention agreed to sponsor one of its states--Wyoming--in its efforts to become a state convention.

The recommendation to sponsor the efforts of Wyoming Baptists to form a new convention was made by the Northern Plains Executive Board, after Wyoming churches met to formulate plans to move toward convention status.

Currently, plans are for Wyoming Baptists to constitute a convention by Jan. 1, 1984. Under Southern Baptist Convention guidelines, a state must have 50 churches and 12,500 members or 70 churches and 10,000 members in order to constitute.

The Northern Plains Convention currently is composed of churches in North and South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana.

Messengers also adopted a \$1,238,819 budget, of which \$554,824 will be contributed by the 158 churches and 54 church-type missions. Of the \$554,824, Northern Plains Baptists will contribute 17 percent--or \$94,320--to world-wide missions causes through the SBC unified budget, the same percentage as last year.

Roger Hill, pastor of First Baptist Church of Three Forks, Mont., was elected president.

Messengers also gave final approval to two constitutional changes. The first would limit executive board members to one four-year term, and require they be off the board for one year before re-elected. Currently, executive board members may serve two successive three-year terms.

The second change allows two messengers per church for each 50 members, or fraction thereof, and additional messengers for each 50 members or \$250 contributed through the Cooperative Program. Previously, messenger qualification was strictly on the basis of membership.

The 1982 meeting of the convention will be Oct. 27-28 at Baptist Temple in Mandan, N.D.

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High Court Affirms Ruling
On Religious Accommodation

By Larry Chesser

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11/10/81

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court left standing a ruling by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago upholding the constitutionality of a section of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requiring employers and unions to "reasonably accommodate" the religious beliefs of employees unless doing so would create "undue hardship."

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The Seventh Circuit's action upheld a ruling by U.S. District Judge Robert W. Warren of Eastern Wisconsin that Title VII provisions of the Civil Rights Act do not violate the First Amendment's no establishment clause.

Warren had ordered the reinstatement of a Wisconsin production worker, Darrel C. Nottelson, who was fired from his job with A. O. Smith Corp. when he refused on religious grounds to participate in the Smith Steel Workers Union. Nottelson is a member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church which teaches it is morally wrong to be a member of or pay dues to a labor union.

In requiring Nottelson's reinstatement as well as payment of actual and exemplary damages and attorney's fees, Warren ruled that Nottelson's proposal to pay a sum equivalent to union dues to a nonreligious, non-union charity could have been accommodated by the company and the union without undue hardship and therefore, both had violated Title VII provisions.

Attorneys for Smith asked the high court to rule on the question of constitutionality of the religious accommodation requirement, arguing in a written brief that the Seventh Circuit's ruling upholding the law was "clearly erroneous."

Attorneys for Nottelson argued that the court of appeals ruling was consistent with other circuit court decisions and that Title VII does not violate the establishment clause but is an "accommodation of the free exercise clause." They also contended that the religious accommodation requirement involves only a "minimal" and not "excessive" entanglement between church and state.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which granted Nottelson a "right-to-sue" letter in July 1975, intervened on his behalf at the Seventh Circuit and Supreme Court.

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West Virginia Elects
First Woman Officer

Baptist Press
11/10/81

FAIRLEA, W. Va. (BP)--West Virginia Baptists elected their first woman officer and heard encouraging first-year reports of the Mountain State 200 drive.

Velma Caldwell, Bluefield housewife and former state Woman's Missionary Union president, was elected second vice president of the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists, the first woman to be elected an officer of the 11-year-old convention.

Messengers re-elected Charles Whitlock, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Fairmont, as president, and elected Cledith Campbell Jr., pastor of Altizer Baptist Church, Huntington, first vice president.

Missions director Floyd Tidsworth told the 331 messengers and visitors the convention's goal of doubling the number of congregations by 1985 is on schedule. He said 21 congregations were started in 1981 by the combined Mountain State 200 efforts of West Virginia and North Carolina Baptists.

North Carolina is cooperating in a sister convention relationship and sent 138 groups into West Virginia in the last year for backyard Bible clubs, vacation Bible schools, church building projects and other mission efforts. Southern Baptists established congregations in three West Virginia counties that previously had no SBC congregation.

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Messengers adopted a 1982 budget of \$900,118, including \$417,232 anticipated income from West Virginia churches. Of that, 25.5 percent will be forwarded to national Southern Baptist Convention causes, an increase of one-half percent over last year.

A resolution tabled last year that supported SBC President Bailey Smith in the midst of furor resulting from Smith's remarks concerning God's not hearing the prayers of Jews, was left tabled at this meeting in favor of another.

The new resolution quotes biblical passages citing Jesus as the "only mediator between God and men" and says "salvation (is) by faith through Jesus only."

It goes on to "support Dr. Bailey Smith as he has provided dynamic leadership in the field of evangelism, as he has stood firmly committed to the inspired Word of God and as he has challenged Southern Baptists worldwide to make Bold Mission Thrust a reality."

The 1982 convention will be Nov. 5-6 at Grace Baptist Church in Parkersburg.

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Evangelism Thread
In Northeast Blanket

Baptist Press
11/10/81

STROUDSBURG, Pa. (BP)--Evangelism is the common chord which can bring five Southern Baptist bodies in the northeastern United States together for a massive Bold Mission Thrust project in 1982-85, according to participants at an area planning meeting in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains.

Almost 100 Southern Baptists from the Northeast including pastors, laity and associational and state leaders gathered in Stroudsburg, Pa., to plan a cooperative Bold Mission Evangelistic Thrust to "reach multitudes of lost people, revive church members, and strengthen existing congregations." Conference participants, led by Albert McClellan, retired associate executive director of the SBC Executive Committee, also sought methods through which the five Baptist bodies can work together to give 60 million people in the northeastern United States the opportunity to hear and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Southern Baptist bodies in the Northeast include the Baptist Convention of Maryland (Maryland and Delaware), organized in 1836; District of Columbia Baptist Convention (Washington, D.C.) organized in 1877; Baptist Convention of New York, organized in 1969; Pennsylvania-South Jersey Baptist Convention, organized in 1970; and the Baptist General Association of New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont), a fellowship affiliated with the Maryland convention. Baptists in New England expect to organize as a state convention in 1984 or 1984.

During the two-day Pennsylvania meeting, representatives of the five Baptist bodies formulated plans for Northeast Thrust, a Bold Mission project which calls for a cooperative evangelism emphasis. One possible project is simultaneous evangelistic events to be conducted throughout the Northeast in 1984.

In an area with approximately 60 million population, Southern Baptists claim only 136,979 resident church members. This 0.02 percent of the total population meets in 601 Southern Baptist churches. Sixty-seven counties in the area, with a population of 5,338,700, have no SBC-affiliated church or mission.

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The proposed Northeast Thrust had its beginnings two years ago when convention executive directors met to discuss ways the five groups could work together. Evangelism directors from the area then helped formulate a concerted effort to reach across state convention borders in a dramatic display of cooperation to evangelize 60 million people.

The Pennsylvania meeting was called to continue the planning process and allow input from Southern Baptist leaders in the area. Information gathered will be compiled into a single document for further planning of Northeast Thrust projects.

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Home Missions Officials Urge
Ministry To Poor, Refugees

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
11/10/81

PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--Officials of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board urged ministries to the poor, the hungry and the refugees of life in America during Home Missions Experience at Louisiana College.

Home Missions Experience is an annual week-long emphasis sponsored by the Home Mission Board at one of the 46 Baptist senior colleges or universities in the nation.

The week began with a plea from Nathan Porter, the board's domestic hunger consultant, calling for Baptists to minister to the poor and hungry in America, and ended with a call from Wendell Belew, director of the missions ministries division, to reach out to the refugees of life.

Porter pointed out there are more than 1 billion hungry and starving people in the world, "but the most shocking and scandalous truth is that poverty and hunger exists in the land of plenty in the midst of wealth."

"People are hungry in America, however, not because of scarcity of food but because they are too poor to buy the food that is available," he asserted.

To most middle-class Americans, the poor and hungry are hidden from view, so the majority refuse to acknowledge they exist, said Porter.

"We who are middle class never get off our expressways of life to see the people who are poor and hungry," he added.

Belew, looking at the number of refugees in America today, said there is another type of "refugee" who seems to be constantly moving to find meaning in life. Most Americans, he said, are refugees in the broadest meaning of the word.

"We need to move into the world to care with the hurt of the people," Belew challenged. "We need to move out of the comfort of our middle-class houses, down into the ghettos and out into the streams of all kinds of lostness as Christian refugees chosen to proclaim good news to the brokenness of society."

Belew pointed out the Southern Baptist Convention has become the most diverse and the most integrated denomination in America. He said there are more Spanish-speaking Baptist churches in the United States than in the rest of the world, three times as many Vietnamese Baptist churches in America as there ever were in Vietnam, and 700 black congregations with 275,000 members. "The Holy Spirit has forced us to move across racial barriers," he said.

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Sam Choy, associate director of the missionary personnel, said Southern Baptists in the United States worship in 79 languages; yet this is not enough. There are still people of 50 other language groups in America in which Southern Baptists have no work, he said.

Jimmy Jones, pastor of First Baptist Church in Trenton, Mich., shared the struggles of his church in the Detroit metropolitan area where there has been a 36 percent reduction in the work force.

In the face of unemployment among church members, decrease in contributions and tremendous increases in utility bills, Jones' church voted to decrease their giving to the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget from 20 percent to 15 percent. But one week later the church reversed its decision.

"We learned that you can be a church and not pay your gas bill, and not have a building; but you can't be a church and not be missionary," Jones said.

As a result of that conviction, Jones said the church members rallied and gave \$10,605 in one Sunday to pay off their huge utility bill.

Also during the week, the Home Mission Board commissioned five missionaries, including one newly-appointed couple, Mike and Debbie Lee, who are evangelism interns in Southfield, Mich.

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Indiana Baptists Name
Constitution Study Panel

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11/10/81

MARION, Ind. (BP)--Messengers to the annual meeting of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana commissioned a study of their constitution as they met in Sunnycrest Baptist Church.

The study of the basic document was recommended by parliamentarian Darrell Diamond, an attorney from Lafayette, who said updating was needed.

An amendment to instruct the committee to specifically study placing the Indiana Baptist under a separate board, the method of hiring state staff and the method of electing executive board members was voted down by a two to one margin.

State convention president Frank Worthington, pastor of Ross Baptist Church in Gary, who was re-elected to a second term, appointed a five-member committee to study the constitution, naming Calvin T. Harvell, pastor of Grace Baptist Church of Evansville, as chairman.

Messengers approved a \$1,748,508 budget, of which \$1,240,000 will come from the 282 churches and 41 church-type missions. The budget provides that 31.5 percent--\$390,600--will go to support world-wide causes of the Southern Baptist Convention unified budget, the same percentage as last year.

The 1982 annual meeting will be at First Southern Baptist Church in Terre Haute, Nov. 9-11.

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