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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
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

June 17, 1982

82-90

SBC Evangelists

Avert Bitter Battle

By Patti Stephenson

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--After a marathon 12-hour session spiked with fiery preaching, boisterous singing and frequent calls for evangelists to "stand by God's inerrant word," the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists ended on a high note of harmony, averting a bitter battle which had threatened to divide the 350-member association.

Controversy which had festered in recent months over the issue of who should control the conference was resolved when members ratified by a three-to-one vote a new slate of bylaws transferring major responsibilities from the conference's executive director to its elected officers.

The vote on new bylaws was called after evangelist Sam Cathey of Hot Springs, Ark., pled with conference members to "refrain from tarnishing the unified spirit of our conference and eroding our credibility among our fellow Southern Baptists." His successful motion to vote without debate was later credited with "bathing this conference in a spirit of unity" by Jim Wilson, an Orlando, Fla., evangelist and newly-elected vice president CSBE.

The conference had also been troubled by charges accusing president Freddie Gage of Fort Worth, Texas, of manipulating the conference as a "political machine" to garner support for conservative causes centered around the issue of biblical inerrancy.

Gage responded by vowing to "fight liberalism until all the blood is drained from my body," and declared, "If you don't like Paige Patterson (president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas--a conservative leader), then I don't want to be in the same conference with you."

Patterson, along with fellow conservatives Adrian Rogers, former SBC president and pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., and Darrell Robinson, pastor, Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala., participated in the general session of the CSBE.

Rick Scarborough of Nacogdoches, Texas, elected to succeed Gage as president, described the conference's purposes as being "for fellowship and for speaking to issues concerning all evangelists." But he added, "Before we can shake this convention, we must allow God to shake us and we must make peace with each other."

Other officers elected include Rudy Hernandez of Dallas, secretary/treasurer; Lee Castro of Mt. Juliet, Tenn., music director; Lonnie Parsons of San Antonio, assistant music director; Harold O'Chester of Austin, Texas, pastor advisor; and Felix Snipes of Atlanta, parliamentarian.

The conference also recognized 17 veteran evangelists for "500 combined years in evangelism." Honored at a banquet led by newly-elected SBC president Jimmy Draper were Sam Allen of Lubbock, Texas; Hyman Appleman of Kansas City, Mo.; Porter Barrington of Thousand Oaks, Calif.; Clifton Brannon of Longview, Texas; G.P. Comer of Dallas; E.J. Daniel of Orlando, Fla.; Eddie Lieberman of Greenville, S.C.; Vance Havner of Greensboro, N.C.; Jessie Hendley of Decatur, Ga.; Eddie Martin of Lancaster, Pa.; Angel Martinez of Fort Smith, Ark.; Percy Ray of Myrtle, Miss.; Jack Stanton of Bolivar, Mo.; Steve Taylor of Greenville, S.C.; John Tierney of Greenville, S.C.; J. Oscar Wells of Bethany, Okla., and Grady Wilson of Montreat, N.C.

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Banquet speaker Bill Stafford, a Cleveland, Tenn., evangelist, declared, "I don't come to the Bible to find discrepancies, but to look for Christ."

Draper urged the evangelists to "pray that Southern Baptists get back on track to win our world for Christ," adding, "I'm certain we can find common ground."

The afternoon session, billed as an "old-fashioned, soul-winning revival" featured addresses by evangelists Larry Taylor of San Antonio; Manley Beasley of Euless, Texas; James Robison of Hurst, Texas, and J. Harold Smith of Orlando, Fla.

Taylor told a crowd of 3,200 at the New Orleans Hilton, "The real thing hurting us is not liberals but inconsistency in our own lives."

Robison labeled events at the ongoing Southern Baptist Convention here as a "sick mess," adding, "the average Baptist today thinks the Bible is just another leather-bound accessory instead of a war manual."

Smith preached on "three deadlines" persons cannot cross and still receive salvation, noting, "the men who are attacking God's Word are close to crossing the line."

The rally, punctuated by frequent standing ovations and shouted exhortations from the audience, closed with an extended invitation to which an estimated 200 persons responded.

Conference delegates also passed numerous resolutions, including a condemnation of "Christian rock-and-roll music as a medium for the gospel" and motions commending executive director Don Womack of Memphis, Tenn., Gage, and former vice president Ed Stalnecker of Jacksonville, Fla., for their contributions to the conference.

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Gene Garrison Named
Second Vice President

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Gene Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, was selected from a field of eight candidates as second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In the third runoff in as many elections, the convention messengers chose Garrison over Ann Cravens, messenger from Lakeside Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, and Norris Sydnor Jr., bivocational pastor of Riverside Baptist Church, Baltimore.

Garrison drew 52 percent of the 7,659 runoff votes (4,015), Cravens 27 percent (2,037) and Sydnor 21 percent (1,607).

In the first round of balloting, Garrison led all candidates with 31.6 percent of the vote (3,233). Sydnor was second with 17.9 percent (1,831) and Cravens, third with 16.8 percent (1,716).

Five other aspirants were eliminated on the first ballot.

Gene Watterson, pastor, First Baptist Church, Shelby, N.C., finished with 8.7 percent (894); Joe Lovelady, pastor, Edgewater Baptist Church, New Orleans, 8.5 percent (868); Robert E. Craig, president, Union University, Jackson, Tenn., 7.4 percent (757); Maylan Morley, a layman from First Baptist Church, Belle Plaine, Kan.; 7.2 percent (733), and Wayne Martin, pastor, First Baptist Church, Texas City, Texas, 2.4 percent (209).

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Amended Trustees
Report Adopted

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--An amended report of the Committee on Boards was adopted with virtually no opposition during closing sessions following an apparent compromise between representatives of the so-called conservative and moderate factions of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Earlier, three nominees to two boards were replaced in challenges of the report during heated debate.

Larry Lewis, president of Hannibal-LaGrange College, Hannibal, Mo., and a "conservative," moved that the convention vote to approve the amended report.

Lewis said he was joined in the motion by Kenneth Chafin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, a "moderate" who had nominated two replacements to the Sunday School Board in one of the successful challenges to the report.

Before the motion by Lewis and Chafin, further challenges had been expected.

Following approval of the report, newly elected SBC President James Draper of Euless, Texas, and Committee on Boards Chairman Dan Vestal of Midland, Texas, applauded the actions of Chafin and Lewis.

"I am surprised at this peaceful conclusion and feel this will help heal some wounds and let this convention end on a high note," Draper said.

Vestal said he was aware of negotiations but neither he nor the committee was involved. "I am pleased that the compromise came about to bring this decision process to a conclusion. The committee wrestled long and hard in its nominations--they were not decisions easily arrived at," Vestal said.

Lewis said he and Chafin got together and made the agreement "rather than turn this convention into a dogfight. My opinion is that 15,000 messengers cannot function as a committee of a whole."

Calling Lewis "a very reasonable man," Chafin said he was willing for debate to end so long as the two amendments approved by messengers were upheld.

Two nominees to the Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn., and one to the board of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., were replaced in challenges by Chafin and Vernon Davis of Alexandria, Va.

Don Dilday of Navasota, Texas, and J.C. Hatfield of San Antonio were elected to replace Harlon Caton of Spring, Texas, and Elton "Butch" Ikels of San Antonio as trustees of the Sunday School Board.

"When you put someone on the Sunday School Board it would be good if their church uses the literature of the board," said Chafin. "I have personally checked with both of these churches and both use other literature in their Sunday Schools."

Opposing Chafin's motion, James Moss, associate pastor of Spring Baptist Church where Caton is pastor, said the church does not use Southern Baptist literature "throughout our Sunday School." He said board materials were recently used in Vacation Bible School.

Davis nominated Christine Gregory of Danville, Va., to replace Eddie Sellers, Morganton, N.C., as a local member of Southeastern. In a ballot vote following a show of hands too close to call, the amendment to replace Sellers with Gregory passed by a vote of 5,242 to 4,485.

Baptists March For Peace,
Call For Nuclear Disarmament

By Michael Tutterow

NEW YORK (BP)--A Japanese Southern Baptist, a survivor of the atomic blast which devastated Hiroshima 37 years ago, has called for Southern Baptists to take a stand for peace and push for nuclear disarmament.

Fumako Amano, wife of a Baptist pastor in Japan, joined more than 750,000 demonstrators marching for peace to lend support to the United Nations special session on nuclear disarmament.

Other Southern Baptists present for the massive peace march echoed her sentiments. Members of New York's Metro Baptist Chapel called for Southern Baptists to increase support for a nuclear arms freeze.

Although plagued by internal injuries from radiation exposure, Amano survived the Aug. 6, 1945 atomic blast, the first time such a bomb was used. Her brother died 13 days later from injuries sustained in the blast; her father died several years later from the explosion's after effects.

Amano, with the assistance of her daughter as translator, explained she had come to New York to tell Southern Baptists about her experience and to help the denomination in educating members about the dangers of nuclear arms.

"She wants to help their (Southern Baptists') study of nuclear victims," said Amano's daughter. She thinks the United States should not make nor use nuclear weapons.

Amano added she simply comes to appeal "for peace and justice in the name of Jesus Christ."

Gene Bolin, pastor of Metro Baptist Chapel, said his involvement in the rally stemmed "from my call to Christian ministry. I have no alternative but to be here," said Bolin. "This is the gospel," because the good news is peace to all people on earth."

He lamented that nuclear holocaust "appears inevitable" unless the arms buildup is curtailed, and called Baptists to follow "the New Testament paradigm of Christ the prince of peace."

Steve and Gail Benfield, also members of the church and organizers of the Southern Baptist committee on conscientious objection, claimed Southern Baptist involvement "in this global issue is imperative."

Benfield said it is important symbolically for Southern Baptists, who represent typical middle Americans, to take a stand.

Benfield questioned whether Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust plan to proclaim the gospel to every person on earth by the year 2000 could continue effectively without the denomination addressing the nuclear arms issue. "As part of the Christian community, we cannot ignore this," he concluded.

"A growing awareness of what Christian citizenship means" prompted Richard Swindle, director of admissions for Mercer University (Baptist), in Atlanta, to participate in the rally. He joined 10 other students and faculty from the university for the 900 mile trek to New York City.

"I don't think the issue is just political or economic," Swindle said. "For me it is ultimately a spiritual issue. This is a survival issue--survival of the human race. When we talk about nuclear weapons there is nothing we can control. We've never dealt with the possibility of the destruction of the human race."

Swindle challenged Southern Baptists to "claim their heritage" on this issue by "again becoming involved in righting wrongs and seeing justice done."

Elias Golonka, Southern Baptist missionary to the United Nations, urged Southern Baptists to add "their strong voice to the millions of Christians around the world to stop arms production and the possibility of nuclear holocaust."

Golonka personally denounced the United States policy of nuclear arms buildup, adding a freeze by both the Soviet Union and the United States would lessen tensions between the superpowers and insure "security for the entire globe."

One of only an estimated several dozen Southern Baptists marching in the rally, Golonka called for increased denominational action on the disarmament issue.

"There is no place for war or the arms race in the kingdom of God," asserted Golonka. "As children of God, we ought to voice our opinion against war and take a definite stand for peace. We should not be silent."

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SBC Roundup

Conservatism Sweeps SBC
In Resolutions, Election

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Despite shifting tides from session to session, a wave of conservatism overflowed the 125th meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention at the New Orleans Superdome.

After electing a conservative president for the third time in five years, the 20,437 messengers intensely debated and then adopted resolutions endorsing a constitutional amendment on prayer in public schools encouraging the teaching of scientific creationism in public schools, and condemning abortion except when the life of the mother is endangered.

Conservative-backed candidate Jimmy Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, was elected president by a sizeable margin over Duke K. McCall, chancellor of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, supported by moderates in the SBC.

However, moderates controlled the election of first and second vice presidents and succeeded in replacing three agency trustee nominations by the committee on board's with nominees of their own.

Elected first vice president in a runoff with U.S. Congressman Albert Lee Smith Jr., of Birmingham was John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., an earlier candidate for president. Sullivan won 68 percent of the vote over Rep. Smith, who was elected to Congress in 1980 as a Moral Majority-backed Republican.

Elected on the second ballot as second vice president was Gene Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, with 52 percent of the votes.

Kenneth L. Chafin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church, Houston, led in challenging the committee on boards' nomination of two Texans, Harlon Caton of Spring, Texas (a suburb of Houston), and Elton "Butch" Ikels of San Antonio, as Sunday School Board trustees, saying their churches did not use church literature produced by the agency.

Although there is no requirement that they do so, Chafin argued "it would be good" if they did so if they were to serve as trustees of the agency that publishes SBC church literature.

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In a second successful challenge to the committee's nomination, Vernon Davis of Alexandria, Va., nominated Christine Gregory of Danville, Va., former president of Woman's Missionary Union, to replace Eddie Sellers of Morganton, N.C., on the board of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., arguing Virginia needed a local member on the seminary's board, but had never had one.

Conservatism dominated resolutions adopted by the convention, which for the first time since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down compulsory religious exercises in public schools 20 years ago, endorsed by a three-to-one majority a constitutional amendment supporting prayer in public school.

Adoption of the resolution came only two hours after hearing executive director James Dunn of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs charge that the school prayer amendment proposed by President Ronald Reagan "would uproot the First Amendment, radically alter the Bill of Rights, and put the government in the business of making decisions about religion." Dunn argued it would "give state sanction" to "Buddhist prayers in Hawaii, Mormon prayers in Utah, and Muslim prayers in the Bronx."

Bill McCormick, pastor of University Hills Baptist Church, Shreveport who authored the resolution, and Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, countered that the amendment would help prevent misinterpretation of U.S. Supreme Court decisions and permit prayer in schools as a step toward restoring morality in America.

A few minutes later, however, messengers voted by a two-to-one margin to table a resolution which would have censured Dunn for accusing President Reagan of despicable demagoguery, and "playing petty politics with prayer" in proposing the amendment.

After intense debate on a strongly worded resolution condemning abortion, the messengers voted to table the proposal only to revive it later and pass it.

While the convention had previously opposed abortion, the statement this year was the strongest ever, calling it "infanticide" and abhorring the use of tax money to support "selfish, medically unnecessary abortions."

Another motion referred to the Executive Committee would have given the state conventions the authority to nominate members to the committee on committees, rather than the convention president in consultation with the vice presidents. Still another motion referred for study would prohibit nomination of a trustee who has not resided at least one year in the state he or she would represent.

Both proposals appeared aimed at curtailing influence and power of conservatives who have controlled the convention presidency for the last four years, and at committee appointment of "inerrantists" who had only recently moved to their states.

Three of the five proposals referred to the Executive Committee for study, at the request of former Executive Committee executive director Porter Routh of Nashville, had been pushed by SBC "moderates."

Almost all of the motions presented from the floor of the convention were referred to the Executive Committee for study and report next year.

Others referred included proposals to make the SBC first vice president responsible for organizing prayer support for the annual convention, drafting a "Bill of Rights" for cooperating churches in the SBC, and studying the best possible utilization of seminary-trained ministers who have not found places of service in the denomination.

Convention messengers rejected on second reading a proposed constitutional change that would have required the president, or one of the two vice presidents, to be an unordained lay person.

Throughout the convention, speakers and comments in discussions from the floor expressed unified belief in the Bible as the word of God, but no effort surfaced to change the wording of the Baptist Faith and Message statement on the Bible.

In the convention sermon, William E. Hull, pastor of First Baptist Church, Shreveport, drew loud applause when he declared, "Every Baptist I know believes everything the Bible teaches about itself."

In his strongest statement as SBC President, Smith said in the president's address the Bible is "the holy, infallible, inerrant Word of God," calling messengers to kneel in a prayer of commitment.

"The day we quit having loyalty to this great book, we shall cease being a great denomination," Smith declared.

Draper, the new president, rejected in his first news conference any alliance with conservatives who have sought to control the convention in recent years and emphasized a desire to promote communication between conservative and moderate elements of the convention.

Draper restated his support for a constitutional amendment on prayer in public schools, endorsing the stance taken later by the convention-adopted resolution.

Major inspiration during the three-day meeting came during the reports of the Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board, and plans by the Sunday School Board and Radio-Television Commission to proclaim the gospel throughout the nation and world, using satellite television with the creation of new ACTS and Baptist TelNet television systems.

The convention voted to meet in St. Louis, Mo., June 16-18, 1987, and selected James L. Pleitz, pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas, to preach the convention sermon in 1983 in Pittsburgh. (By Jim Newton)

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CORRECTION--In (BP) story mailed 6/16/82 "Some Missionaries Make Plans To Leave Lebanon," please combine first two paragraphs to read:

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--Some of Southern Baptists' 16 missionaries in Beirut, Lebanon, have made plans to leave the country, but they do not know when or how they will be able to leave, according to Isam Ballenger, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for Europe and the Middle East.

Also, in seventh paragraph please add rephrase the sentence to say the FMB "released \$15,000 in hunger relief funds and \$15,000 in general relief funds for Lebanon on June 15."

Thanks,

Baptist Press