



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 12, 1982

82-162

### Christine Gregory Elected President of Virginia Baptists

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (BP)—Christine Gregory, former president of the Woman's Missionary Union and first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention 1980-81, has been elected president of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Not only is she the first woman to be chosen to head the BGAV but she was unopposed in the balloting. Virginia is the third SEC convention to elect a woman as president (Washington D.C., and Nevada were the others).

In other key action the messengers called for the Executive Committee of the SEC to convene a special meeting of the committee for the purpose of "finding and implementing solutions" to the "polarization and open factionalism" currently taking place in the convention.

The resolution commended SEC President James T. Draper Jr. "and others" for their efforts to solve "this potentially self-destructive" problem which is "obscuring the Baptist witness" for Christ. The messengers noted that one group within the convention had "openly announced" its intention to control the boards and agencies of the convention and was in the process of gaining such control.

Calling for "heroic measures by persons in positions of leadership" in the convention, the BGAV requested that the special meeting of the executive committee submit recommendations to the annual SEC meeting in Pittsburgh in June 1983, to correct "flaws in the system" that allow takeover attempts and to "encourage participation of all viewpoints in the deliberations and actions of the convention."

Copies of the resolution were sent to the officers of the SBC, the officers of the Executive Committee and to all other Baptist state conventions asking them to take similar actions in their conventions.

The convention adopted a \$12,025,000 budget for 1983 and designated 37 percent of that amount to be sent to worldwide mission causes at the national SEC level. This was a one percent reduction from 1982 when Virginia sent 38 percent to world causes.

The reduction was attributed to financial woes of the BGAV's retirement homes and a need to concentrate funding in that area.

Messengers also made an adjustment on a controversial procedure adopted last year that made a church's gifts to the Cooperative Program (the SEC's unified giving plan) the sole criteria for determining how many messengers each church is allowed at the state convention.

Churches will now be allowed "negative designation" which means they may say which BGAV agencies they do not want their gifts to support and that stipulation will be honored. In the past such gifts would not have been counted as a Cooperative Program contribution.

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"It is the most unifying thing we could have done," John Ivins, director of the division of general promotion for the BGAV said. "We have had several churches withholding their Cooperative Program gifts because they disagreed with a specific agency—one of them withheld about \$70,000 this year. Now churches can participate in the parts of the program they desire."

By resolution the convention opposed "any constitutional admendment that deals with prescribed or prepared prayer in public schools."

Messengers overwhelmingly voted down an anti-abortion resolution that urged unwed mothers to consider having their babies and putting them up for adoption. The defeated resolution was presented by an individual messenger after the resolution committee declined to report it out to the convention. Arguments against the resolution were centered on the "extreme language" and the fact that the resolution did not allow for abortion even in cases of rape and incest.

A Christian Life Committee report that urged churches to be supportive of pastors who have undergone divorce and to have "compassion and understanding" was accepted by the convention without opposition.

Nearly 1,700 messengers registered for the 159th meeting of the BGAV at First Baptist Church, Alexandria, and visitors pushed the attendance to over 3,000.

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Texas Baptists Avoid  
Lingering Controversies

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press  
11/12/82

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas (BP)—Texas Baptists, in their annual convention, dealt with issues such as drunken driving, abortion, school prayer and homosexuality but put aside theological and political controversies of recent years.

The meeting was sombered when James Landes, who is retiring this year after nine years as executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, collapsed at a reception in his honor. After shaking "about 2,000 hands," the 70-year-old Landes fell to the floor and was rushed to a hospital. Tests results were negative but Landes spent two days in the hospital recovering from "exhaustion."

The 3,500 messengers and visitors from many of the state's 4,000 Southern Baptist churches announced clear intentions to commit themselves to reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus in this century. They underscored their mission concerns by adopting a \$50 million budget for the convention's Cooperative Program of world missions support. More than a third of the budget (35.9 percent) will go to help support the work of 6,000 missionaries in the United States and 100 foreign countries, said D. L. Lowrie, convention president. The remainder will help support 23 Texas Baptist institutions and other state missions work.

Last year Texas sent 35.7 percent of its budget to worldwide SEC mission causes.

Lowrie, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lubbock, was re-elected by acclamation to a second one-year term as president. Messengers elected John D. Morgan, pastor of Sagemont Baptist Church, Houston, as first vice president and Fred Roach, president of Centennial Homes, Dallas, as second vice president.

Texas Baptists were urged by Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr., Euless, to avoid theological controversies. "It doesn't matter what theological position a man holds if he doesn't have the message the world needs," Draper said. "That message is Jesus Christ. We live in a day of crisis but the greatest crisis facing Texas Baptists is a spectator mentality. We're got to get out of our buildings and into the streets and into contact with people."

Lowrie warned that without a "magnificent obsession for missions" Baptists will invite mediocrity and death to the denomination. He said he wants to help lead in a Texas-wide evangelistic partnership with Mexico and Baptist's efforts to reach the heart of Texas' intercities for Christ.

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A black pastor enlarged on that theme. "America's destiny will be shaped by the cities. What is happening in the cities will soon be happening in the suburbs," said E.V. Hill, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Los Angeles. "The communists, organized crime and cults know that. They are in the cities," he said. Hill said Jesus weeps, not because the cities have rejected Him, but because the cities have been turned down by evangelical Christians.

In resolutions the convention reaffirmed the Baptist stand for separation of church and state and opposition to "legislatively prescribed prayer." It also expressed concern about "the suppression of the free exercise of religion by some public institutions" and insisted voluntary meetings before or after classes or work hours for Bible reading and prayer should be permitted in public settings. The resolution also supported court action which seeks relief from present rulings which deny free exercise of religion in public schools and buildings.

Another resolution was on efforts of homosexuals to legalize homosexuality and win public acceptance. "The homosexual lifestyle is not normal or accepted in His (God's) sight and is indeed sin. But there is forgiveness through repentance," the resolution said.

Messengers reaffirmed the traditional BGCT stance on abortion, opposing it except in instances of rape or incest or where the mother's health is endangered.

A resolution on drunken driving called for the Texas legislature to pass laws to end the practice of deferred adjudication, to raise the legal drinking age to 21 and to prohibit the transport of open alcoholic beverages in vehicles.

Other resolutions urged Baptists to make ministry "to the suffering unemployed a vital part of our mission," to continue giving strong opposition to all forms of legalized gambling, to give priority to providing resources for family life and to support the American Christian television system being organized by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

Messengers also received a report from the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission which noted that Hispanics make up 21 percent of Texas' population and called for the admission of all children, including undocumented aliens, to public schools and called for fair wages and just working conditions for all people.

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October Storms Destroy  
Spanish Baptist Churches

Baptist Press  
11/12/82

JATIVA, Spain (BP)—Torrential rains and flooding lashed southeastern Spain in late October leaving at least 38 people, including a Baptist layman, dead and destroying three Baptist churches.

Floods caused by broken dams wrecked Baptist churches in the towns of Alcira, Carcagente and Sumacarcel. Baptist layman Jose Garcia of Sumacarcel suffered a fatal heart attack Oct. 20, as he and his wife sought refuge in a cave when the town was evacuated. The husband of another member of the Sumacarcel congregation also died during the flooding.

Twenty Baptist families in Alcira and Sumacarcel were among more than 100,000 people left homeless. Spanish Baptists nationwide quickly responded by sending truckloads of food and clothing to stricken areas. The Baptist church in Jativa became headquarters for distribution of relief supplies. A number of homeless families were taken into homes of church members in undamaged towns.

Groups of laymen worked daily to clear mud and debris from damaged structures and the Woman's Missionary Union of the Jativa church organized work teams to clean walls and floors.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board released \$30,000 in hunger and general relief funds Nov. 10 for food, temporary shelter, cleaning and reconstruction costs in damaged communities of the region.

Renewed rain and wind storms pounded Spain and southern Europe again Nov. 7-9, taking at least 35 more lives and leaving 13 missing and presumed dead.

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ASEC Focus On  
'God's Challenge'

By Elizabeth Young

TUCSON, Ariz. (BP)—Messengers to the 54th annual meeting of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention quickly handled convention business and turned their attention to the meeting's theme "God's Challenge: Reaching Arizona for Christ."

The only ballot vote taken was during the election of the convention president, Clark Johnson, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Flagstaff. Johnson was elected first vice president last year and succeeded Charles Pollard, former pastor of Twenty-second Street Baptist Church in Tucson, as president when Pollard moved out of state last August.

J. Truman Webb, pastor of First Baptist Church, Florence, also nominated for the presidency, was elected first vice president without opposition. Also elected by acclamation were Tommy Foster, pastor of First Baptist Church, Winflow, second vice president and Eugene Birt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Sun City, recording secretary.

The 456 messengers adopted a record \$3.4 million budget marking a 12.5 percent increase over 1982. The budget figure is based on total unduplicated funds expected to pass through the convention office in 1983, including designated offerings and some designated for Grand Canyon College and Arizona Baptist Children's Services. In keeping with the five-year plan adopted by the AFBC executive board 25.75 percent of the budget will go to Southern Baptist Convention causes, a .25 percent increase over 1982.

Messengers unanimously adopted 13 resolutions with no discussion other than a motion for one amendment. Three resolutions dealing with the use of alcohol called for the raising of the legal drinking age to 21, praised Governor Bruce Babbitt and the state legislature for passing a drunk-driving bill and expressed concern for the use and abuse of alcoholic beverages.

Other resolutions urged churches to set goals and participate in the Baptist Sunday School Board's 8.5 by '85 enrollment emphasis, urged the state convention to assist churches in starting 50 new church-type missions in 1982-83, encouraged churches and associations to help existing struggling churches and asked the state convention to help churches develop ministries to single adults. Resolutions also expressed concern for the economic condition of the United States and for the state of the family, urged prayer for the nation's leaders and condemned pornography.

Jack Johnson, executive director-treasurer of the ASEC, presented projections for each ASEC department for the remainder of this decade and said the goals are "attainable if we make any kind of effort for Jesus."

He warned that as the convention sets priorities to reach its goals the programs, organizations and efforts that are not working will have to be abandoned. "We can't do today's programs on yesterday's structures," he said.

Johnson challenged the churches in the convention to start 300 church-type missions in the next seven years and to begin by starting 50 each year for the next three years.

The Sunday School is the starting point for new work and building a church, Johnson said. "Unless you get people enrolled in Bible study, I'm not sure you've enlisted them into much," he said. In the convention sermon Roy Fisher, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Scottsdale, challenged Arizona Southern Baptists to wake up, work and watch because the night is far spent. "We've got to wake up to the importance of Bible study," he said. The study of God's word is top priority and that's why we need the Sunday School."

The 1983 annual meeting will be Nov. 8-10 in Phoenix.

Capps Receives  
ABTS Mullins Award

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—George E. Capps Jr., associate executive director of the Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, has received the first E.Y. Mullins Human Relations award from the American Baptist College of the American Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS).

ABTS is a predominantly black school sponsored jointly by the Southern Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A., Inc. for the training of ministers and church-related workers.

The award honors Mullins, former president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and the Southern Baptist Convention (1921-24), who was instrumental in the founding of American Baptist Theological Seminary. Odell McGlothian, Sr., ABTS president, said the award committee searched for someone who embodied the spirit of Mullins and shared his dream for the institution.

Capps' service to American Baptist Theological Seminary has been unmatched, McGlothian said. "He is a man with both a vision and a dream. His vision of this institution is that it will grow in enrollment, quality and relevancy."

Prior to joining the staff of the Education Commission in 1975, Capps, a native of Talladega, Ala., served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Cookeville, Tenn., for 14 years. He has also pastored churches in Parsons, Tenn., and Fordache, La. He and the former Betty Tipler of Grand Junction, Tenn. have three children, John, Linda and Paul.

The E.Y. Mullins Human Relations award will be given annually to a Southern Baptist who has demonstrated outstanding qualities in human relationships.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Baptist Press

Northwest Convention  
Elects Spokane Pastor

Baptist Press  
11/12/82

PORTLAND, Ore. (BP)—Messengers to the 35th annual meeting of the Northwest Baptist Convention elected a Spokane, Wash., pastor as president in sessions described as "the quietest in years."

James T. Draper Jr., SEC president, spoke twice at the convention and reiterated his conviction that inerrancy, liberalism and political control of the denomination are not the most serious crises facing the denomination. He identified the lack of concern, conviction and commitment as the primary problems plaguing Southern Baptists.

The election of Frank L. Barnes, pastor of Pines Baptist Church, Spokane, for 21 years, did, however, draw considerable interest from the record number of messengers. Nine men were nominated for president and three ballots were required before Barnes was declared the winner.

The 600 messengers also approved a convention long-range plan submitted by a special committee emphasizing the fundamentals of growth and discipleship. Eleven new churches were approved for affiliation with the convention and a 1983 Northwest cooperative budget of \$1,325,000 was approved. The budget includes 32 percent forwarded to the SEC Cooperative Program, the same as last year.

Reflecting economic hard times in the Northwest, the budget is only five percent above the expected convention receipts for 1982 and is \$100,000 below the budget approved a year ago for 1982.

One constitutional proposal which drew debate would have allowed the convention's executive board to elect its own chairman. The messengers overwhelmingly approved an amendment which retains the present system of having the convention president also serve as board chairman. The 1983 convention will be held Nov. 8-10 in Eugene, Ore.