



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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83-161

Northern Plains Split Yields Wyoming Convention

CASPER, Wyo. (BP)--The Northern Plains Baptist Convention practiced multiplication by division at its 35th annual meeting Oct. 19-20.

Wyoming, one of four states in the Northern Plains convention, officially organized to become an separate convention Jan. 1. The Wyoming Southern Baptist Convention will be the 35th state convention cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Fittingly, the Northern Plains meeting was held at First Southern Baptist Church in Casper, which in 1952 became the first Southern Baptist church to be organized in the state of Wyoming. There were 375 messengers and visitors present.

North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana will continue to work together in the Northern Plains Baptist Convention, working toward the time when each has sufficient numerical and financial strength to support separate state organizations.

The birth of the Wyoming convention was the focus of the Northern Plains meeting. John Thomason, area director for Wyoming the past 18 months, was elected executive director of the Wyoming convention. Five other employees transferred from Northern Plains to Wyoming and two additional staff people have been hired for the new convention.

The Wyoming convention has 11,500 members in 60 churches.

The long-planned move puts a financial strain on Northern Plains since Wyoming has contributed approximately 50 percent of the budget for the four-state unit. As a result the Northern Plains budget for next year was slashed from \$520,000 to \$260,000 and the percentage sent to the national Cooperative Program was cut from 17 percent to 10 percent.

The cuts were more than made up, however, since the initial Wyoming budget is almost \$670,000, with 20 percent going to the national Cooperative Program.

The cut in Northern Plains giving to the national Cooperative Program was the only business item that stirred debate. "Our people really didn't want to have to cut our contributions," June Highland, executive assistant in the Northern Plains Convention said.

"But since we will lose half of our income but only transfer a third of our employees to Wyoming, the messengers reluctantly decided we had no choice."

Three pastors were elected officers of the Wyoming convention: Jerry Polk, B yd Avenue Baptist Church in Casper, president; Earl Wood, Calvary Baptist Church in Rock Springs, first vice pr sident, and Larry York, Big Horn Baptist Church in Buffalo, second vice president.

The Wyoming convention named its state mission offering after O.R. Delmar, first pastor of First Baptist Church of Casper and director of missions in the Casper area since 1968.

Northern Plains officers for the coming year, also all pastors, are: John Miller, Baptist Temple, Mandan, N.D., president; Richard Willoughby, Bethel Baptist Church, Billings, M nt., first vice president and Bill Agee, Mobridge (South Dakota) Southern Baptist Church, second vice president.

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Wyoming will hold its convention Nov. 14-15 at Sunnyside Baptist Church in Cheyenne. The Northern Plains convention meeting will be Oct. 24-25 at Calvary Baptist Church in Rapid City, S.D.

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Rabbi Urges Baptists To Send
Israel Missionaries To Africa

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
10/24/83

LITTLE SWITZERLAND, N.C. (BP)--A top official of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith urged Southern Baptists to "leave Jews alone" in Israel and send their missionaries instead to Africa or "anyplace in the world where people need the word of the Lord."

"I don't think we need you (missionaries) in Israel," said Rabbi Howard Singer, director of interreligious affairs for the ADL, during a Jewish-Baptist colloquium at Wildacres Retreat in the Blue Ridge mountains.

Singer said he resented Baptists' efforts to convert Jews to Christianity, stressing "I don't think Jews need Christianity--they need Judaism."

In the dialogue that followed, Baptist participants in the conference told Singer frankly and honestly he had overreacted and "come on too strong."

One Baptist participant, Carson-Newman College professor Clarence Watson, told Singer he had the feeling the Rabbi was "a Jewish evangelist trying to win us Christians to Judaism, and I didn't like it since my understanding of the purpose of this conference is for us to understand each other."

Singer apologized for possibly offending the Baptist participants, but observed the exchange did help to generate understanding among Baptists of how Jews feel.

Victor Dowd, pastor of Bessemer Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C., stressed there is a need for Baptists and Jews to share their faith with each other, but he was unaware of any Southern Baptist church in North Carolina with a program geared specifically toward reaching Jews.

Several participants in the dialogue, both Jewish and Baptists, pointed out the Christians involved in evangelistic efforts aimed specifically at Jews were not at the colloquium.

Ra Mangum, pastor of First Baptist Church, Blountstown, Fla., quipped Jews in Israel really didn't have anything to worry about. Southern Baptists have been working in Israel for more than 40 years and only have about 400 church members--most of them Arab.

Singer's comments came in the evening session after a morning presentation by Norman Lytle, Southern Baptist representative in Israel for 20 years.

Lytle gave a personal perspective on what it means to live and work in Israel as a Southern Baptist, and presented an overview of Baptist ministries in Israel.

Lytle said in a discussion period Baptists do not seek to "proselytize" Jews in Israel, but they do feel a responsibility to make available the gospel of Jesus Christ, not only in Israel, but in 100 other countries of the world. In Israel, "we don't knock on doors or preach in the streets," but Baptists are faithful in proclaiming the gospel to all who are interested.

Most of the four-day dialogue was spent discussing tensions in the Middle East from Baptist and Jewish perspectives. Lytle and Charles Kimball, a Southern Baptist scholar and interfaith director for the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Nyack, N.Y., spoke on Baptist perspectives, while Singer and Kenneth Jacobson, director of the department of Middle Eastern affairs for the ADL, presented Jewish viewpoints.

Jacobson, in a Jewish political perspective, stressed Israel strongly opposes return to the borders of Israel prior to 1967, saying "there can never again be a foreign army on this side of the Jordan River."

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He explained prior to 1967, the borders of Israel were only nine to 14 miles wide, and Israel cannot afford foreign troops stationed so close to key population centers.

Jacobson observed the Palestinian issue is not Israel's problem alone, but is a problem that must be solved by the whole region. Jordan, he claimed, has the highest responsibility of all because, in many ways, it is the state of Palestine.

The real war, he said, is not being fought in the Middle East but rather is a battle for public opinion in the United States.

Arabs believe if they can turn American public opinion against Israel, this can weaken Israel economically and diplomatically, making it possible to use military force at a later time, according to Jacobson.

He expressed regret there is no Arab statesman on the scene today who is willing to negotiate for peace like Anwar Sadat of Egypt. "If an Arab spokesman really looking for peace came forward, then the Israelis would make those decisions. But you can't expect Israel to make those decisions before there is an Arab peacemaker on the horizon."

Kimball, a Southern Baptist doctoral candidate at Harvard University, said establishing a homeland for four million Palestinians scattered throughout the Middle East is the most crucial and complex issue in Middle Eastern affairs.

The Palestinians, 15 percent of whom are Christians, have a clear national identity, yet are not welcome in any of the countries where they are now living. "The only viable solution without continued confrontation and conflict is a national homeland for them," Kimball said.

From a Christian perspective, Kimball called for negotiations based on the human rights of all people in the Middle East and for nonviolent solutions, arguing the problems cannot be solved by physical force or military might. Both Kimball and Singer said violence and military action should be used only as a "last resort."

Singer, in a presentation on Jewish attitudes toward war and peace, said contrary to current popular perceptions that Israel is a warrior state, throughout history Jews have hated war and have only been willing to fight when pushed to the point there is no other choice.

In another speech on Zionism, Singer observed most Christians make a terrible error in thinking Zionism is only secular and political. "It is a profoundly religious movement that has a political form."

Like the series of exiles and returns to the "Promised Land" recorded in the Bible, the return to Israel is to Jews a demonstration they are "God's chosen people" and have been forgiven by God for their past transgressions, Singer said.

About 25 Baptists and Jews attended the regional colloquium, jointly sponsored by the ADL and the interfaith witness department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Although both Singer and George Sheridan, regional director of the HMB's interfaith witness department, expressed disappointment in the number of participants, they agreed it was one of the best dialogues in the series of four such conferences held at Wildacres, a retreat center operated by the Blumenthal Foundation.

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Southwestern Trustees Elect Davis,
Fill Two Vice Presidential Posts

Baptist Press
10/24/83

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary elected Davis L. Cooper, pastor of the University Hills Baptist Church, Denver, Colo., as board chairman and filled two vice presidential posts during their annual meeting on campus.

W.J. Smith of Charlotte, N.C., was elected vice chairman, and John P. McNaughton of Fort Worth, Texas, was reelected secretary.

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The trustees also elected registrar Jeter Basden and business manager Hubert Martin as vice presidents; established a Chair of Prayer and Spiritual Formation; added a financial consultant to the president; approved sabbatical study leave for certain officers and administrators; added two degree plans and approved 17 course additions.

L. Jack Gray, professor of missions since 1956, was named the first occupant of the new Chair of Prayer and Spiritual Formation. It combines the 19 current courses offered at Southwestern with another dozen on spirituality, prayer and worship in the Bible being planned.

Basden will fill the newly created position of vice president for planning and research Nov. 1. The position replaces that of executive vice president which had been occupied by Lloyd Elder, president-elect of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Basden has been director of admissions and registrar since February 1981.

Martin, business manager since 1980, will succeed Wayne Evans as vice president for business affairs. Evans announced his retirement as of Jan. 31, 1984.

Evans will assume a consultant role as financial advisor to the president beginning Feb. 1, 1984. In his new role he will provide financial and investment data and counsel to the president and work with the Southwestern Baptist Seminary Development Foundation, Inc., in property acquisitions to complete the campus master plan.

The administrative study leave is not guaranteed, but is contingent on the value of the study proposal, ability of the seminary to cover work assignments and the availability of resources. Full salary and benefits will continue for the length of the leave, not to exceed six months, including personal vacation and engagement time, every seventh year. An individual must serve two years after any sabbatical leave, or pay back salary and benefits received during the leave.

The two degree plans added are the master of arts in church social services and the master of arts/master of science in social work.

The MA/MSSW degree will be an integrated plan with the University of Texas at Arlington. A student will be enrolled in both schools and will graduate from both schools upon completion of 82 required course hours. The MA(CSS) will require 66 course hours for graduation.

Course additions include one in the school of theology and 16 in the school of religious education, including six in the department of communications, seven in behavioral sciences and three in church social services.

The faculty in the school of theology has begun a restudy of the master of divinity degree, estimated to require two years to complete. "All facets of the curriculum and its relevancy for training ministers to serve in the last part of the 20th century will be included," said theology dean William Tolar.

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MK Marine, Chuck Register,
Not Among Lebanon Casualties

Baptist Press
10/24/83

NICOSIA, Cyprus (BP)--Marine translator, Chuck Register, son of Southern Baptist missionaries Ray and Rose Mary Register in Israel, was not among Marines or Navy men killed or injured in a blast that leveled a building for U.S. peacekeeping forces in Lebanon Oct. 23.

Finlay Graham, Foreign Mission Board associate for the Middle East, who lives in Nicosia, Cyprus, said Register had lived in the headquarters building where more than 160 soldiers died but moved to another building a few days earlier.

A Lebanese army lieutenant, who Graham said is a Christian, ate lunch with Register the day of the early-morning terrorist attack and called the Marine's family back in the States to assure them he was safe. Family members then called Register's parents in Nazareth.

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Special assignment workers, Steve and Miriam Fox, from Kettering, Ohio, who aided injured Americans after the blast which destroyed the American Embassy in Beirut in April, have been in regular contact with the embassy to determine how they and missionaries might minister during the latest crisis, Graham said.

"All our missionaries are safe," he added.

Graham said the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut opened a few days ago with nine students and international ministries of publication work in broadcasting for the entire Arab world are continuing. Even so, uncertainty of mail service has limited both, he said.

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Hamblen Named
Director Of Missions

Baptist Press
10/24/83

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (BP)--James V. Hamblen, associate director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Association Missions Division, has been named director of missions for Pilot Mountain Baptist Association, effective Nov. 16, 1983.

Hamblen, 49, joined the HMB associational missions staff in 1979 when he came to direct training for associational directors of missions and to coordinate Associational Strategy Planning processes.

As director of missions, Hamblen will coordinate support resources for the two-county area covered by Pilot Mountain association, as well as provide materials and training for the 74 churches in the association and coordinate cooperative ministries and activities.

Before joining the HMB staff, Hamblen was director of Southern Baptist Activities in Columbia, Md. He also was pastor of Columbia Baptist Fellowship, director of missions for Howard Baptist Association in Columbia, and a consultant in "new town" and metro planning. He also has been pastor of churches in Oklahoma, Texas and Maryland.

Hamblen is a graduate of the University of Texas and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, and was a "Continuing Education Fellow" at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Va.

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CORRECTION--In (BP) story "Committee To Study Canadian SBC Membership Starts Work" mailed 10/20/83, in 21st paragraph, please change European Baptist Federation to European Baptist Convention.

Thanks,
Baptist Press
