



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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### Issues at 1984 SBC

Presidency, Key Reports  
Top Kansas City Agenda

By Dan Martin

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Selection of a new president tops the list of issues facing messengers at the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City, Mo., June 12-14.

While the choice of a person to succeed James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, as president of the 14.1 million member denomination tops the agenda, it probably is not the most volatile issue facing the estimated 18,500 messengers.

An item expected to draw extended--and possibly heated--discussion is the relationship of the SBC to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a nine-denomination coalition which has represented the SBC in Washington since the 1940s.

Two other issues expected are the role of the SBC in Canada, including whether the national convention will become international in scope, and an equally explosive issue: the role of women in the church, including ordination to the ministry and to the diaconate.

Resolutions generally draw discussion, and there will be a variety of statements, including positions on the role of the United States in Central America, abortion, homosexuality, national defense and the prayer amendment issue, including the equal access and religious freedom dimensions of the question.

Also, messengers will consider the report of the denomination's Committee on Boards, already a topic of controversy because of the nomination of inerrancy movement leader Paul Pressler of Houston to a term on the SBC Executive Committee.

PRESIDENCY--Six men have been mentioned as potential presidential candidates. A new president is necessary because Draper, first elected in 1982 and reelected in 1983, has served the two one-year terms allowed by the SBC Constitution.

Three men are the most likely candidates, according to convention watchers. They are John Sullivan, current first vice-president of the SBC and pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church of Shreveport, La.; Grady C. Cothen, recently retired president of the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn., and Charles Stanley, current president of the SBC Pastors' Conference and pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta.

Sullivan, 47, is the only man in recent history to serve back-to-back terms as first vice-president. He has publicly announced he will be nominated and has been endorsed by at least one state Baptist newspaper.

Cothen, 63, retired in February citing health reasons. After several months of rest, he reportedly appears ready to resume an active role in denominational life. He says "many persons" have talked to him about being nominated, and said he has "never refused the denomination or the churches any service I could render."

Stanley, 46, in late May told Baptist Press he is "seriously considering" allowing his name to be presented at the convention. He said he has been "prayerfully asking the Lord to give me direction. If I can be a help, I want to be, but at this point I just want to wait and see." A decision probably will not be made until the convention, he added.

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Three other persons are potential nominees: Edwin Young, past president of the Pastors' Conference and pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston; Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, and Adrian Rogers, who was a one term SBC president (1979-80) and is pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn.

Jackson, who said he probably won't even attend the Kansas City meeting, told the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger "someone is going to be elected before we get there," and added "a man can't be elected independently. He'd have to line up with one of the factions and I won't do it. So my candidacy is out of the question."

Stanley is widely regarded as the favorite of the inerrancy movement, while Cothen is seen as the candidate of the moderates. Sullivan is not identified with either group, and commented "it will be interesting to see if anyone can be elected anymore who is not strongly identified with a political faction."

BJCPA--Funding for the Public Affairs Committee, a SBC standing committee through which funding passes to the BJCPA, could be challenged during consideration of the SBC budget. Observers say the avenue likely will be to reallocate all or part of the \$450,000 SBC contribution to a "Southern Baptist presence" in the nation's capital.

The BJCPA and its executive director, James M. Dunn, have drawn increasing fire from conservative Southern Baptists in recent years for his style and for opposition to President Reagan's School Prayer Amendment. The Alabama Baptist Convention, during its annual meeting last fall, passed a resolution asking that funding be halted to the BJCPA.

CANADA--Following a 1983 effort to amend the SBC Constitution to include Canada in the geographical area encompassed by the SBC, a 21-member study committee was named to study the matter. It will report the constitution should not be changed, but that Southern Baptists should renew their efforts to help SBC-type churches in Canada and to evangelize the nation.

The Canadian Southern Baptist Conference, which met in early May, approved the report in a carefully worded statement. Many pastors and church leaders in Canada, however, expressed a desire to affiliate with the SBC. Rumors circulate the report will be amended and a renewed effort will be made to seat the Canadians as messengers, giving them full-fledged SBC status.

ROLE OF WOMEN--Turmoil has torn segments of the convention over the ordination of women as deacons and ministers. At least two associations disfellowshipped churches with ordained women. One of the churches was First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, of which Gene Garrison, former second vice-president of the Convention, is pastor.

The debate has heated up, with factions taking opposing sides and citing scripture as justification. Early rumors circulated an effort would be made to refuse seating to churches which ordain women, but the battle apparently will be fought through resolutions.

COMMITTEE ON BOARDS--Pressler's nomination is the most controversial, but other names on the report also have drawn criticism. The report includes 215 nominees--103 renominations and 112 new trustees--to serve on the convention's 20 national agencies.

The president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, C. Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, has said he will present a substitute nomination for the Pressler slot.

Another protest will be heard by the committee from Richard Eskew, pastor of First Baptist Church of Yadkinville, N.C., who was eligible for a second full term on the Home Mission Board but was not nominated.

Rumors are circulating challenges will be made to some nominees from Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina. A leader of the inerrancy movement, however, said if the challenges develop, a whole series of substitute nominees--particularly for renominations--may be entered. Some observers fear a state-by-state wrangle.

In recent years, the report of the Committee on Boards has faced limited challenges, but has never been subjected to a protracted person-by-person debate.

BSSB-N

ACTS Start-up Agreement Completed,  
Elder Pledges Continued Support

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A 1981 joint start-up telecommunications agreement between the Baptist Convention's Baptist Sunday School Board and the SBC's Radio and Television Commission.

As part of the May 24 action by the trustee executive committee of the BSSB in Nashville, Tenn., pledged continued support for the RIVC in Fort Worth, Texas and the ACTS (American Christian Television System) network.

The decision to end the agreement was made after several weeks of deliberations between the presidents of the board and the commission, Lloyd Elder and Jimmy Allen. Both emphasized in a May 23 meeting in Elder's office that the mutual decision was reached because the needs which called for the joint venture no longer exist.

"This agreement was viewed from the beginning as temporary. It has been mutually beneficial and a part of the developmental process of implementing a nationwide Christian network going into millions of homes," said Elder. "We will continue to work together and to support the ACTS network. Structural linkage through the ACTS board is no longer needed."

The joint venture agreement included a \$10 million conditional credit assurance provided by the Sunday School Board to secure license applications from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for low-power stations. Allen said existing applications would now be secured with funds provided by the commission or by local ACTS boards.

Under the agreement, Sunday School Board President Elder has been on the five-member board of ACTS, Inc., a subsidiary corporation formed by the commission in 1981 to obtain the licenses. Elder resigned from the ACTS board effective May 24.

A provision of the agreement which will continue was the commitment by the Radio and Television Commission to provide the Sunday School Board up to one hour per day on the ACTS network for programming produced by the board.

Allen, who was unable to attend the May 24 monthly meeting of the board's trustee executive committee, met with Elder May 23 and presented him a plaque and resolutions of appreciation to the Sunday School Board trustees from the trustees of the commission and the board of ACTS, Inc.

"The development of alternative financial sources and changes in FCC procedures in processing applications for low-power television station licenses have eliminated our need for the conditional credit assurance provided by the board," Allen said. "However, the cooperation of the board in providing this assurance for the last three years has been a major contribution to the fact ACTS is now a reality."

In recommending termination of the agreement to the trustees, Elder observed, "Monumental progress has been made toward establishing the historic American Christian Television System. I am most pleased that from its very beginning the Sunday School Board under the leadership of Grady Cothen has had a significant support role in this venture.

"Participation on a temporary basis by the Sunday School Board was mutually helpful but now is not essential to either agency."

Elder also expressed appreciation for assistance provided by the commission in the development of Baptist Telecommunication Network (BTN), the board's satellite network to churches which will become operational in June.

"The development of BTN has come to a point where structural relationship to the Radio and Television Commission is no longer essential. However, both of our organizations will continue to cooperate in every possible way to serve the churches and the denomination through ACTS and BTN," said Elder.

HMB-F

Hungarian State Minister Says  
Shortage Is Readers, Not Bibles

By Mary Jane Welch

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Hungary's religious affairs leader thinks his country's Bible problem is a shortage of people who read their Bibles, not a shortage of Bibles, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board official reported after a recent visit to Hungary.

Hungary has printed more than 300,000 Bibles in the last three years, said Imre Miklos, Hungary's state minister of religious affairs, speaking in late April on Hungarian television before a studio audience of 66 representatives from various religious groups. "The trouble is we have more Bibles than are read."

Isam Ballenger, the board's director for Europe and the Middle East, watched the interview on Hungarian television as a Hungarian Baptist translated parts for him. Members of the studio audience were allowed to question Miklos and were polled on questions by the moderator.

Miklos' appearance showed a willingness to try to work with Christians in Hungary, said Ballenger. Baptists weren't represented in the studio audience, but were pleased with the minister's comments, he added. During the program Miklos often stressed cooperation.

"The question cannot be socialism or God," he said. "We must seek opportunities to cooperate. We are not so beautiful as we should be, but we are not so ugly as others say."

"We ought all to live according to our beliefs—Marxists according to their beliefs and Christians according to their beliefs," said Miklos. "In Marxism there are some values, and we need to see the values of others. Christians need to see values in Marxism and Marxists need to see values in Christianity."

While Miklos stressed the need for cooperation between Christians and Marxists, "there is one thing we cannot do," he said. "Religious training may not again be introduced in the schools."

Eight religious schools do exist in Hungary and the audience was polled on whether students finishing there face disadvantages because of their schooling. Twenty-seven said they face disadvantages and 24 said they do not. Miklos said those students have advantages because they get better training at the religious schools.

The audience also was polled on whether interest in religion is increasing among Hungarian young people. Thirty-nine said interest is increasing, 15 said it remains level and 12 said it is decreasing.

Miklos said an increasing interest in religion didn't necessarily mean the influence of religion is increasing. "It is the desire of young people to know," he said. "Thank God, people want to know good things. Youth want to know and we want to satisfy their needs."

Asked about the rule that Communist party members must be atheists, Miklos said, "You say a Catholic priest cannot marry. So a party member must submit to party rules and proclaim the ideals of the party."

He said the largest group in Hungary is in the middle between Christianity and Marxism. They believe neither in God nor man, he said.

During the questioning, Miklos mentioned several examples of the government's willingness to cooperate with believers. When asked why the government wouldn't permit more religious broadcasts on television, he replied that such a thing is not impossible.

But the audience began to discuss the question among themselves and decided more televised church services might cause more estrangement from the church, said Ballenger. They felt people might stay home and watch television rather than attend church.

When questioned about mandatory military service, Miklos said it is a good experience for young people and soldiers may be visited by clergy. He also pointed out the government has an agreement with the Nazarenes which allows them to serve in the armed forces, but not bear arms.

Christians in Hungary do have more freedom than Christians in some other Communist nations, said Ballenger. Hungarian Baptists have about 11,000 active adult members and have built 42 new church buildings in the last 17 years. They've just elected a new executive secretary—Jaros Vizian, pastor of Rakoshpalota Baptist Church in Budapest.

Southern Baptists have donated a small percentage for most of those buildings, said Ballenger, but Hungarians have given most of the money and done much of the work themselves because they consider building churches their missionary program. They are able to preach and teach the gospel only in churches.

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'Sophisticated Stereotyping'  
Hampering Southern Baptists

By Karen Benson

Baylor  
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WACO, Texas (BP)—Southern Baptists are guilty of a sophisticated type of stereotyping which spans race relations, views about the elderly and ideas on the role of women, among other issues, charged Ken Chafin this week at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Chafin, pastor of Houston's South Main Baptist Church, was keynote speaker for the May 23-25 National Conference on Aging for Southern Baptists, sponsored by Baylor, the Southern Baptist Association for Ministries with the Aging and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

He will end 12 years at South Main within weeks to become professor of preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Chafin noted paternalistic attitudes prevail within Southern Baptist seminaries toward senior faculty members and within the Foreign and Home Mission Boards toward appointments of senior adults to mission fields.

"These attitudes reflect the style of thinking of adults from our society—a society which worships young people," he said. "The most happy senior adults are the ones who minister to others. Life yields its best to those willing to tie themselves to responsibility. We stay alive as we think of others. You and I live so comfortably with many stereotypes. I notice functioning within my congregation a more sophisticated type of stereotyping. Let's keep on resisting the stereotypes."

Historically, "our denomination loses interest in the baptistry," Chafin said. "We need to recapture the concept of the Christian life as a continual conquest. The biblical concept of pilgrimage is a marvelous concept. Do you think the pilgrim need die when you join the Association of Retired Persons?"

Baptists typically do not like the "process" idea of Christian living, Chafin said. "We don't like things that can't be solved with a vote or a resolution or one big weepy sermon. But what I'm talking about is not something that will be taken care of before you leave this conference. We live with stereotypes every day, and we need to become more and more sensitive to a society filled with stereotypes about aging."

He urged the conference participants to confront speakers who perpetuate stereotypes; to question Southern Baptist literature in which the elderly, or women or any other group is presented in a stereotyped manner, and to offer support to those within individual churches and the denomination who are trying to sensitize others to stereotypes.

Stereotypes often are kept alive by the senior adults, themselves, he said. "There is in all the stereotypes about aging a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy about aging that is a lie," he said. Also, "our denomination has allowed, even in its literature, the lie that women are inferior to men."

Most people need help with coming to terms with the aging process, Chafin said. "Some of you are hiding from your own aging process by working with the aging. Everyone needs help with the aging process. It needs to be talked about. Our churches and religious institutions need help in thinking how we relate to the aging process."

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