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November 16, 1984

84-167

Perkins Says Blacks, Whites Caught In Blame-Guilt Trap

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (BP)--Black and white churches are caught in a "blame-guilt" trap which prevents them from working for racial reconciliation, a black minister from Mississippi said during the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's fall urban evangelism forum.

John Perkins, founder and president emeritus of Voice of Calvary Ministries in Jackson, Miss., told about 75 Southern Baptists involved in urban evangelism what his organization has been trying to do in evangelism, community development and racial reconciliation, and warned against social pressures which deter Christian involvement.

The church is caught in two social dynamics which work against Christian action in racial reconciliation, Perkins pointed out.

The black church is caught in the trap of "blame," he said. Black people, he said, blame white folks for getting them into their situations, and expect white folks to get them out. On the other hand, white people are caught in the trap of "guilt," and don't want to be involved because it makes them feel guilty, he said.

Perkins urged both black and white churches to deal with guilt and blame with the good news of the gospel. "The way to get beyond our guilt and blame is at the cross," he said. "The purpose of the cross is to get rid of guilt..."

"You don't have to live with the guilt of the past," he said. "We can leave today and not have to worry about yesterday and move on with making a new reality for our society."

This generation, he observed, has the choice of becoming the generation which convinces the poor they really do not have dignity, or becoming the generation which could put racial prejudice behind us.

Racial prejudice denies the creation of God, he said. "Man is not a nigger, a gook, or a honkey—man was created in the image of God," he declared.

Warning the church has lost its credibility in society because it has forfeited to others its role and responsibility for bringing about social change, Perkins said. "The evidence of our Christian faith is our concern for the poor."

He warned Baptists against avoiding social action just because of bad connotations of the words. "Social action is still a good word," he said. "Don't take social out of the gospel. The gospel," he said, "is putting love into action; it is words and deeds, not just words. It is the love of God made visible in society. "Pointing out there are up to two million homeless people in America who are ignored by both the church and the government, Perkins observed the American welfare system is based on people having both a Social Security number and a permanent address. "The government does not see homeless persons as people, because you have got to have an address even to be listed on the welfare roles."

It is easy to create a welfare-dependent mentality among the poor who have been "dumped on and degraded by society," causing them to lose hope, stamina, energy and motivation, he said.

In his opening remarks, Perkins had high words of praise for former Southern Baptist Convention President Owen Cooper, retired president of Mississippi Chemical Corp., Yazoo City, Miss. More than any other person, Owen Cooper as a Christian made the greatest contribution of all to racial reconciliation in Mississippi, Perkins said.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

During very crucial days in the 1970s when the Ku Klux Klan was bombing Head Start centers following the murder of three civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Miss., Owen Cooper became statewide director of the Head Start program and "began a process of change" which has brought real progress in relationships between blacks and whites in Mississippi, Perkins said.

Saying it was "right" for Cooper to have been elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1973, Perkins said Cooper uniquely combined the courage of a businessman to deal with community problems with personal Christian convictions based on the Bible.

During those days (late 1960s and early 1970s) everything in Mississippi society "denigrated the black man to make him feel like he was a nigger. The black man was expected to be happy while he lived in misery, and he was never to use his skills and talents to change the environment in which he lived," Perkins said.

When change did come in Mississippi, it was not because of the influence of the government or the influence of the church, he added. It was because of the threat of a national economic boycott, Perkins said.

The retired minister, who now lives in Pasadena, Calif., said he learned quickly in Mississippi working with businessmen to bring about racial reconciliation and community change was far more effective than working with other ministers.

The pastors felt they were trapped and voiceless on race, and they only reflected what society did, Perkins recalled.

"What had happened in Mississippi was that we had taken the gospel that is supposed to call people out of the world and into a relationship with God and each other, and that is supposed to cross over racial and cultural barriers and make us one, and we had placed that gospel into our culture and race and the gospel had lost its power," Perkins said.

He told the group about involvement in creating community health centers, leading evangelistic efforts, and bringing about change in such towns as Mendenhall and New Hebron, as well as in Jackson, the state capitol.

Working for racial reconciliation today may be even more difficult than then because people are less likely today to admit their own racial prejudices. "In today's highly-motivated, success-oriented society, people will not acknowledge failure," he added.

Malcolm X made a tremendous contribution to racial reconciliation by helping black people overcome their inferiority complex and recognize "that we are somebody and we are worthy."

Noting black and poor people have very little self-confidence, Perkins observed Democratic presidential candidate Jesse Jackson has given black people political hope they can have an influence on society.

"But the real issue," he said, "is whether black people will turn that political emotion into creative community development. Will we take responsibility for our own condition in the community or leave it up to someone else?" he asked.

He challenged blacks to assume responsibility for their own destiny instead of blaming whites and depending on them for solutions. "I don't say somebody else has to do anything before I do something," he insisted. "I'm not waiting for someone else to do something else for me—I'm going to take responsibility for my own destiny," Perkins said.

The author of several books on racial justice, Perkins dropped out of school in the third grade and later educated himself. He has received two honorary doctorate degrees and has lectured at more than 150 national and international universities. A Baptist minister who has been pastor of several churches in Mississippi, Perkins is listed in the International Who's Who of Intellectuals.

N.C. Baptists Affirm
Women, Farmers, Officers

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP)—North Carolina Southern Baptists reelected all their convention officers and reacted to resolutions passed by the national Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City last summer on the ordination of women and the production and use of tobacco at the annual meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

A resolution on "women in Christian ministry" reaffirmed resolutions at the North Carolina convention in 1975 and 1983. It stressed that ordination is a matter for each local church—not the national denomination—to decide and expressed respect for the right of all persons to respond to their call to ministry.

The resolution at the national convention in June said the ordination of women was not biblical and urged churches not to ordain women as deacons or ministers.

The tobacco resolution drew considerable debate. The original resolution described the resolution passed at Kansas City as "simplistic." It agreed "health risks from tobacco use must always be acknowledged" but said the tobacco industry is "an important and complex part" of the state's economy and many people involved in that industry "historically have been dedicated leaders and supporters of member churches of the North Carolina state convention.

It expressed appreciation to tobacco farmers and "others engaged in related industries" who loyally support their local churches and denominational ministries and acknowledged "the individual freedom of tobacco farmers...to earn a livelihood as determined by their own consciences and personal convictions under God."

An amendment was offered to delete the phrase describing the SBC action as simplistic as a slap at the Southern Baptist Convention and a repudiation of the position taken by the SBC at Kansas City. After considerable debate the entire resolution was tabled. The following day a motion was passed which expressed "appreciation for the farmers of North Carolina and their dedication to Baptist churches and to the mission enterprise of the denomination."

In contrast, the election of officers was a display of unity, despite an article in the Baptist United News, an independent publication, prior to the convention that first vice-president J. Dewey Hobbs would be challenged from the floor.

Instead, Hobbs, director of the pastoral care school at Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem, President Norman A. Wiggins, president of Campbell University and second vice-president William Poe, an attorney from Charlotte, were reelected for a second term on a single motion.

There were two challenges to nomination committee recommendations, one successful.

Messengers replaced Coy Privette, executive director of the Christian Action League, as chairman of the resolutions committee, with Alton McEachern, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greensboro, on a ballot vote of 677-625.

Supporters of the move to replace Privette said the challenge was based on a "conflict of interest" since Privette had been elected to the state legislature and was the executive director of a lobbying organization. The Christian Action League is an inter-denominational group which works on moral issues. Until three years ago it received North Carolina convention budget funds but now is included in the state missions offering.

Last September Privette was involved in the controversial sale of the state convention's mailing list (which the Christian Action League purchased from the state convention) to the reelection campaign of Senator Jesse Helms.

A second challenge also required a ballot vote, but by a 60-40 split messengers sustained the nominating committee's choice of Marion Lark, pastor of First Baptist Church, Henderson, for a spot on the nominating committee. Billy Mobley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hickory, was proposed as the substitute. Debate centered on whether there was sufficient east-west balance on the committee.

An announced challenge to Jim Jarrard, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Highpoint, by Steve Sells, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Greensboro, evaporated when Sells told the convention he no longer intended to pursue the challenge.

In money matters, the record 4,255 messengers approved a budget of \$24 million. North Carolina will send 34.45 percent (an increase of .05 percent—approximately \$600,000) on to the national mission and education programs of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Other resolutions included support for religious freedom and the protection of parental and student rights and opposition to governmental interference in religious schools.

The 1985 meeting of the convention will be Nov. 11-13 in Charlotte.

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Louisiana Resolutions
Focus On Gambling

By Oscar Hoffmeyer Jr.

Baptist Press
11/16/84

PINEVILLE, La. (BP)—Louisiana Baptists increased Cooperative Program giving to the Southern Baptist Convention from 34 to 34.25 percent when they adopted a \$16 million budget for 1985 during their 137th session in Pineville Nov. 12-14.

Messengers also affirmed women in their Christian service and "steadfastly" supported Baptist Press, the SBC's news agency, that "cannot and will not be controlled or pressured to publish less than the whole truth."

Raymond Boswell, Shreveport layman who was reelected convention president, challenged Louisiana Baptists to "Again see the genius of the Sunday school for reaching people. Great Sunday schools build great churches and we know what it takes to build Sunday schools."

The \$16 million budget, increased by \$250,000 over 1984, will be divided 34.25 percent for Southern Baptist programs and 65.75 percent for Louisiana programs.

Three adopted resolutions focused on gambling, one restating opposition to further legalize gambling, one to launch earnest efforts to educate individuals about gambling's "destructive effects" and the third a call to repeal charitable gambling laws.

An amendment to reword the resolution on "Appreciation for Dedicated Christian Women" was defeated following a brief discussion period.

With reference to the "Edenic Fall," messengers approved the resolution to "reaffirm their confidence in our dedicated Christian women, assure them that we believe that every believer is equal at the foot of the cross and commend them for their inspired and loving service to our Lord and His church."

Other resolutions called for support of "the intent of Sunday Closing Laws by refraining from the use of Sunday for the purposes of commerce and supporting those establishments who honor the present laws;" "raising the drinking age to 21 years;" and "right to food for the people of the earth, a right inherent in creation."

In other business action messengers elected Gail DeBord, pastor of Pineville's First Baptist as first vice-president and Kelly Fitzgerald, pastor of Baton Rouge's Grace Baptist Church, as second vice-president.

During a special program on Louisiana Baptists' ministries, messengers learned churches and missions increased from 1400 to 1411 with total membership of 555,239; Sunday school enrollment of 309,399; church training enrollment of 96,969; baptisms of 14,783 and total receipts of \$157,578,641.

A total of 1135 persons registered for the convention, including 835 messengers.

Louisiana Baptists will meet at First Baptist Church, Lake Charles, Nov. 11-13, 1985.

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World's Fair Ministries:
People, Not Numbers

By Leisa A. Hammett

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Baptists at the New Orleans 1984 World's Fair conducted ministries to people instead of ministries of numbers.

During the six-month event (May 12-Nov. 11), which attracted seven million instead of the projected 11 million visitors, Baptists conducted street ministries in the nearby French Quarter, gave volunteer support to the on-site interdenominational "Thirst" exhibit and directed area campground ministries.

Sixteen student missionaries comprised the Baptist Exposition Ministries French Quarter witnessing team, which included a brass/jazz band, a clown, a mime and a balloon artist. While the band entertained passers-by with popular tunes, the remainder of the team passed out tracts and talked to the gathered crowds.

To some of the missionaries' surprise, Baptist Exposition Ministries turned out to be a ministry to the French Quarter street people more than to Quarter visitors.

"(The student missionaries) made a day to day impact," said Baptist Exposition Ministries associate director Judy Stewart. "They've shown that Christians aren't obnoxious. They go out in their t-shirts and jeans and don't approach people with a 'turn or burn' philosophy."

The "street people"--including prostitutes, alcoholics, drug abusers, homosexuals and Hare Krisnas--entertained Quarter browsers much like the missionaries did, except it is their lifestyle, a means of earning money for rent and food. But, said team clown Debbie Lewis, "they are human beings that need to be cared for and know about God."

Early during the fair a street magician named Jason accused team magician Barry Mitchell of undermining Jason's business. He threatened Mitchell with a whip and ordered him to get off the street or start charging for his balloons. But before the fair concluded, Jason accepted Christ and was influential in leading other street people to Christ, including a former prostitute, a Hare Krishna and an alcoholic.

"These people are completely opposite of the middle-class work ethic," said associate director Dave Stewart. "(Southern Baptists) have got to break down some barriers and stereotypes--(the image of a) Christian as a young man in a business suit or a young lady in a dress." Added associate director and wife Judy, "Some of these women don't even own a dress or one that would be 'acceptable' in church."

"The team," said Dave, "talked to anybody. They didn't care how a person looked or smelled. (They knew these people) just needed some help."

Baptist Ministries Exposition director Jimmie Knox said, "This kind of ministry is valid. We went outside of the walls of the church and came to where the people were. The team was careful not to come across as sanctimonious with stained glass language."

David Peach, a Southern Baptist and director "Thirst" exhibit, said the presentation on spiritual thirst and various Bible displays provided "many ministry opportunities."

Peach recalled visitors coming from the media show with tears in their eyes, indicating they were touched by the presentation.

"You can't count those things," he said. "I know Baptists think that is a cop out. But you can't get statistics on an 11-year-old boy who's starving for attention and stays at the exhibit two days." He added the Thirst presentation was a major fair attraction. In addition to reaching people for Christ, Peach said, Thirst demonstrated Christian denominations can work together.

Both Thirst, sponsored by the Greater New Orleans Federation of Churches, and Baptist Exposition Ministries plan to continue follow-up ministries with visitors who made professions of faith. Information on Thirst visitors who completed response cards have been referred to their local clergy.

Baptist Exposition Ministries are attempting similar follow-ups. "Our whole purpose is not to just lead people to Christ and then leave them," said Lewis.

Visitors responded favorably to both Baptist and other denomination efforts. Although the Baptist team recalled being scoffed at and even spit upon, Knox said some people they talked to, including Christians of other denominations, appreciated what they were doing.

Thirst also provided chaplaincy services to the fair and Sunday morning worship services.

Twenty-five mission groups from nine states assisted Baptist Exposition campground ministries. More than half of the 17 campgrounds in which Baptists led Bible studies, puppet shows, and family-type entertainment had never had mission groups before.

The majority of campground ministries ended when school resumed in the fall. Baptist Exposition ministries campground ministries coordinator Caroline Veno had hoped area churches would continue ministries.

The New Orleans Fair was not the first World's Fair in which Baptists participated. In the 1982 Knoxville World's Fair, Baptists sponsored an on-site pavilion. But Knox said he would not compare the onsite and offsite ministries. Both are important, he said, because each reached a different type of person.

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Social Security Taxes Up For Ministers, Churches

Baptist Pr ss
11/16/84

DALLAS (BP)--Social Security benefits will increase next year, but taxes will be higher for churches and ministers.

Approximately 37 million beneficiaries will see their monthly Social Security checks increase about \$15 a month, and another four million Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients will receive a 3.5 percent increase in their checks.

A report by the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., said the average monthly Social Security check will increase from \$434 to \$449 in 1985, while those persons on SSI will have benefits increased from \$314 to \$325. A couple's average monthly check will increase from \$750 to \$776 if both individuals are drawing benefits.

Social Security benefits are increased if the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers rises 3.0 percent or more from the third quarter of one year to the third quarter of the following year. The CPI rose 3.5 percent from October 1983 to October 1984.

But while the benefits are set to increase so will the maximum wage base and tax rates.

The maximum amount of annual earnings subject to Social Security tax will increase from \$37,800 to \$39,600.

The maximum self-employment tax for ordained ministers will increase by \$401.40 to \$4,672.80 in 1985. This figure represents both the wage base increase and an increase in the effective tax rate from this year's 11.3 percent to 11.8 percent in 1985. The increase is a continuation of a 1983 law which raised the tax rate for self-employed persons to 14.1 percent. A 2.3 percent tax credit was included for 1985.

The tax rate paid by employees and employers will each increase to 7.05 percent. Employees paid 6.7 percent and employers paid 7.0 percent in 1984.

The report said the maximum Social Security tax paid by employees in 1985 will be increased by \$259.50 to \$2,791.80. The maximum tax paid by employers on a worker's earnings will rise by \$145.80 to \$2,791.80.

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A 1983 law made all churches subject to Social Security taxes last Jan. 1. Unless a church has filed for an exemption, it must to pay the employer share of the tax and deduct the employee share from the wages of non-ordained members on the church staff. Ordained ministers must continue to pay self-employment tax.

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CORRECTION--In (BP) story, "Oklahoma First To Split Mission Funds 50-50," mailed 11/15/84, please be advised that the Florida Baptist Convention voted hours earlier to divide receipts 50-50. That story was not filed with (BP) until after the Oklahoma story had been released. Baptist Press regrets the error.

Thanks, Baptist Press

Georgia Moderates
Dominate Elections

Baptist Press
11/16/84

AUGUSTA, Ga. (BP)--The Georgia Baptist Convention held one its most harmonious sessions in many years in the city where the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1845. At the conclusion of the 163rd annual session, they dedicated a historical marker at the old site of First Baptist Church in Augusta, where the SBC was born.

Messengers approved without a word of debate a 1985 Cooperative Program budget of \$22.04 million--an increase of seven percent over 1984. If fully funded, the budget will send 46.8 percent--an increase of 1.8 percent--to national Southern Baptist Convention causes.

Executive Director-Treasurer James N. Griffith noted the convention is moving "toward a true 50-50 division of our budget between Georgia and SBC causes." Currently, about 10 percent of the budget is allocated to share expenses between state and worldwide missions causes.

Georgia Baptist Convention registered an all-time high of 3,279 messengers. They elected Floyd F. Roebuck as new president. He has been pastor of First Baptist Church in Rome for 24 years and was supported by a statewide organization of moderates in Georgia, which has been holding strategy meetings for several months. Three of the four vice-presidents elected were also supported by that group. One is a woman, one a layman, and another a minister.

Georgia messengers approved 14 resolutions. One affirmed "the full and equal dignity of all Christian men and women." Another resolved that "ordination is at the discretion of the local church under leadership of God's spirit." Yet another urged "all Georgia Baptist to work for harmony in the midst of our diversity."

Other resolutions supported separation of church and state; opposed legalized gambling in Georgia; asked state legislators to raise the legal drinking age in Georgia to 21 and called for national legislation to ban advertising of alcoholic beverages on television.

Georgia Baptist messengers also approved state convention participation in the new church annuity plan being proposed by SBC Annuity Board. They passed a motion praising the "fairness and accuracy" of their state paper, the Christian Index, in handling controversial news items. They voted to sell Camp Glynn, a camp near Brunswick for Royal Ambassadors, which has been in operation about 30 years. They also approved a motion voicing support for Southern Baptist Convention seminaries, "citing particularly each president."

Georgia Baptist Convention will hold its 1985 meeting Nov. 11-13 at Jekyll Island Convention Center.

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CORRECTION--In (BP) story, "D.C. Acts on Nicaragua, Women's Ordination," mailed 11/13/84, in ninth paragraph please delete the reference to "in the heart of" before "downtown" and change the distance from "six blocks" from the White House to "sixteen blocks." In 14th paragraph change the total budget figure from "\$676,395" to "\$926,395" and change the final sentence to read, ("The D.C. convention is dually aligned with the SBC and ABC/USA.")

Thanks, Baptist Press

Henley Reelected
By Alabama Messengers

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—In its 162nd annual session, messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention reelected Wallace Henley, pastor of McElwain Baptist Church, Birmingham, to a second term as convention president.

Also reelected were: Rick Lance, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, first vice-president; and Fred Lackey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Athens, second vice-president.

Alabama Baptists approved without discussion a budget of \$29,482,000 for the coming year with a base budget goal of \$20,695,000—a 15 percent increase from last year.

The basic budget will be divided with \$8,400,223 (40.6 percent, an increase of 0.6 percent over last year) going to SBC causes, \$9,633,746 to state convention causes and \$2,661,029 to general denominational causes.

Messengers to the convention approved seven resolutions and other recommendations. One action recommended that by 1990, the Cooperative Program receipts be divided equally between state and SBC causes.

Approval was given to recommendations of name changes of the executive board of the Alabama convention and the administration committee. The executive board will be known as the State Board of Missions and the administration committee will be the executive committee.

Also approved were resolutions of affirmation and commendation for the six seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention and the three colleges of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, as well as a resolution concerning opposition to textbooks which would include "materials detrimental to the individual or biblical institution of marriage."

SBC President Charles Stanley was assured of the prayer support of Alabama Baptists in another resolution.

It was also reported that the Alabama Baptist, newsjournal of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, received high scores as a source of information in a recent survey conducted by the committee on information dissemination appointed by the convention.

A total of 1,838 messengers registered for the convention, along with 395 visitors.

The Alabama Baptist Convention will hold its 1985 annual meeting at First Baptist Church, Huntsville, Nov. 19-20.

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Delaware 'Named'
To Maryland Convention

Baptist Press
11/16/84

GLEN BURNIE, Md. (BP)—The 149th annual session of the Baptist Convention of Maryland was also its last.

Messengers to the meeting at Glen Burnie Baptist Church unanimously finalized their 1983 vote to change the name of the convention to the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware. Baptists in Delaware have comprised one of the conventions 12 associations.

Messengers also approved several resolutions including action on diversity and unity, biblical creation, the Vatican ambassador, and the Baptist Book Store. There were 632 messengers and 200 visitors.

In business sessions, debates centered on proposed changes in the constitution and bylaws which would name one representative from each association to most committees, and which would transfer to the state mission board most of the appointative powers now held by the convention president.

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After lengthy discussion at two sessions, the messengers voted to refer the proposal back to the state mission board for study, clarification, and a better method of a power distribution. Approval in effect, would help allow the state mission board to name the committee on committees, a power now held by the president.

One section of the constitution which received first approval was an increase in the giving figure designated for each church to have an additional messenger above the authorized two. The figure is raised from \$250 to \$750 for each additional messenger.

The bylaws changes would have gone into effect immediately if they had been approved.

The resolution on diversity and unity recognized current controversy within the Southern Baptist Convention, and encouraged forums through the Maryland Baptist, in convention and association meeting.

On biblical creation, the resolution asked for denominational press, colleges, and seminaries to "present the biblical views of creation, presenting the scientific evidences that support the biblical record, and encouraged them to offer a forum for discussion of the biblical account."

The resolution also encouraged measures to be provided in Maryland and Delaware public schools to present in "a fair and unprejudiced way the models of creation."

Another resolution urged the Sunday School Board to keep the Lutherville Baptist Book Store in the greater Baltimore area when it relocates.

Messengers also resolved to ask the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee to join the Americans United for Separation of Church and State legal action against the presidential appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican.

Ralph Ehren, pastor of Colesville Baptist Church, Silver Spring, was elected president of the convention. He had served as first vice-president.

The Cooperative Program operating budget for 1985 is \$2,151,127. Distribution gives 40 percent--same as last year--to national Southern Baptist causes.

Next year's meeting will Nov. 11-13 at First Baptist Church, Suitland, kicking off a year-long observance of the convention's 150th anniversary.

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