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May 24, 1985

85-67

Tanner Urges Support Of  
SBC Seminaries, Presidents

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (BP)—SBC Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner has expressed strong support for the six SBC seminaries and their presidents, who have been under personal attack by "those who have charged there is a trend toward liberalism" in SBC seminaries.

"That simply is not true," said Tanner in a statement released to Baptist Press and mailed to all trustees of the SBC Home Mission Board.

Tanner said in an interview he wrote his statement after awakening at 4:30 a.m. on May 19, a "Day of Prayer" for the Southern Baptist Convention, and after praying for more than four hours. He was in a revival at First Baptist Church, Batesville, Ark., that week and released his statement on his return to Atlanta.

"I reached the point I had to take a stand and speak up in support of our seminaries," he told Baptist Press.

He recalled talking a few weeks ago with 74 new home missionary appointees during missionary orientation in Atlanta about their seminary preparation. "I questioned several of them carefully about their personal faith, their call to missions, their Christian commitment and the influence of their seminary experience."

Recalling Jesus Christ had said, "by their fruits you shall know them," Tanner expressed belief that "you can conclude by the quality of their graduates that our seminaries are the finest in the world."

He described graduates of the six SBC seminaries as "the finest, best trained, and most deeply committed young people I've encountered in 30 years of denominational service."

"Reflecting on the quality of graduates our seminaries are producing, I want to express my strong support for our six Southern Baptist seminaries," Tanner said. "The Home Mission Board is proud to be in partnership with these six seminaries."

He specifically commended the seminaries' presidents, administrative personnel and faculty members. "They are not only competent people, but they are among the most dedicated Christian educators in our nation."

Noting much of the criticism has been directed against the six seminary presidents, Tanner said he had known these men personally for almost 30 years. "They are men of integrity who believe the Bible is the inspired, authoritative word of God. They are theologically conservative," Tanner said.

Naming them individually, Tanner expressed "strong support" for presidents Russell H. Dilday Jr. of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Milton Ferguson, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO.; Roy Lee Honeycutt, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; Landrum Leavell, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; Randall Lolley, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., and Frank Pollard of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

As a graduate of Southwestern seminary, Tanner urged all other Southwestern alumni "support our president, Russell Dilday, the administrative staff, faculty and students." Tanner urged alumni of the other five seminaries "to do likewise."

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Tanner said he was convinced the seminaries "are theologically and doctrinally sound" and have good, conservative leaders and strong, Bible-believing faculties.

"If that were not true, the Home and Foreign Mission Boards would be the first to know, because in appointing our missionaries, the missionary personnel departments of both boards investigate and question the candidates on their theology," Tanner said.

Pointing out there are almost 13,000 students enrolled in the six seminaries, Tanner said the seminaries are stronger now than ever before in SBC history. "One of the things that alarms me about the current controversy," he added, "is that many of these students will become so disillusioned that they will leave our convention or fear to follow through on their call."

Acknowledging "our institutions in the SBC are not perfect, and all of us may not always agree with their leaders," Tanner insisted "they all unquestionably subscribe to Biblical authority and conservative theology" and "deserve our support."

Tanner said support of current seminary leadership is "essential for the future of Baptist missions at home and around the world" and expressed gratitude for them for helping "effectively prepare their students, many of whom are our future missionary personnel, to face the unlimited challenges of ministry in a diverse and pluralistic society.

"Because of this preparation, coupled with a strong commitment to God's leadership, we as Southern Baptists have the best trained, most effective missions force of any denomination in the world," Tanner concluded.

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Seven-Month CP Total  
Reaches \$67.9 Million

C-N

Baptist Press  
5/24/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The national mission and educational programs of the Southern Baptist Convention received \$9,789,824 in April through the Cooperative Program.

Through the first seven months of the fiscal year, voluntary receipts from the 37 state conventions affiliated with the SBC totaled \$67,892,781. This represents an increase of 7.11 percent (more than \$4.5 million) in undesignated gifts over the same period in 1983-84.

Despite the increase, more than double the rate of inflation, the national Cooperative Program is faced with a second consecutive year of income falling below budget goals.

The 1984-85 basic operating budget is \$118 million. In order to reach that figure, receipts must average \$10,021,444 over the last five months of the fiscal year (May through September). In the first seven months, income exceeded the \$10 million mark twice—in January (\$10,812,419) and in March (\$10,125,631). The monthly average through April was \$9,698,983.

The 1983-84 fiscal year was the first in decades to fall below budget. That year, income was \$108.8 million against a basic budget of \$114.5 million.

Meanwhile, current levels of designated giving (primarily to the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board) have been impressive. Through April designated gifts from the 36,500 churches of the Southern Baptist Convention were \$73,522,374.

That reflects an increase of 13.32 percent (\$8,6740,230) over the same period 1983-84.

Of the \$73.5 million, the Foreign Mission Board has received \$60.8 million through the Lottie Moon Christmas offering (compared to \$54.4 million at this time last year); and the Home Mission Board has received \$3.7 million (compared to \$4.4 million) through the Annie Armstrong Easter offering. "Other designations" total \$9.1 million (compared to \$6.1).

Most of the \$3 million increase in "other" was directly attributable to massive increases in hunger relief contributions.

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C-N  
Baptist Press

'I Am Not A Profane Man,' Patterson Says

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—"I am not a profane man," Farrar Patterson said in a statement released to the Baptist Standard, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Patterson, professor of communications and preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, retained his post March 20 when trustees voted 19-12 to dismiss him, falling two votes short of the required two-thirds majority.

The recommendation Patterson be fired was brought by Southwestern President Russell H. Dilday Jr., and the academic affairs committee. The recommendation included six "very serious charges" against Patterson, according to Dilday.

The charges questioned Patterson's "lifestyle and behavior including profanity and vulgar language," and said his work of was of poor quality.

Patterson gave a statement to Presnall H. Wood, editor of the 350,000 circulation Standard. Wood printed the statement with an editor's note specifying it was being printed "in the interest of fairness."

The statement is Patterson's first public statement on the charges other than a general denial printed when the story concerning the trustee action was published, both in the Baptist Standard and in Baptist Press.

In the statement, Patterson said defending himself "against unwarranted charges is distasteful but necessary because the charges brought against me have ruined my ministry and crushed my family."

"The basic motivation of my life and that of my wife has been to serve God in the ministry of the Word. The two charges that hurt the most are that I am 'a profane man' and an incompetent teacher. The evidence contradicts the latter." Patterson writes.

Concerning the charges of profanity, Patterson said: "The statements and words which...Dilday and William H. Tolar, dean of the school of theology, allege I said, which have been interpreted as being profane and vulgar have been grossly exaggerated. Their charges of my using profanity and vulgarity have created in some a false impression, leaving the actual words to the hearers' imaginations—imaginations fired by deliberate and gross overstatement."

He added: "I am not a 'profane man' and do not use vulgar and abusive language. Yes, I have made the mistake of expressing strong feelings with some strong words that are too much used in today's world. I regret it and do not intend using these words. I ask forgiveness to my offended."

He commented on allegations he was "overheard cursing former dean of the school of theology Huber Drumwright, who died in 1981. "Huber Drumwright was my dear friend, teacher and one of my spiritual heroes. Although I have no memory of the event, I might have used some strong words to express my feelings, but I did not curse him. I have never cursed anyone."

In regard to charges of incompetence in the classroom, Patterson said he has "received numerous letters from students who have been blessed by my teaching. Fifty of these were presented to the academic affairs committee (during a four-hour hearing prior to the committee adopting the recommendation to fire Patterson).

Patterson also quoted extensively from a letter written by his secretary, Vivian Taylor, which says Patterson "never used any profanity in my presence, nor has he been verbally abusive in any way."

FMB-N

Famine, Convention Controversy  
Double Burden For Missionary

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Grief over the Southern Baptist battle at home is depleting his energy for battling famine in west Africa, says Southern Baptist missionary Norman Coad.

Facing the grim reality of famine in Mali is difficult enough without having to worry about squabbles among Southern Baptist supporters at home, said Coad in the following letter to John Mills, the Foreign Mission Board's director for west Africa:

"If there is no rain this year, the entire culture will be destroyed. Every phase of it is strained to the breaking point—the Niger River culture, the migrant herding tribes, the rural farming culture, the city dwellers. This famine is so big and we are fighting back with so little.

"But fight we do. We are better organized, better informed, better equipped, and have better communications with the Malian authorities and local populations than ever before. We are doing our part. Some lives will be saved, some are seeing Christians in a positive light for the first time. The government endorsed our work on national radio yesterday, again. This is the third set of broadcasts through the national media this year that puts the Baptist Mission in a very positive light.

"God is working in the midst of it all. While we grieve, work and pray, his eternal purposes are being worked out. I know him better than ever before, little as that knowledge is, yet he is even more mysterious. To really know him I feel is beyond me, but that hunger is here inside me quenchless and strong. I have touched a nerve here for I have begun to weep.

"Since I have begun, I will finish. You have no idea how deeply grieved we are here over the insanity of our good friends who are on both sides of the issues in the present Southern Baptist Convention political crisis.

"Both groups are committed to defending the true faith. Most are good people fighting for what they believe. Yet, all I see is the demonic forces at work to destroy the SBC so that at our finest hour in missions, Bold Mission Thrust will never be attained. To me, whichever group wins, it will be a Pyrrhic victory: a victory won at too excessive a cost.

"Will there be enough unity left to carry the load of intercessory prayer for missions or will the Spirit be so quenched that no power remains? Will we have the necessary people to staff our mission efforts or will our people be so disillusioned they no longer give themselves to missions through the SBC? Will the financial base be weakened to the point that we must cut back our forces and program? Will God leave us on the scrapheap and anoint another group with the heavy responsibility? It has happened before; it could happen to us.

"So we pray for the Southern Baptist Convention, the leading protagonists, those who will vote at this convention, that in the midst of all the noisy clamor of politics, they will perceive the will of God; that we would be preserved; that the unity of the Spirit will reign.

"We do this looking over our shoulders, depleting our energies, interceding for our base of support while the battle rages hot and heavy all around us. It doesn't seem right, but that's the way it is."

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BSC-N

House Budget Trims Subsidy  
For Non-Profit Mailers

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press  
5/24/85

WASHINGTON (BP)—Postal rates for non-profit publications, including Baptist state newspapers and local church newsletters, may rise significantly next fall because of budget cuts passed May 23 by the U.S. House of Representatives.

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Although the House-passed 1985-86 budget calls for an \$840 million subsidy to the U.S. Postal Service to help cover the costs of mailing those and other publications, the figure falls \$141 million short of what the Postal Service says it needs to maintain the subsidy at its present level.

According to a House budget committee spokesman, that shortfall could result in postage increases of 15-20 percent, effective Oct. 1.

Complicating the picture is the dramatically lower figure of \$100 million approved by the U.S. Senate May 10. That amount would strip the Postal Service of nearly 90 percent of the "revenue foregone" subsidy at issue.

The House budget committee spokesman said the gap between the two versions of the new budget means the subsidy question will be a "very tough conference issue" when House and Senate conferees get together to work out a compromise. He added: "We need all the help we can get to put pressure on (Senate conferees)."

He said he foresees about a "50-50 chance" of settling the matter somewhere between the two figures, perhaps in the \$600-650 million range. Such a settlement, he said, would result in a 25-35 percent postage increase for non-profit publications.

The spokesman said Senate conferees will likely do "lots of posturing" in an attempt to make a big cut in the subsidy in order to appear tough in reducing the federal deficit. At the same time, he added, pressure from groups which benefit from the subsidy, including the blind and otherwise handicapped, will make that line item "a significant conference issue."

In 1970, non-profit and other subsidized mailers gradually began assuming more of the actual cost of mailing their publications in a 16-step plan that will eventually remove the subsidy entirely. They are now at step 14, with step 15 scheduled to take effect July 1, 1986.

Because of previous budget cuts pushed by President Reagan, these mailers already have absorbed repeated postage increases, the largest coming in early 1982 with passage of the first Reagan budget. The president's proposed 1985-86 budget terminates the subsidy except for \$39 million to benefit organizations that send materials to the blind.

Although a date has yet to be announced for the beginning of the conference committee's work, it is expected within a matter of days.

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Lewis Myers To Head New Office  
Responding To Needs In China

FMB-N

Baptist Press  
5/24/85

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Lewis Myers, a former missionary to Vietnam, has been elected director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's new Cooperative Services International office.

Myers, a member of the board's administrative staff since 1977, will lead Southern Baptists in responding to professional and social service opportunities in China. The Mississippi native was elected to the position during the board's May 22 meeting in Richmond and will assume his new duties June 1.

The board also approved the position of a field associate with expertise in the Chinese language and culture and one or more lay people to enlist Southern Baptists for needs expressed by Christian and secular institutions in China for educators, medical personnel and other professionals and technicians.

However, the Cooperative Services International office, created during the board's April 17 meeting in Nashville, Tenn., will not send any missionaries to China. Missionaries have not been able to work in the country for more than 30 years.

China's "current openness to external influences provides a great opportunity for Southern Baptists to become aware of and appropriately involved with Christians there," Myers said.

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Later, other countries where a missionary presence is not possible may become part of the office's work.

Myers has directed consultant services at the Foreign Mission Board since 1980, coordinating the work of specialists in evangelism, relief, health care, development work, family ministry, media and lay people abroad. From 1977 to 1980, he was associate to the director of the board's overseas operations.

In his new China-related work, Myers hopes Southern Baptists will "learn what the church in China has experienced which has both solidified their faith and given them some remarkable growth during the last three decades, in an atmosphere that hasn't been conducive to the advancement of religious causes."

Appointed as a missionary to South Vietnam in 1960, Myers was mission chairman in 1962 and 1963 and from 1972 to 1974. He was on furlough when the country fell to North Vietnam in 1975. In 1962, Myers began a Baptist publications ministry in Saigon and was its director through 1964. He also was pastor of the Vietnamese-language Grace Baptist Church.

From 1965 to 1974, he was stationed in Da Nang, where he and his wife, Toni, engaged in church planting and lay leadership training in five heavily-populated northern provinces. They worked with three Da Nang congregations and more than 25 house churches. Myers also worked in refugee and relief efforts and taught at the Da Nang Theological Education by Extension center.

Myers was a consultant on Vietnamese ministry to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board from 1975 to 1977.

For Myers and his wife, close friendships with the Chinese date back to their youth. Both grew up in the Mississippi Delta (he in Skene, she in Boyle) where there's a sizable Chinese population. Myers, for example, had Chinese friends in a Boy Scout troop and among competitors in high school athletics.

A 1954 graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, Myers earned the master of divinity degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., in 1958. Prior to missionary appointment, he served churches in Ruleville, Tutwiler and Sumner, Miss., and Hardinsburg and Shepherdsville, Ky. He and his wife have four grown children.

In other actions, the board appointed 49 new missionaries and reappointed four couples. These bring the total additions for the year to 184.

One veteran missionary couple was reappointed the day after a son and daughter-in-law were appointed. Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Wakefield, missionaries for 20 years to Singapore and Malaysia, were assigned to work in India, where he will be a general evangelist. Their son and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. J. Mark Wakefield, will work in Fiji, where he, too, will be a general evangelist.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Huge Attendance  
Creates Problems

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press  
5/24/85

DALLAS (BP)--An expected registration of up to 30,000 messengers--by far the largest annual meeting in the 140-year history of the Southern Baptist Convention--is causing logistical problems for convention planners.

Because of the increased number of registered messengers, leaders of the convention have established several guidelines in an effort to handle the huge crowd and to allow each elected messenger an opportunity to participate.

Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, and chairman of the SBC Order of Business Committee, said seating in the Grand Hall of the Dallas Convention Center will be limited to registered messengers only during the opening day of the convention, Tuesday, June 11.

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Doors to the Grand Hall will be opened at 7:45 a.m. Tuesday, and admission will be limited to messengers who have their badges, Chapman said. The area will be closed to visitors and other non-messengers until 7:45 p.m., when convention officers and the Committee on Order of Business will decide whether to allow entry by non-messengers.

"We know this will create some inconvenience," Chapman told Baptist Press. "But we feel we have no choice other than to provide a seat for every registered messenger. We have tried to make an arrangement which will accommodate the additional number of messengers."

The guidelines on how to handle the unexpectedly large crowd were established May 23, when SBC President Charles Stanley, Chapman, Parliamentarian Wayne Allen of Memphis, Tenn., met with Convention Manager Tim A. Hedquist and Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

When the convention was planned, registration was estimated at 23,000, according to Hedquist. Now, he predicts at least 27,000 messengers, but adds registration could increase by as much as 5,000.

Seating in the Grand Hall—originally scheduled for 20,000 seats—will be expanded by opening West Hall, which will accommodate 6,300 additional messengers. With standing room for 3,700 more, the main hall should be able to accommodate 30,000 persons, Chapman said.

In addition, the Arena, adjacent to the Grand Hall, will be opened and will be able to accommodate 5,000 persons. A microphone and closed circuit television will be provided to allow those seated in the Arena to participate in business sessions and elections, Chapman said.

He added one of the convention officers will be stationed in the Arena, which will have an identification light directly connected with the main podium.

The Arena will be reserved first for messengers, but non-messengers will be allowed at the discretion of the convention officers and the Order of Business Committee, Chapman said.

Chapman, however, urged messengers to seek seating first in the Grand Hall before going to the Arena.

Visitors will be able to watch proceedings from the Theater, which has 1,700 seats. Two six-foot television screens will be used to broadcast the sessions, he said.

On Wednesday and Thursday, June 12-13, the West Hall will not be available and seating will be provided for 20,000 persons in the Grand Hall. On those days, seating in the Arena will be expanded to 7,300, and admission will be limited to messengers only until such time as the officers and Order of Business Committee deem otherwise, Chapman said.

Chapman suggested persons elected by their churches register as quickly as possible after arriving at the Convention Center, preferably on Sunday or Monday. The Registration area will be open at 2 p.m. Sunday, and will be open at 8:30 a.m. each day the convention is in session.

Admission to the meeting halls will be limited to those who already have registered and have their messenger badge, he said. The halls will be "secured and staffed by ushers, who will limit admission to only those already registered, he said. Chapman also urged messengers to cooperate with ushers, in order to facilitate an orderly convention.

The expected influx of 30,000 messengers has caused strain on several other areas of convention preparation.

The child care area, planned to accommodate 300 pre-school children, already is filled, Hedquist said, pointing out expansion is impossible because Texas child care laws do not allow the use of unauthorized facilities. Downtown churches have operating child care programs and cannot be expanded.

He suggested messengers with small children who have not pre-registered contact their hotels, which often have baby sitters available.

Letter Urging Prayer, Influence  
Draws Large Response: Elder

By Linda Lawson

BSSB-N

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Response to a May 8 letter to 400 key leadership Southern Baptist churches calling for prayer and servant leadership to bring healing in the denomination has been overwhelmingly positive, according to Sunday School Board president Lloyd Elder.

In the letter from Elder which was also sent to board trustees, SBC agency leaders, state convention presidents and executive directors, he urged, "Please, in the name of Christ and in behalf of millions of us Southern Baptists, use your voice and influence, 'not to lord it over th flock,' but to guide us through these next four crucial weeks."

Enclosed with the letter was a statement concerning election of officers in which Elder said he will not announce who he will support for SBC president. Also enclosed was an excerpt concerning servant leadership from Elder's book, Blueprints, an April 12 statement by state convention presidents and a response card in which recipients could ask to receive a copy of Blueprint and/or a statistical analysis of key leadership churches.

As of Friday, May 24, Elder said he had received 305 responses from the total mailing of approximately 500. Of those, 222 were from the 400 key leadership churches.

Elder said he chose to do the direct mailing (which originally was not for publication) because of a "deep and growing concern for the welfare of the convention and the need for short-range and long-range efforts at denomination renewal and reconciliation."

He said he was releasing the information because "the response has been phenomenal and most encouraging, the largest I have ever experienced in this kind of selective process." Many have written letters in addition to returning the response cards, Elder said. Others wrote notes on the cards.

"I have heard from outspoken Southern Baptists with strong, diverse convictions and experiences and from quieter but equally concerned fellow Baptists," Elder said.

Respondents have promised to pray and urge others to pray for the convention, he noted. "They have said, 'We will seek to provide servant leadership and we will seek to provide long-term renewal leadership in our denomination.'"

In the letter Elder listed nine ways the pastors could be a positive influence on messengers to the convention, including: pray, encourage unity, trust convention leadership, elect officers and trustees, adopt a trustworthy convention budget and unapologetically support the Cooperative Program.

Other suggested actions were: focus on the goals of Bold Mission Thrust, discuss resolutions, motions and reports and maintain goodwill, stability and joy.

"Four hundred pastors committed to trust-building could undergird elected leadership and put down any thought of losing our opportunity in the service of God through Bold Mission Thrust," Elder wrote.

However, he emphasized, "Whatever happens in Dallas, I am going to cast my life and th board toward 2000 A.D. for 50,000 churches and 24 million Bible-believing, evangelistic, cooperating world missionary Southern Baptists."

H said the 400 churches were selected using research methodology based on nine key leadership factors: membership, resident membership, baptisms, Sunday school enrollment, Sunday school attendance, church training enrollment, undesignated giving, Cooperative Program giving, and total mission expenditures.

In his statement concerning election of officers, Elder did not say who he will support for SBC president, but noted, "We have not just one or two, but scores of seasoned, Bible-believing, evangelistic, missionary cooperating Southern Baptists able to serve the convention as president...We desperately need a president who will believe in our work, lead us and encourag us in the days before us."



Elder said he sent the mailing because the denomination, the board and he personally need the prayers and servant leadership of the pastors.

"I am praying we'll meet each other, our responsibility and our gracious Lord in the Dallas convention sessions," he concluded.

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Bisagno, Young Seek  
Role As Conciliators

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press  
5/24/85

HOUSTON (BP)---Insisting, "some of us are beginning to feel encouraged," John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church in Houston, has helped launch yet another peace effort on the troubled waters of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Bisagno, who has been noticeable by his absence from any visible participation in the struggle which has shaken the 14.3-million member Southern Baptist Convention for the past six years, co-hosted a meeting May 22 with Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, which brought together some of the principal antagonists.

The meeting lasted more than eight hours.

"I have weighed heavily my place in the controversy," Bisagno said, explaining why he has stepped forward at this time. "Ed and I have sought to put our selves in the middle as conciliators and things seem to be progressing very quickly, I am very please at the prospects for progress---very encouraged."

The two Houston pastors decided to each invite one person and then to invite Paige Patterson, associate pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas and a leader in the inerrantist camp, and Russell H. Dilday Jr., president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth and a spokesman for the moderate group.

Both Patterson and Dilday were asked to bring someone of their own choosing. Dilday invited Landrum Leavell, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and Patterson invited Wayne Allen, pastor of Briarcrest Baptist Church, Memphis.

Bisagno invited John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., and Young invited Barry Landrum, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pasadena, Texas.

The group agreed to keep the details of their discussion secret, "lest something rock the boat," Bisagno said. He did say Sullivan is currently making contact with leaders across the convention who have proposed peace plans (such as former SBC president Franklin Paschall, the stat convention presidents and individual pastors).

Sullivan also is working to nail down a date when an effort can be made to mesh the peace initiatives into a single plan "we can support unanimously," Bisagno said. That gathering could involve a lot of people or representatives from each plan and might take place in person or by telephone, he added.

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Criswell Mass Mailing  
Supports Stanley

By Jim Jones

Baptist Press  
5/24/85

DALLAS (BP)---The pastor of First Baptist Church Dallas has sent letters to 36,000 Southern Baptist ministers urging them to reelect "God's prophet" as president of their convention.

The plea from W.A. Criswell, who leads the largest Southern Baptist congregation in the nation (25,000 members), asked the pastors to vote for Charles F. Stanley of Atlanta at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 11-15 in Dallas.

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"Let us work with our President, Dr. Charles Stanley of Atlanta, to win this lost world to Jesus," said the letter, mailed May 22. "He (Stanley) is building one of the great strategic churches (First Baptist of Atlanta) in our Southern Baptist Zion. He is God's prophet, preaching the gospel of salvation to uncounted thousands (on television) every week."

Russell Kaemmerling, editor of the Southern Baptist Advocate an independent journal which is involved in an effort to elect "inerrantists" to the presidency of the SBC and to eliminate perceived liberalism in the denomination, said he did not know the cost of the printing and mailing but that it was paid for with private funds.

Each of the visible groups in the SBC struggle have laid claim to the title "conservative" so the group backing the reelection of Stanley are often referred to as "inerrantists" and those supporting Amarillo pastor Winfred Moore are called "moderates."

Attendance at the Dallas convention is expected to be the largest, by five to ten thousand, ever. Estimates of the number of registered messengers from the 36,500 churches affiliated with the SBC range from 27,000 to 32,000.

Moderates are working to defeat Stanley, saying inerrantist presidents elected during the past six years have been making appointments which would allow fundamentalists to dominate the Baptist seminaries and other institutions.

Moderates criticize Stanley for not being active in Southern Baptist affairs and for his church's low percentage of giving to the Cooperative Program, the financial support for the mission activities of the denomination.

However his supporters say Stanley, who has a nationwide television ministry, has recently led his church to increase giving to the Southern Baptist causes.

Criswell whose church has 25,000 members, in most cases has stayed behind the scenes during the controversy. But one of his associate pastors, Paige Patterson, who also is president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, is one of the founders of the inerrantists push for power which began in 1979.

Many believe the Dallas Convention will be the denomination's most volatile period.

"In love and in compassion let us come together in Dallas this June as one great missionary minded family," Criswell letter says.

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(Jim Jones is religion editor of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.)