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Bennett Unveils Proposed
Educational Voucher Plan

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)—After holding it in the wings for a number of months, the Reagan administration finally ushered its proposed educational voucher program into the spotlight during a news conference Nov. 13.

The program, dubbed The Equity and Choice Act of 1985 (TEACH), would allow parents of educationally disadvantaged children to obtain vouchers that in turn could be "spent" at the school—public or private—of the parents' choosing.

Since last summer, U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett repeatedly has vowed to find a way around a Supreme Court decision which held unconstitutional New York City's program of sending public school employees into private schools to provide specialized services under Chapter I (formerly Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. During the news conference, Bennett stated the high court did "not say private and parochial students could not receive Chapter I services, but just not in the way they had been."

A written explanation provided by the Department of Education explained the proposed voucher program "would be clearly distinguishable, for it minimizes the 'entanglement' of church and state that concerned the court" in its earlier decision.

In introducing the proposed bill, Bennett said the voucher program will give parents "a ticket to find the best possible schools for their children." These schools, Bennett expanded, could include private, church-related elementary and secondary schools.

Currently, federal funds provided through Chapter I go to public schools that provide education services for children who are economically and educationally disadvantaged. These services typically are provided during the regular school day by trained specialists in separate classrooms. In some cases, instruction is offered after school.

Under the administration's proposal, the parent of a student eligible for Chapter I services could choose to allow his child to remain in the school the child currently attends, where the child would continue to receive compensatory services. The parent, however, could opt to obtain a voucher for use in:

- another public school in the same district—if the district permits such intradistrict transfers;
- a public school outside the local school district—if the other district accepts interdistrict transfers;
- an eligible private school.

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The voucher could be used for compensatory services provided by the school, for tuition, or for a combination of compensatory services and tuition, at the parent's option.

Bennett claimed the proposed legislation, which calls for the voucher program to take effect July 1, 1986, would accomplish three major goals:

- increase educational opportunity for disadvantaged children by expanding the range of choices available to them under Chapter I;
- increase parents' involvement by providing choices as to the educational program that best meets the needs of their children;
- promote a healthy rivalry among schools to meet the needs of disadvantaged children.

Some 4.8 million disadvantaged children now qualify for Chapter I participation, according to Department of Education figures.

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Eligibility for participation is determined by the local school district under criteria of the federal statute.

Although the average voucher would be worth \$600, the actual value would vary. A voucher would be worth a local district's total Chapter 1 allocation—minus administrative expenses—divided by the number of Chapter 1 students participating in the district.

Bennett stated the voucher program would be "revenue neutral"—no funds other than those already budgeted for Chapter 1 services would be required. Bennett's under secretary, Gary Bauer, contended budget costs have been a major obstacle in obtaining passage of the Reagan tuition tax credit proposals, but should not be a factor in Congress' decision.

The bill is expected to be introduced in Congress within a few days. Sponsors will be Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, and Rep. Pat Swindall, R-Ga.

"As chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, to which TEACH will be referred, I guarantee that this innovative and sensible approach will have high priority for serious consideration by the United States Senate," Hatch commented.

Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, however, expressed strong opposition to the bill.

"Vouchers are a backdoor attempt to dismantle federal aid to education and will cause irreparable harm to Chapter 1, by far one of the nation's most successful education programs," said Hawkins. "Bennett's plan to offer vouchers—worth about \$540—in the expectation that children will be able to gain admission to any school of their choice plays a cruel hoax on the nation's very poorest families.

"This legislation is loosely drawn and most likely unconstitutional. It is fatally flawed and will fall on its own weight."

Robert L. Maddox, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, echoed Hawkins' concern over the constitutionality of the proposal. "It is a clear violation of the establishment clause of the First Amendment," Maddox declared. "It also would be bad for schools—for wherever government money goes, government control will soon follow."

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, called the legislation "unfair, unconstitutional, undemocratic and unhealthy for public education."

"This is yet another attempt to divert dollars dedicated for public education into private and parochial schools," Dunn continued. "Virtually all Baptist conventions that represent the 27 million Baptists in this country have repeatedly reaffirmed their opposition to parochial schemes and they will surely see through this slick subterfuge."

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Conservative Resolutions Mark
Mississippi Baptist Convention

Baptist Press
11/14/85

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)—Mississippi Baptists concluded their annual convention by passing, almost without discussion, a slate of conservatively oriented resolutions.

The resolutions opposed state lotteries and parimutuel gambling, pornography, alcohol, illegal drugs, child abuse and tax code revisions which would eliminate tax deferred annuities.

Mississippi Baptists resolved to oppose and work for legislation to prohibit all abortions except to save the life of the mother. That resolution also called for churches to work to provide counseling, housing and adoption services for unwed mothers.

Another resolution, which was sent back to committee for reworking, but only to make it stronger, opposed the elimination of Blue Laws, calling for Sunday to continue to be a uniform day of rest.

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Earlier in the convention, which registered a record 1,831 messengers from churches across the state, Frank Gunn, pastor of First Baptist Church, Biloxi, was elected president to succeed Charles Pickering, a layman from Laurel.

Jerry Mixon, pastor of First Baptist Church, Winona, was elected first vice-president. Marvin Bond, a professor at Mississippi State University and a former missionary to Hong Kong, was elected second vice-president.

The convention also voted to sponsor a pastors' conference to precede next year's convention. This move effectively killed an unofficial pastors' conference begun this year. The officers of the unofficial version reported to the convention they would participate in the official one and were named to a planning committee by Pickering.

Messengers voted an \$18.5 million Cooperative Program budget for 1986, 36 percent of which goes to SBC causes outside the state (compared to 35.5 percent in 1985). A report of a \$40 million endowment campaign for Mississippi College, William Carey College, Blue Mountain College, and the Baptist Children's Village said that in the first few months of the campaign, \$10.9 million had been raised. Previous total endowment had been \$9 million.

The 1986 convention will meet at Jackson's First Baptist Church, Nov. 10-12.

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Penn.-So. Jersey
Vote For Waltz

Baptist Press
11/14/85

MONROEVILLE, Pa. (BP)—In its fifteenth annual meeting in Monroeville, Pa., the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-So. Jersey unanimously approved a possible \$100,000 mortgage to complete the purchase of a state convention building in Harrisburg, Pa., with closing date set for Feb. 1, 1986.

In other action, the executive board elected Marshall N. Chambers as director of evangelism and Brotherhood. Chambers has been an associate in the evangelism division for three years.

The convention heard a report from Dwight Moody, pastor of North Park Baptist Church, Pittsburgh, chairman of the Northeast task team on theological education.

Comprised of representatives from Pennsylvania-So. Jersey, New York, New England, Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia, the task team has become an advocate of theological education as a missions strategy throughout the United States. He also announced the Home Mission Board has approved a position to be titled coordinator of theological education. During the coming year, the HMB will work with seminary presidents to draft a job description.

Howard and Jean Girard, coordinators for volunteer work between Florida Baptists and Pennsylvania-So. Jersey, were honored for four years of faithful and effective service. Over 100 congregations in Pennsylvania-So. Jersey are linked with partner churches in Florida.

A budget of \$1,931,231 was approved for 1986, with 27 percent going to national and worldwide SBC causes, an increase of .5 percent.

Among resolutions passed were those supporting the efforts of the SBC Peace Committee, encouragement for churches to minister to the hungry and to contribute to hunger relief, and to actively work in opposition to the gambling movement. Atlantic City, the world's largest gambling center, is located in the convention.

David Waltz, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Williamsport, Pa., was elected president. His father, Joseph Waltz, was the first executive secretary of the convention.

Next year's meeting is scheduled for Temple Baptist Church, York, Penn., Nov. 6-8.

Baptists Join Relief Efforts
After Colombian Volcano Erupts

By Art Toalston

BOGOTA, Colombia (BP)—An initial \$10,000 in Southern Baptist relief funds was allocated for west-central Colombia soon after volcano Nevada Ruiz erupted unexpectedly Nov. 13, inundating at least one city and three villages with a wall of mud and water.

Early casualty estimates are 15,000 dead in the city of Armero and 5,000 additional dead in the surrounding agricultural area. Eighty-five to 90 percent of Armero was reportedly inundated with mud and water as deep as 15 feet. Estimates of the city's population range from 30,000 to 50,000.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board allocated \$10,000 to be used by missionaries there working in cooperation with Red Cross relief efforts in the wake of what is likely to be Colombia's worst natural disaster in recent history.

"This appears to be such a widespread disaster that there's really no way of knowing yet how extensive the loss of life is," said the mission's administrative chairman, Ellis Leagans.

None of the 80-plus Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to Colombia and no Colombian Baptist congregations are reported among the volcano's victims. The closest missionary to the disaster is Leagans, who has been living in Ibague, a city of a half-million people about 75 miles south of the disaster area. When the eruption occurred, Leagans and his family were in Bogota, about 125 miles to the east of the volcano.

Residents of Ibague, including about 225 who attend the city's only Baptist church, may have relatives and friends who were claimed in the disaster, Leagans said.

There was a small Baptist congregation in Armero about 15 years ago, Leagans said, but he knew of no current Baptist meetings in the city.

The volcano had been smoking for several weeks but scientists had expressed no alarm. The volcano has not erupted in recent history.

The extensive damage was caused not by lava and ashes, Leagans said, but by landslides rushing down the 15,000- to 16,000-foot Andes Mountain slopes into the Magdalena River. Heavy rains during the past two months contributed to the rampage, he said.

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Florida Moves Beyond
50-50 CP Income Split

By Greg Warner

Baptist Press
11/14/85

MIAMI (BP)—Messengers to the Florida Baptist state convention adopted a record budget, took a strong stand against all abortions and denied the appointment of a prominent conservative leader to the powerful State Board of Missions.

One year after becoming the first state Baptist convention to divide its income equally between state causes and the national Cooperative Program, the Florida convention again raised its unified giving.

Although the increase is small (from 50 percent to 50.1 percent), it is part of a plan to increase Cooperative Program giving by .1 percent each year. "We just could not stop at 50 percent," said Executive Director-Treasurer Dan C. Stringer.

The \$24 million total budget, the largest ever for the state, is an increase of \$2 million over last year.

For the most part, Florida Baptists followed this year's trend of state conventions devoid of the controversies that have rocked recent SBC meetings. Only twice did messengers depart from scheduled or anticipated actions, once to debate abortion and later to remove Jacksonville pastor Jerry Vines, as a nominee to the State Board of Missions.

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The abortion issue surfaced in the annual report of the State Board, the committee which acts ad interim between meetings of the state convention. In authorizing a program of counseling women with unwanted pregnancies, the State Board had instructed the convention staff to prepare materials which "include the biblical, ethical and theological position abortion is morally wrong except for instances of incest, rape and when the life of the mother is in danger."

While messengers voted to accept the Capital State Board report unchanged, a separate motion called for a more restrictive stand in the counseling materials and declared all abortions are immoral, including those that follow rape, incest and efforts to save the life of the mother.

Although the motion to instruct the state staff was debated for an hour, it passed by an estimated 2-1 margin. The action carries more weight than traditional resolutions against abortions because it directs the type of counseling that can be offered pregnant women through the convention Christian Social Ministries program and children's homes.

Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, is a member of the SBC Peace Committee and a leader of conservatives in the denominational controversy. Although Vines was asked to be on the State Board by the committee on nominations, messengers rejected the nomination after another Jacksonville pastor noted Vines' lack of involvement in the local Baptist association. Billy Strickland, pastor of First Baptist, Oceanway, was elected without debate in place of Vines.

Florida Baptists elected a pastor, a layman and a woman to the three convention offices. Max Cadenhead, pastor of First Baptist, Naples, and this year's first vice-president, was chosen president. James L. Redman, a lawyer from Plant City, was elected first vice-president. Laura Monroe, a pastor's wife from Fort Walton Beach, was elected second vice-president.

Other actions of the convention relaxed enrollment restrictions on Baptist Bible Institute, raised the number of trustees at the school and authorized a committee to study the role of the institute. BBI is a ministerial training school for non-college graduates. Florida Baptists approved a partnership with Baptists in the African country of Mali, Florida's first international partnership.

Only two resolutions were adopted by the convention—one in appreciation of the host city and the other opposing a state-operated lottery.

A total of 1,557 messengers and 1,072 visitors attended the meeting.

Next year's session is scheduled for Nov. 10-12 in Pensacola.

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Louisiana Baptists
Launch Mission '90

Baptist Press
11/14/85

LAKE CHARLES (BP)—Louisiana Baptists launched a campaign, elected officers, adopted a budget and protested gambling, pornography and homosexuality during their 138th annual meeting.

The campaign is Mission '90, a program to raise \$10 million to start 250 churches during the next five years. Messengers unanimously approved the concept and devoted much of their attention during the three-day meeting to its implications.

Mission '90 was the focus of one entire session of convention Nov. 11-13 in Lake Charles, La., and no fewer than five speakers in other sessions discussed the challenges and ramifications of starting the churches.

The new leader is Robert Magee, pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Ruston for the past 21 years. Convention messengers chose Magee for a one-year term as president of the 571,083-member LBC. The other candidate was Ron Herrod, pastor of First Baptist Church of Kenner.

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Other new convention officers are first vice-president Carroll Karkalitz, a layman and member of Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles; and second vice-president Dorys Wiegand, a laywoman and member of First Baptist Church of Jennings.

The 1986 budget which messengers approved totals \$16.6 million, a 3.7 percent increase over the 1985 budget of \$16 million. Of the \$16.6 million, \$16,265,000 will be spent on Louisiana Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention causes. The remaining \$335,000 will be channeled to the Southern Baptist Retirement Program.

LBC causes will receive \$10,653,575, or 65.5 percent of the total LBC-SBC portion of the budget. SBC causes will receive \$5,611,425, or 34.5 percent (compared to 34.25 percent in 1985) of the LBC-SBC portion.

Gambling, pornography and homosexuality were topics of three of 10 resolutions passed by convention messengers.

They stated their opposition to gambling and a state-run lottery, pornography and measures to eliminate Louisiana's Sunday closing laws. They called homosexuality a "lifestyle (that) is unnatural and therefore is an aberration of God's plan for humankind," but they urged Louisiana Baptists to "minister redemptively to homosexuals, calling them to God's love."

In other matters, messengers approved extensions of LBC missions partnerships with Baptists in Nevada and Zimbabwe through Dec. 31, 1987 and amended the LBC Bylaws to allow the Order of Business Committee to solicit convention speakers "up to three years in advance."

The convention drew 1,130 participants, including 868 messengers and 262 visitors.

Next year's meeting will be Nov. 10-12 at Louisiana College in Pineville.

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Illinois Vote Margin
Stalls Capital Funds Drive

Baptist Press
11/14/85

COUNTRY CLUB HILLS, Ill. (BP)—Illinois Baptists decided by a single vote to enter into a \$2-\$3 million capital fund drive, then backed away from the campaign in the interest of harmony during their annual meeting Nov. 5-7.

Illinois Baptist State Association President Charles Chandler told messengers as he announced the split vote: "The majority has said, 'Go ahead,' but I don't feel good about that." Keith Stanford, messenger from Logan Street Baptist Church, Mt. Vernon, told messengers he voted with the majority, but added: "It is obvious we have not found the will of the Lord. Majority rule is one way to find the will of the Lord but when it's this close, it seems evident we haven't heard from God yet."

Messengers subsequently referred the matter to the state board of directors.

If it had been approved, the campaign would have set up a church site endowment fund, provided construction monies for two state-owned camp and retreat centers and the Baptist Children's Home, and allowed construction of a Baptist Student Union facility at Illinois State University at Normal.

Some messengers who spoke against the drive objected on the basis that it would compete in their churches for Cooperative Program and special mission offerings. Others objected to the \$273,170 cost of running the campaign and some to the idea of utilizing the services of an out-of-state consultant (Tyler Associates of Fort Worth, Texas).

Messengers adopted a record \$5,904,814 budget with a Cooperative Program goal of \$4,354,338. They agreed to forward 43.5 percent of Cooperative Program receipts (\$1,894,137) to worldwide missions and education causes, a half percent increase from 1985.

Chandler, pastor of Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church, Urbana, was reelected to a second term as state association president. His church will host next year's meeting Oct. 29-31.

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Bennett Cook, HMB Loans
Associate, Dies of Cancer

ATLANTA (BP)—Bennett C. Cook, associate director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's church loans division, died after a long bout with cancer.

Cook, 59, had been a long-time staff member of the Northwest Baptist Convention in Oregon and Washington before joining the Home Mission Board staff 14 years ago.

A native of Texas, Cook was interim executive secretary of the Northwest Convention in 1971. He also had been the Northwest convention's associate executive director, director of church services division, Sunday school secretary and associate director of the evangelism-Brotherhood department.

From 1951 to 1959 he had been education and/or music director of Texas Baptist churches in Port Arthur, Dallas, Mineral Wells, Hughes Springs and DeKalb, from 1951 to 1959.

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Vision 2000
Focus In New York

Baptist Press
11/14/85

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (BP)—The 16th annual meeting of the Baptist Convention of New York was held in Rochester Nov. 7-8. The focus of the meeting was the unanimous acceptance of the long-range strategy plan, entitled BCNY: Vision 2000.

BCNY: Vision 2000 took 15 months to develop and write and provides direction for the convention to the year 2000 A.D.

Over 100 persons representing a cross section of churches, association leaders, convention staff and the BCNY executive board were involved in the process.

All convention officers were reelected, including: Ed Hewlett, pastor of the Metropolitan Baptist Church, Rochester, president; Sam Simpson, pastor of the Bronx Baptist Church, first vice-president, and Conrado Navarro, pastor of William Carey Baptist Church, second vice-president.

The convention unanimously approved a resolution affirmed the Cooperative Program and set as a goal 50-50 distribution of Cooperative Program gifts between the Baptist Convention of New York and the Southern Baptist Convention causes.

The 1986 budget includes a one percent increase in the convention's voluntary contributions to the national Cooperative Program to 24 percent. The total 1986 budget is \$2,167,473.

Also adopted was a resolution urging prayer and support for the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee. A resolution reaffirming the partnership between the Georgia Baptist Convention and the Baptist Convention of New York was enthusiastically adopted as a new covenant of cooperation was presented to both conventions.

Other resolutions dealt with the need for spiritual awakening and evangelism with special emphasis on "Good News America" and appreciation for local hospitality.

Next year's convention will be Nov. 6-8 at Calvary Baptist Church in Aberden, N.J.

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King's Bridge Offers
New Retirement Model

By Sherri Brown

Baptist Press
11/14/85

ATLANTA (BP)—The dedication of King's Bridge retirement community was the culmination of 14 years of work and a life-long dream for Scottish architect/developer Hamish Fraser.

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King's Bridge, sponsored by Briarcliff Baptist Church, Atlanta, and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, is Fraser's answer to Christian community for the elderly.

Fraser's dream began as a child, when he spent weekends in the remote fishing villages of Scotland's Shetland Islands where his Baptist lay-preacher father led village worship services. He was impressed with the community spirit he witnessed--where the elderly were cared for by family and friends until their death.

Fraser came to America in the early 1970s to work. In response to his surprise at the fragmentation of the American family, Fraser began to dream of a retirement community affiliated with a church that would care for spiritual needs, as well as providing for physical needs.

Eventually, Fraser met Wendell Belew, Home Mission Board missions ministries director. "I could tell he had a burning mission," recalled Belew. "And I felt I should be a facilitator."

The two studied other retirement communities and Fraser decided not to allow government funding through Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs because he "wanted the church to control the program." Also, HUD had stopped funding long-term projects to insure the homes were kept for their original purposes.

After two years of study and consideration, Briarcliff Baptist Church, where Belew is a member, offered five acres and a commitment to developing ministries to the King's Bridge community. With that promise, Fraser began financial and marketing feasibility studies, financed by the Home Mission Board.

"We do help finance some special experimental projects occasionally," explained Belew. "And we wanted to see if a church could really do this."

This project differed from other church-sponsored retirement homes because the church accepted no government funding and still decided to remain a non-profit organization.

The retirement community is owned by a board of directors--made up of members of Briarcliff Church which is next door to the community, and at least five employees of the Home Mission Board. Residents buy the right to live in one of the 200 units and then pay a monthly maintenance fee which includes one meal a day, 24-hour security, light house cleaning and minor health care. Whenever they terminate their residence, at least 60 percent of the entrance fee will be returned.

Fraser and Belew met difficulty as they sought venture capital of \$500,000. "Everyone thought it was a great idea, but no one wanted to put money on it," recalled Belew.

Finally, a family friend of Fraser's, Ian Brown, president of the British Linen Bank in Scotland, lent the money. "Bank presidents are not notoriously sentimental people, but we are very sentimental about King's Bridge," said Brown at the dedication.

Fraser designed the four buildings in a modified 1920s style, to bring back memories of residents' young adulthood. "I have endeavored to make this their home; it is not an institution," he said.

Fraser believes architecture lost a sense for beauty during the 1950s and 60s. "I've tried to make King's Bridge intimate, human. I want it to relate to something inside the residents."

Fraser's wife, Sarah, hunted and found classic antique furnishings for offices, lobbies, parlors and the dining room. "This is an expression of quiet elegance, but not opulence," said Fraser. "Southern Baptists are committed to stewardship, so this building had to be a good use of funds, but it doesn't have to be ugly," he continued.

However, because of high quality building and furnishings, as well as the lack of government funding, living quarters are more expensive than some. Entrance fees range from \$30,000 to \$95,000. "I've taken a beating from a lot of people because this isn't low income housing," said Belew--whose father lives at King's Bridge.

"But nine out of ten people over 75 are women. They're frightened to live alone, they don't want to live with their children, and they don't want to move to Florida. We can provide a beautiful and secure home: after all, God cares about middle income people, too."

"It is for the residents we have done this," said Fraser. "They have decided to spend the rest of their lives here. That's humbling to me."

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

Georgia Baptists
Meet In Peace

Baptist Press
11/14/85

JEKYLL ISLAND, Ga. (BP)—More than 3,000 Georgia Baptists attended the annual meeting of the Georgia Baptist Convention and focused on peace and reconciliation.

Messengers met for three days without a squabble or debate. They approved a record budget for 1986 of \$24,042,000 and a new capital improvements and endowment program totaling \$16,100,000. The budget, if fully funded, will send 48 percent of undesignated gifts to support worldwide Southern Baptist Convention causes.

Messengers adopted a resolution pledging prayer support for the SBC Peace Committee. They also urged Baptists not to take their grievances into the public arena, an obvious reference opposing a possible lawsuit against the SBC for parliamentary action in Dallas last June.

The Georgia Baptist Children's Home changed its name to add "and Family Ministry" to the title. In so doing, it will begin providing adoptive services, aid to unwed mothers and other family ministries.

Georgia Baptists voted to extend for five years a missions partnership with the Baptist Convention of New York, a sister state relationship that started in 1978. Georgia Baptists also have a missions partnership with Baptists of Liberia.

They also voted to observe a special day of pray for farmers and their families and to urge government leaders to do all possible to assist farmers. In Georgia, churches were called on to conduct special emphasis on soil and water conservation.

One brief motion voiced gratitude for SBC President Charles Stanley "showing the nation that Baptists as a whole are Bible believing, God fearing people." Stanley is pastor of First Baptist Church in Atlanta. He spoke at the pre-convention rally at Jekyll Island attended by an overflow crowd of about 3,500 persons.

Floyd F. Roebuck was reelected president of the Georgia Baptist Convention without opposition. He is pastor of First Baptist Church in Rome, Ga.

The 1986 Georgia Baptist Convention will meet Nov. 10-12 at Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta.

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