



**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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85-147

**Crowders To Proceed  
With Bylaws Lawsuit**

By Dan Martin

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--A group headed by Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Crowder of Birmingham, Ala., will proceed with the filing of a lawsuit against the Southern Baptist Convention.

Crowder told Baptist Press the group—"Baptists Committed to Fairness"—"has instructed its attorneys, Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore of Atlanta, to proceed with the filing of a suit to enforce the existing bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The Birmingham layman declined to name others involved in the group, but said he and other representatives will meet with attorney Emmet J. Bondurant in Atlanta Friday (Nov. 22) to discuss the suit, including the specific complaint, who will be named as defendants and in which court--state or federal--the suit will be filed.

Crowder said "Baptists Committed to Fairness" are from "several states" but declined to comment further "because that is involved in the drafting of the complaint." Earlier, Crowder had indicated the suit may be a "class action," which seeks to have a number of persons join the complaint.

He said "it is expected the suit will be filed in a court in Georgia in late November or early December," noting the SBC is a Georgia corporation.

Bondurant told Baptist Press the suit could be filed either in federal district court or in Fulton County Superior Court. "That decision will be made when we have our conference with Mr. Crowder and the other plaintiffs."

The focus of Crowder's complaint is Bylaw 16 of the Southern Baptist Convention, which says members of the SBC Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees "shall be nominated" by the convention's Committee on Committees.

During the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC, June 11-13, in Dallas, SBC President Charles F. Stanley of Atlanta, ruled challenges to the nominations of the Committee on Committees must be made one-by-one. His ruling was overturned by a ballot vote (12,576 to 11,801).

Subsequently, on the advice of Parliamentarian Wayne Allen of Briarcrest Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., Stanley said nominations may come only from the Committee on Committees and ruled further efforts to amend the report out of order. Amid near pandemonium, the Committee on Boards slate of nominees was elected 13,123 to 9,581.

Crowder has claimed the interpretation and rulings on Bylaw 16 violated his rights as a messenger. The Crowders and Bondurant appeared at the September meeting of the SBC Executive Committee, seeking to have the body overturn the action of the convention. The Executive Committee, after an executive session, voted to "affirm" the actions of the convention.

In late October and early November the Executive Committee's Bylaws Workgroup conducted two telephone conference calls and announced they will present an amendment to Bylaw 16 when the Executive Committee meets Feb. 17-19, 1986, in Nashville.

The amendment will allow further nominations from the floor, but limits nominations to one per messenger, thus eliminating the proposal of alternate slates.

Crowder and Bondurant were critical of the Bylaws Workgroup action, as well as the Executive Committee's response to the complaint.

"The...amendment imposes even greater restrictions on the messengers than did Dr. Stanley's ruling in Dallas," Crowder said. "As a practical matter, this proposal effectively blocks all power of the SBC messengers to amend the report...."

Bondurant said there currently are 54 members of the Committee on Boards and to amend "would require 54 people making 54 separate nominations. As a practical matter, it could never be successfully amended unless the convention is prepared to stay convened for several weeks and to devote sufficient time to this matter."

Crowder said because the Executive Committee "affirmed" the actions of the Dallas convention, and the SBC Peace Committee "has announced its decision to address doctrinal questions first, it does not appear that any of the issues concerning the integrity of the SBC bylaws will be addressed within the SBC before the Atlanta convention (the annual meeting of the SBC, June 10-12, 1986)."

"For these reasons, 'Baptists Committed to Fairness' feel that all remedies within SBC procedures have been exhausted. The SBC Executive Committee must now bear the responsibility for the fact that the bylaw violations must be remedied by a court decree, rather than by action from within the SBC," Crowder added.

Crowder quoted an article from an Atlanta newspaper which said the SBC "may be on the brink of schism," and said the group "does not wish to see such schism occur, nor does it wish to see the democratic principles embodied in the SBC bylaws ignored."

He claimed the actions of the Executive Committee and the Bylaws Workgroup "have made it abundantly clear that the time for quiet efforts to effect change has passed. These efforts toward compromise and the spirit of compromise are not being reciprocated."

The layman noted Stanley had quoted I Corinthians 6:1-8, in a previous newstory. The Scripture concerns Christians taking other Christians to court "before unbelievers."

"I knew that Scripture before he (Stanley) quoted it," Crowder said. "I believe I have done everything I can to try to keep from going to court. What Dr. Stanley has failed to realize is that the Scripture is a two-edged sword. It is more incumbent on Dr. Stanley, the Executive Committee and the officers of the convention to try to settle this matter out of court than it is to me.

"I have called to their attention that there was a wrong committed. I have spent much time and several thousand dollars trying to do right. I have tried in good faith, and now I am just leaving it in the hands of the Lord.

"Dr. Stanley violated the bylaws; Bob Crowder didn't. He (Stanley) hasn't said the first word. I haven't heard Dr. Stanley or Wayne Allen or anybody trying to make things right with the 12,500 people who said they had done wrong. They have the responsibility under Scripture to make things right, and as far as I am concerned they broke the constitution and bylaws. Bob Crowder didn't."

He added, "in my opinion" the Executive Committee, in declining to act and in "affirming" the actions of the SBC, "did worse than Stanley did."

Crowder added he plans to "do whatever is necessary to get the bylaws enforced...to correct the violation and to make sure they aren't misinterpreted anymore. Somebody has got to have the courage to stand up and fight for our rights. They violated them...Dr. Stanley and his parliamentarian."

Bondurant added he has been "disappointed in the response" of the convention officials and the Executive Committee. "There are those who profess a desire to avoid a confrontation, but they seem unwilling to take any steps to that end."

Bondurant said the suit "will probably" name the SBC, and the Executive Committee, which is incorporated in Tennessee. It might name Stanley, Allen or others, he said, adding "there are a number of other possibilities."

Ingram To Resign  
As Oklahoma Executive

BETHANY, Okla. (BP)—Joe L. Ingram, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma since 1971, will step aside June 30, 1986 to become fulltime president of of the Baptist Health Care Corporation.

In making that announcement at the annual state convention, Ingram emphasized he is not retiring, but rather merely "completing the task" set before him 15 years ago. Ingram, who will be 66 in January, already is president of the Health Care Corporation which operates nine hospitals and four retirement villages but will not devote fulltime to that job.

In an unusually harmonious meeting, all three men nominated to state office were elected without opposition.

Wendell Estep, pastor of Council Road Baptist Church, Bethany, (where the convention was held) was reelected to a second term as president. Rod Masteller, pastor of Putnam City Baptist Church of Oklahoma City and this year's pastor's conference president, was elected first vice-president. Keith Russell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Fletcher, whose church gives 30 percent of undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program, was elected second vice-president.

The business sessions were only a few minutes long as messengers approved a budget of \$17.5 million which was virtually the same as 1985. The same 50 percent will be passed on to worldwide Southern Baptist causes through the Cooperative Program.

Resolutions commended the Oklahoma disaster relief team of 24 men who spent two weeks in Mexico following the earthquake, reaffirmed opposition to ordination of women, gambling, beverage alcohol and expressed disapproval of an Oct. 31 Baptist Messenger story.

The story in the newsjournal of the BGOO was based on an interview on death row with Robbie Johnson, a Baptist who was convicted of robbery and murder during a Dec. 14, 1984 robbery of a Geronimo bank. The resolution put the convention on record encouraging the editor and staff of the publication "to exercise caution and sensitivity to counsel relative to such matters." Those who pushed the resolution felt the Messenger had been insensitive to the victims, three of whom were members of Geronimo First Baptist Church.

The 1986 convention will meet for the fourth straight year at Council Road Baptist Church, Bethany, Nov. 10-12.

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Virginia Baptists  
To Study Immersion

Baptist Press  
11/19/85

SALEM, Va. (BP)—Virginia Baptists, during their annual meeting Nov. 12-13, authorized a committee to study a constitutional provision concerning "believer's baptism by immersion."

George Euting, pastor of New Bridge Baptist Church of Richmond, Va., offered a motion calling for a committee to study and bring to the 1986 annual meeting an interpretation of Article III of the Constitution of the Baptist General Association of Virginia which concerns membership in the BGAV.

The section reads: "The General Association shall be composed of the officers of the General Association and messengers elected by Baptist churches which follow the New Testament teaching of salvation by grace and believer's baptism by immersion...."

Euting told messengers to the annual meeting he is concerned about churches which accept members without immersion and wants "the body to state its policy considering churches that accept members without immersion."

The study committee will be appointed by Sherrill G. Stevens, who was elected president of the Virginia Association during the meeting. Committee size was not specified in the motion.

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Messengers also affirmed the Religious Herald, newsjournal of the BGAV, took an offering to help victims of flooding in Virginia, adopted a budget of \$13,925,000 and heard a report on religious liberty.

On the first day of the convention, messengers adopted a statement expressing "gratitude" to the Religious Herald and its staff "for credibility and forthrightness" in reporting news of importance. On the following day, a resolution critical of the Herald for publishing controversial stories was turned back because of the affirmation.

The resolution critical of the Herald was introduced by Tommy Taylor, pastor of London Bridge Baptist Church of Virginia Beach. Taylor mentioned an article concerning Robison B. James, a professor at the University of Richmond, alleging "militant inerrantists are heretics," and another article concerning the controversy in the denomination.

It asked the BGAV "to go on record imploring the Religious Herald and staff to heed the voice of our Southern Baptist Convention and of the convention elected Peace Committee...and to use more caution, discretion and restraint."

The resolution, however, was not considered as officials pointed to the previous action, in which they said messengers "overwhelmingly recorded gratitude..." to the Herald.

Messengers also declined to adopt an anti-abortion resolution. The resolutions committee told messengers it "felt the BGAV has spoken on that (issue) enough." The recommendation was supported by a ballot vote.

A special offering to provide assistance to flood victims in the Salem-Roanoke area "as well as all people in need of assistance throughout the state" collected \$6,107.50. The area had been hit by heavy flooding prior to the convention.

Messengers also adopted a statement from a Religious Liberty Committee which urges churches to observe the bicentennial of an act for religious liberty, which was passed in January of 1786.

The committee, chaired by Robert McKinney, pastor of Tappahannock Baptist Church, issued a report on religious liberty. It said, in part:

"The Scriptures, the United States Constitution and our Baptists heritage issue a clarion call for society in general and for Baptists in particular to support the concept of the open forum both in theory and practice.

"We are challenged to preserve our own right and privilege to believe as we feel led by God to do so, and to proclaim that belief before all who desire to hear us. We are also challenged to preserve the right and privilege of others to believe and to proclaim as they are so led, even when those beliefs and proclamations may contradict our own.

"An open forum of religious opinions, convictions and interpretations preserves the dynamic of diversity and of the free exchange of ideas and concepts. It protects the right of individuals to speak their hearts and minds without fear that their personal integrity, denominational loyalty or Christian commitment will be called into question."

In addition to electing Stevens, pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Richmond, as president, succeeding layman Earl A. Scott, who served the traditional one-year term, messengers also elected W. Wesley Huff, pastor of Wytheville Baptist Church, first vice-president, and Don Reid, pastor of First Baptist Church, Galax, as second vice-president.

Under Phase One of the \$13.9 million budget, Virginia Baptists will retain 62 percent for state causes and sent 38 percent to support the worldwide missionary, evangelism and educational enterprises of the Southern Baptist Convention. The distribution is the same as under the 1985 budget.

The 1986 annual meeting will be Nov. 11-12 in the Richmond Marriott Hotel.

Northwest Convention  
Cuts Budget Three Percent

YAKIMA, Wash. (BP)—A cut in the operating budget and a farewell to churches which have been a part of its fellowship for more than 30 years were key items at the 1985 annual meeting of the Northwest Baptist Convention.

During a fairly short business session the convention adopted a 1986 Cooperative Program budget of \$1,491,564—three percent below last year's budget. The amount sent on to world mission causes through the Cooperative Program remains the same, 33 percent.

Symbolic goodbyes were exchanged between Canadian representatives to the convention and those on the state side as the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists look forward to becoming an independent entity next May.

A special plaque expressing appreciation for the Northwest Baptist Convention's 32 years of support was given to Cecil Sims, executive director, by Canadian coordinator, Allen Schmidt. Sims reciprocated by presenting Schmidt with a mock check representing the over \$55,000 received in the 1985 state mission offerings designated for Canadian missions.

The messengers also approved the designation of its state mission offering monies over the next three years to support the Vision Northwest 2000, a fifteen year effort to expand the ministry of Southern Baptists in the Northwest.

Clint Ashley, pastor of the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Pullman, Wash., was reelected as president of the Northwest Convention while Gene Dempsey, pastor the Pinehurst Baptist Church in Everett, Wash., and Omer Hyde, retiring director of associational missions, Eugene, Ore., was elected as first and second vice-presidents respectively.

The Nov. 12-14 gathering in Yakima, Wash., drew 511 messengers and 56 visitors, despite subfreezing temperatures. Next year's Northwest Baptist Convention is scheduled for Nov. 18-20 in Spokane, Wash.

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Hawaii Baptists Address  
Volatile Public Issues

Baptist Press  
11/19/85

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (BP)—Hawaii Baptists took positions on a number of volatile issues during their annual meeting—including abortion, the growing problem of homelessness on the islands and a land use ordinance.

Messengers spoke to the abortion issues on five points as they affirmed the truth of Scripture regarding the sacredness and dignity of human life and God's sovereignty; opposed all abortions except in the case of incest, rape or to save the life of the mother; opposed the use of federal and/or Hawaii state funds for the performance of such abortions; commended those of the medical profession who refuse to perform abortions, and affirmed their Christian responsibility to minister appropriately to women considering abortion.

Hawaii Baptists took the occasion of their 43rd annual meeting at First Southern Baptist Church, Pearl Harbor, to oppose a proposed land use ordinance which would place "excessive financial and temporal restraints" on the construction and operation of religious institutions.

The convention went on record opposing the ordinance with the recommendation that changes be implemented in order to protect the constitutional rights of citizens.

Messengers also noted that projects to beautify downtown Honolulu are bringing pressure on low income properties in the areas, leading to costly renovation and resulting higher rents. Tenants of these buildings are being evicted and many forced into the "tragedy of homelessness."

The convention stated it will "encourage and lobby for" low rental properties to be provided for residents with low incomes.

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Also HBC affiliated churches were challenged to give financial aid in housing the homeless; to make immediate and on-going decisions to offer temporary emergency housing to those without shelter and individual Hawaiian Baptists were urged to be in regular prayer for those in power--whether government officials, legislators or property owners.

Other resolutions opposed state lotteries, pari-mutuel gambling and legalized gambling of any kind, and opposed any sexual orientation legislation which would force the HBC to employ disclosed and active homosexuals.

W.C. Garland, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Pearl Harbor, was reelected president; Clifford Hoff, pastor of Olivet Baptist Church, Honolulu, was reelected first vice-president, and Paul Kaneshiro, pastor of Waiālae Baptist Church, Honolulu, was elected second vice-president.

Messengers also adopted a 1985 budget of \$1,488,519. Of this amount \$793,895 is expected to come from churches affiliated with the HBC. Most of the remainder will come from the Home Mission Board and the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The HBC will send 27.25 percent (an increase of .25 percent) of income from local churches to worldwide Southern Baptist Convention programs through the Cooperative Program.

The 1986 convention will be Nov. 6-8 at Kihei, Maui.

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Kirby Clark Elected  
Seminary Studies Director

Baptist Press  
11/19/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Kirby L. Clark has been elected director of the seminary studies department of the Seminary External Education Division, effective Jan. 1, 1986.

Clark, a doctoral candidate at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, will oversee six off-campus theological education programs operated by the department on behalf of the six Southern Baptist seminaries. Master's level courses are offered in Baltimore; Chicago; Jackson, Tenn.; Little Rock, Ark.; New York City and Orlando, Fla.

Raymond M. Rigdon, executive director of the Seminary External Education Division, announced Clark's election by the division's governing board, made up of the six seminary presidents. The seminary studies division was established in 1982, along with the seminary extension department.

Clark has been a teaching assistant in adult education at Southwestern seminary. He is scheduled to receive the Ed.D. degree there in December. He also is minister of education in the Birdville Baptist Church in Fort Worth. His previous work experience includes service as a church administrator and as an officer in the United States Army.

The Illinois native holds a bachelor of arts degree from the University of New Mexico and master's degrees from Western Kentucky University and Southwestern seminary. He and his wife, Deborah Sue, have three children.

Johnson succeeds Michael D. Johnson, who resigned in May to become minister of education and outreach at First Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, Ark.

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Church In Debt?  
Sell Your House

Baptist Press  
11/19/85

PUSAN, South Korea (BP)—Would you sell your house to pay off your church's debt? Yoon Young Jong did.

Yoon, a deacon at Young Jin Baptist Church in Pusan, South Korea, is a no-nonsense Christian. When his church ran into serious construction debt six years ago, the pastor asked the deacons if they loved Jesus enough to pledge large sums of money.

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A tearful Yoon had no money to give; he'd already contributed beyond his means. So he sold his small house. All proceeds went to help pay off the church debt, except for a small percentage to buy land for a new house someday.

For part of the cold winter of '79, Yoon, his mother, wife and four children lived in a tent on the church property. Church members worried. Non-believers laughed.

It didn't bother Yoon. "Our whole family was united in this decision," he said. "We did it very openly and very gladly, with joy. We believed that those who obeyed the Lord and were faithful, that God would show them the way."

What nobody knew, except for the pastor, was that Yoon also cashed in his retirement fund at Wallace Memorial Baptist Hospital, where he's worked for 23 years, to buy a boiler to heat the church during that frigid winter. He usually arrived at church two hours before Sunday school to feed wood into the boiler so his fellow believers could worship without overcoats.

The church paid its debt. And within a year, Yoon built a new house for his family on a small piece of land purchased from missionaries. "People were amazed," he recalled with a chuckle. "They had said, 'Look at that guy. He believes in Jesus and he helped build his church but he's a fool because he lost his house.' Then God turned around and built us a home and provided for us."

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(Adapted from the October-November 1985 issue of The Commission, magazine of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.)

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

Reagan Vetoes Treasury  
Postal Appropriations Bill

Baptist Press  
11/19/85

WASHINGTON (BP)--Citing what he called "an ingrained incapacity to tackle the large budget deficit," President Reagan vetoed a bill containing \$820 million in federal subsidies to provide reduced mailing rates for non-profit mailers.

The vetoed bill would have provided fiscal 1986 funds for the Treasury Department, Postal Service, Executive Office of the President and various other agencies. Funds budgeted in the bill for the Postal Service would have allowed the retention of reduced mailing rates for non-profit publications, including state Baptist newspapers and church newsletters.

In a statement issued Nov. 15, Reagan sharply reprimanded the Senate for submitting a bill--two-and-one-half months behind schedule--that not only exceeded his own budget proposal but also the congressional budget resolution limit.

Reagan specifically pointed out his opposition to inclusion of the postal subsidies in a similar statement to the House of Representatives.

"My budget proposed a major paring of the remaining postal subsidies, and the congressional budget resolution envisaged a lesser saving," Reagan stated. "This bill provides \$820 million for these subsidies, which represents little saving from current levels and is \$72 million above the budget resolution level."

The Reagan administration had proposed only \$39 million in postal subsidies, thus terminating the program altogether except for benefits to organizations that send materials to the blind.

Although dramatically above the Reagan proposal, the \$820 million figure still fell \$161 million short of what the Postal Service said it needed to maintain the present level of subsidy. Had the bill been approved, non-profit mailers still would have faced an approximate 30 percent postal rate increase.

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Utah-Idaho Baptists  
Dodge Snow, Cut Budget

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho (BP)—The 148 messengers to the 21st annual session of the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention meeting at Idaho Falls, Idaho, Nov. 12-13 enjoyed a warm spirit even though snowstorms and hazardous road conditions prevented some from attending and others from staying for all sessions.

Precedence was set in the election of officers and in adopting a decreased budget. For the first time in the convention's history all officers were elected by acclamation. Andy Hornbaker, pastor of Holladay Baptist Church, Salt Lake City, was elected president of the convention. Huron Polnac, pastor of Cherry Lane Baptist Church, Meridian, Idaho, was elected to a second term as first vice-president.

Another precedence was set with the election of the immediate past president as second vice-president. The nomination speech for William Warren, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Idaho Falls, Idaho, cited his warm, loving capable leadership as president and expressed a desire for his leadership to continue as an officer of the convention. Warren was president for the maximum two years.

Because of budget deficits during 1984-85, a decreased budget in the amount of \$1,258,568, representing a cut of \$173,438, was presented and adopted by the messengers. The 1986 budget calls for gifts from Utah-Idaho churches in the amount of \$315,556, or \$168,386 less than the amount required by the 1985 budget. (Most of the remaining budget will come from contributions from the Home Mission Board and the Baptist Sunday School Board)

A challenge budget appended to the 1986 budget in the amount of \$128,785 calls for additional contributions from affiliated churches of \$32,653. The challenge budget will be activated if the base budget is met.

Contributions to the Cooperative Program for 1986 will remain at 21 percent, the same as last year.

The Utah-Idaho convention income is running 22.37 percent below budget needs for 1985.

On the good news side, four new churches were seated at the annual meeting, bringing the total of local churches cooperating with the convention to 90.

By resolution messengers expressed prayerful support for the Peace Committee formed by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Other business included the adoption of the 1985 calendar which highlights simultaneous revivals for Utah March 16-23 and Idaho April 6-13. In addition to staff reports, other business to come before the convention included a motion calling for prayer support for the Utah Baptist encampment as it seeks the Lord's leadership in an effort to purchase 130 acres in Spanish Fort Canyon for the development of a campground.

Next year's convention will be at First Southern Baptist Church, Salt Lake City, Nov. 11-12.

**(BP)**

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