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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
 SBC Executive Committee
 901 Commerce #750
 Nashville, Tennessee 37203
 (615) 244-2355
 Wilmer C. Fields, Director
 Dan Martin, News Editor
 Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201-3355, Telephone (214) 720-0550

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300

RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

WASHINGTON Stan L. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

December 9, 1985

85-154

Lindsay Says Rogers
 Selected As Candidate

By Greg Warner

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)—Adrian Rogers, whose election as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979 signaled the beginning of a seven-year struggle between conservatives and moderates to control the SBC power structure, apparently again will be the candidate of conservatives when the two sides square off in Atlanta in June.

Although Rogers has not declared formally his candidacy, the Memphis, Tenn., pastor reportedly is allowing his name to be used in a campaign to enlist thousands of messengers to the upcoming Southern Baptist Convention. His intention to run was announced in a Dec. 6 meeting of about 200 conservatives at First Baptist Church, Jacksonville.

"Our candidate will be Adrian Rogers," Homer Lindsay Jr., co-pastor of the church, told the group of pastors and leaders. "He has given us the right to use his name. He is seriously praying and seeking God's face. As far as we know he will be the man to represent us in Atlanta."

Lindsay said he met in Atlanta Dec. 2 with 18 other conservative leaders who decided on Rogers' candidacy. Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, apparently took part in the meeting, although Lindsay said he was not "at liberty" to name the participants.

Since Rogers' election in 1979, the conservatives have controlled the presidency and its appointive powers. In June of this year, the conservative candidate, incumbent Charles Stanley of Atlanta, defeated a challenge from moderate Winfred Moore of Amarillo, Texas, in what is considered the closest and hardest-fought election of any incumbent. Stanley, who is completing his second term, is ineligible to run in 1986, but Moore is expected to be a candidate again.

Lindsay said conservatives already are organizing in support of Rogers in many states, naming Alabama, Arkansas and North Carolina. Lindsay is chairman of the steering committee in Florida, he said, adding, "Our goal is to have 5,000 messengers go to Atlanta from Florida."

Lindsay said the Florida effort began with a recent meeting of 150 conservatives in Orlando, Fla. He and the other 21 members of the Florida steering committee who divided the state into an equal number of districts, will hold meetings similar to the one in Jacksonville, which was by invitation only.

Lindsay said he invited selected pastors from six Baptist associations in northeast Florida, as well as a few pastors from southern Georgia. He said other pastors whom "I felt would be uncomfortable" were not invited.

Another member of the Florida steering committee, Harold Hunter, pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church, told the pastors how to prepare for the Atlanta convention in order to guarantee each of their churches has 10 messengers committed to the conservative candidate.

"I don't want anyone going from my church that I have questions about. If they're going to go, they're going to have to vote like I vote, he said, adding, some of them may not be certain "what it is to be led by the Spirit of God, but I'm certain. On this issue there is no doubt."

Lindsay echoed that certainty. "I'm not telling you how to vote," he said, "but if you do what God wants you to do, then we'll vote the same way. He's not going to lead you to do one thing and me another."

Hunter urged the pastors to return to their churches and make a public commitment to the conservative effort. "Go public with it and be as political as you need to be," he said.

"Liberals are mean as snakes," Hunter warned. "Anybody who'd deny the Word of God doesn't even know God. If Jesus were standing here today, he would tell you his word is inerrant, infallible, verbally inspired, plenary, the Word of God. I am absolutely convinced of that."

Jerry Vines, who shares the pulpit of First Baptist with Lindsay and is on the SBC Peace Committee, recounted the now familiar charges of liberalism in the denomination. A 50-page paper allegedly documenting liberal beliefs among seminary college and seminary professors and employees of the denomination, was distributed at the meeting.

"There is theological departure from the faith to the point that if it is not faced and dealt with in this denomination we will face the demise of the greatest evangelistic force on the earth," Vines charged.

In addition to the theological differences, Vines said the SBC faces problems of political maneuvering, denominational insensitivity, ethical inconsistency and a loss of spiritual commitment.

All three speakers recalled earlier days when liberalism was either unknown or non-existent.

"I grew up in the 50's," Vines said. "Those were red-hot days of winning people to Christ. I believe we are going to have revival when we get back there to living Jesus and loving the lost."

"I grew up in the 30's and 40's," Lindsay said. "You could go into any Southern Baptist church and there wasn't a liberal anywhere, but there are now. The schools are cranking them out."

"This isn't the SBC I grew up in," Hunter said.

After his address, Vines said he saw no inconsistency in a member of the Peace Committee addressing a clearly partisan meeting. "The committee agreed no one would be muzzled," he said, adding moderate members of the committee also are speaking out.

Vines said he was "cautiously optimistic" about the work of the committee. "The difficulty is in pinning down those who hold neo-orthodox (theological) positions," he said. "They use our vocabulary, but not our dictionary."

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Crowd Almost Doubles Goal;
Mother Finds Lost Child

Baptist Press
12/9/85

YEKEPA, Liberia (BP)--Tensions following the recent coup attempt in Liberia didn't prevent members of Mt. Nimba Baptist Church from almost doubling their attendance goal for the Sunday they dedicated their new sanctuary.

Church leaders knew out-of-town guests would hesitate to come because of the attempted coup the previous week, but church leaders decided to continue with the dedication and set an attendance goal for Sunday school of 460. Average Sunday school attendance was 330.

More than 840 people came for Sunday school and still more came for the worship service and dedication, said Earl Williams, Southern Baptist missionary who is pastor of the church. The crowd included at least 300 small children, he said.

As Williams and his family prepared to leave, a frantic mother arrived looking for her child. She had sent her three-year-old to church with his five-year-old brother. Neither child had ever been to the church before. The older boy went home after Sunday school, leaving his brother. But the three-year-old was no longer at church.

Williams took the mother to the police to report the missing child and found the boy already there. But the police and soldiers informed the mother she would be jailed for not watching her child better.

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The men ignored all pleas to release her until Williams said, "You know, when Jesus was a little boy, he got lost from his parents while going to church, and they did not put Mary or Joseph in jail." Everyone's attitude changed quickly, Williams said, and one of the soldiers said, "Reverend, you need to pray for us." The police and soldiers allowed the mother and child to leave with Williams.

As they left, Williams couldn't pass up the chance to speak to the mother. "Maybe God let this happen to speak to you about coming to church yourself with your children," he said. "I am here in Liberia today because I had a mother who took me to church."

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Projections Indicate
Declining Growth Rate

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press
12/9/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Slow progress in membership and giving coupled with decreases in some programs last year (including baptisms) paint a rather tentative—not bold—picture of Southern Baptists, according to 1985 statistical projections.

One of the bright spots is the anticipated 1.0 percent, or 78,573, increase for Sunday school, which has just completed a five-year enrollment emphasis. The new enrollment total should be more than 7.9 million, the fourth consecutive record high. The gain is almost double the 1984 increase.

Membership in Southern Baptist churches is projected to increase by a slower rate in 1985 than in any year since 1926, when churches in the Baptist Missionary Association were dropped from Southern Baptist records. The projected increase of 0.7 percent, or 100,448, would bring the new total to 14,450,105.

In the 1950s, annual membership increases were in the three and four percent range, followed by two percent average gains in the 60s and gains averaging below two percent in the 70s. The percent increases have dropped four of the five years in the 1980s, even though the total membership has increased every year.

Baptisms in the denomination are predicted to decrease in 1985 by 6.9 percent, or 25,670, from the 1984 total, to 346,358. Slightly lower totals were reported in 1977 and 1978, which were the lowest since 1949. The record for baptisms in the denomination was 445,725 in 1972.

Church music enrollment provided another bright spot, with an increase predicted for the 20th consecutive year. The number of musicians participating in Southern Baptist churches is expected to go up by 0.6 percent, or 10,004, to a new total of more than 1.67 million.

Although total receipts and mission expenditures for the denomination increased faster than the rate of inflation, the percentages were lower than for the past several years.

Mission expenditures, estimated to increase by 6.7 percent, or more than \$38 million, are projected to total \$606,119,138 for the year. This would be the lowest increase since 1971.

Total receipts are projected to increase by 5.7 percent, almost \$209 million, to a new high of more than \$3.8 billion. This would be the lowest percentage increase since 1966.

Brotherhood is predicted to increase by 0.4 percent for the seventh consecutive yearly gain. The additional 2,274 persons will bring Brotherhood enrollment to 570,657.

Church training enrollment is predicted to decrease by 1.1 percent, or 21,702, to a new total of 1,951,205. This is the second straight year for church training to decrease, but it comes on the heels of four consecutive years of gains which totaled 13.4 percent.

Enrollment in Woman's Missionary Union is projected to lose 0.5 percent, or 5,848 for the year, bringing the new total to more than 1.16 million. This also would be the second consecutive loss following four straight increases.

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Estimates for the statistical projections are based on information from 28,380 Uniform Church Letters received the earliest in the research services department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Martin Bradley, director of the department, cautioned that normal statistical sampling error could cause the estimates to differ slightly from the final totals which will include more than 36,000 letters.

The final statistical report for 1985 will be released in February 1986. It will include all nine key categories in the projections plus a report on the number of churches in the Southern Baptist Convention.

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ESTIMATED 1985 SBC STATISTICS

	1984 Total	Estimated 1984-85 % Change	Estimated 1984-85 Numerical Change	Estimated 1985 Total
Baptisms	372,028	-6.9	-25,670	346,358
Church Membership	14,349,657	0.7	100,448	14,450,105
Ongoing Sunday School enrollment	7,857,337	1.0	78,573	7,935,910
Church Training enrollment	1,972,907	-1.1	-21,702	1,951,205
Ongoing Church Music enrollment	1,667,385	0.6	10,004	1,677,389
Ongoing WMU enrollment	1,169,630	-0.5	-5,848	1,163,782
Ongoing Brotherhood enrollment	568,383	0.4	2,274	570,657
Mission Expenditures	\$568,059,173	6.7	\$38,059,965	\$606,119,138
Total Receipts	\$3,665,735,085	5.7	\$208,946,900	\$3,874,681,985

(EDITOR'S NOTE--Political and economic turmoil reach far into the fabric of life in the geographic areas in which they occur. The following thoughts from a Southern Baptist missionary who is a personal observer of the strife and troubles overflowing from South Africa are reported just as he wrote them in a message to the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board)

Christmas Peace Elusive
In Southern Africa

By Ken Perkins

Baptist Press
12/9/85

UMTATA, Transkei (BP)--One particular Christmas carol has echoed continuously in the deep parts of my mind this year.

I have always loved to hear and sing "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," all seven verses of it. It calls to mind the cause that Jesus came to champion, the cause of peace on earth.

This is important to us now, for there is little peace here in southern Africa.

Peace is so rare. Sometimes we do feel that we are making real headway in sharing the peace that one can have between God and man, especially in the rural areas.

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To see the reflected joy on the faces of folks who, until accepting Christ as personal Savior, trusted in ancestor worship and tribal superstitions is a thrill we never tire of seeing. But much of our area borders on areas of unrest in southern Africa.

So the debate rages; will our part of the world suffer revolt and revolution or will they experience a new relationship with the Redeemer?

Saturday we go to Cofumvaba to preach a funeral and Sunday we lead a service at Ezebeleni. The churches in both places are meeting in houses. Cofumvaba is so small they have no pastor, leader or deacon to lead the funeral service and they begged us to come so that the witchdoctor could not demand a say in the burial. Ezebeleni is only four miles from the South African border and is a township of about 10,000 people. I called a deacon in Ezebeleni to see if he could interpret for me both Saturday and Sunday.

When I asked how things were there, he replied, "They're killing our people."

Almost a dozen people from that area have died in the unrest this week alone. All sides have said too much and done too little towards healing the deep wounds separating classes and colors of people here. In the course of the conversation I asked about the welfare of church people, the work near there and if it was safe for us to come and worship there on Sunday.

His reply, "I don't know about how safe anyplace here is but I do know we need you to come."

Worldwide, people seek political solutions while the real answer remains spiritual. As one leading politician said just days ago, you can change the laws, but you cannot make people love one another. What an exciting time to be a Christian here! We know we have the solution in our Savior and it is in times like these that people need and want our Lord the most.

"Peace on earth, goodwill to men." May many people in America and Africa join hearts this Christmas proclaiming, "Unto us is born this day, in the city of Bethlehem, a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

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(Ken Perkins is a Southern Baptist missionary in Transkei, an independent homeland in southern Africa.)



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901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN MAY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
901 COMMERCE
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

NEWS SERVICE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION