



BAPTIST PRESS

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May 30, 1986

86-82

Moore Calls Reconciliation Next President's Priority

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Reconciliation in the nation's largest Protestant denomination is the biggest task facing the next president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Winfred Moore said here.

Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas, and first vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, spoke in chapel services at the Sunday School Board and the Southern Baptist Convention Building and met briefly with reporters. Moore has announced he is willing to be nominated as SBC president at the annual meeting in Atlanta June 10-12.

He said he has been travelling throughout the convention preaching one message--"that we can accept the diversity in our convention within the parameters of the 'Baptist Faith and Message.' We must do that.

"We need to do everything we can to defuse some of the issues so we don't have such a volatile convention," said Moore.

At the same time, Moore acknowledged he has become the subject of heated correspondence between the 1986 Chairman of the Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees, Lee Roberts Sr., and the current president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Paul Powell. Roberts is an Atlanta layman and Powell is pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church, Tyler, Texas.

In a May 13 letter to Powell, Roberts alleged Moore, as a trustee of Baylor University, had in 1985 voted "to allow the continued showing of pornography depicting homosexuality, sadism, nudity, explicit sex, and the use of our Lord's name in vain on the campus."

Roberts also alleged Moore violated the guidelines of the SBC Peace Committee by setting forth his own peace plan which Roberts called a "Presbyterian structure." He further challenged a public statement by Moore that Moore does not know any liberals in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"As you know, Dr. Moore serves on the Peace Committee with Dr. Cecil Sherman and Dr. William Hull, both of whom have openly stated that the Bible is neither inerrant nor infallible and that it does contain errors. When Dr. Moore says he doesn't know any liberals, is he saying that he serves on the Peace Committee with these gentlemen but he doesn't know them or is he saying that it is not liberal not to believe the Bible or is he saying that he agrees with them?" Roberts asked.

Roberts' letter was written in response to a letter from Powell. Powell released Roberts' May 13 letter to Baptist state paper editors May 28 and noted in a cover letter that Roberts' "seeks to destroy a pastor's ministry and reputation by using misrepresentations and falsehoods.

"For Mr. Roberts to oppose Dr. Moore politically did not surprise me. It did surprise me that Mr. Roberts did seek to destroy Dr. Moore's personal reputation and ministry to achieve his and others' political ends," said Powell.

"In regard to Roberts' charge that he voted to support pornography at Baylor, Moore denied the charge and said he merely voted to table a motion instructing the administration as to how to deal with the Baylor Film Society.

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"I would vote the same way again tomorrow. It was an administrative responsibility. I'm very pleased with the way they handled things.," said Moore, noting that Baylor President Herbert Reynolds suspended the society.

Moore said his so-called peace plan was not a formal plan but a response to a reporter's question. Of his suggestion in his proposal that state convention leaders submit names from which trustee appointments would be made, Moore said, "I was not talking about connecting state conventions to the SBC."

Moore declined to respond to Roberts' other charges, saying he refused "to get into that kind of thing." He said he has never met Roberts. "I don't know him at all."

In his introduction of Moore, Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder made a "personal statement" of support for Moore. He characterized Moore as a "pastor who does believe devoutly and proclaim faithfully the biblical doctrines held by Baptists. He does indeed believe the truth and seeks to practice it. He has stood for moral righteousness," said Elder.

Elder later told Baptist Press he made his comments to combat false statements being made about Moore.

"Baptists have become very rowdy and polarized, but they still rely on fair play. Baptists do not believe in trying to discredit a pastor's ministry through falsehoods," said Elder.

In supporting the integrity of Moore, Elder emphasized he was not endorsing Moore or anyone as president of the convention.

Analyzing the present state of the convention, Moore said, "We're more politicized as a convention than I've ever seen. If we don't find a way to deal with our problems, it will affect our institutions, agencies and even our churches."

In his church where he has been pastor since 1959, Moore said except for two anniversaries he has never received as much mail of encouragement and support from church members as he has received in the last two weeks.

He expressed optimism about the denomination's future.

For example, in sessions of the Peace Committee, Moore said, "We can have some very rough sessions and then we can sit down and eat together and fellowship with one another. I think that is good.

"I hope we will not give up on any of our Baptist brethren. We need all of us. We can use our diversity to build up the fellowship and share the gospel with the whole world," Moore said.

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SBC Meeting 1986
May Repeat 1985

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
5/30/86

ATLANTA (BP)—In many ways, the 1986 Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta may be a continuation of the 1985 Dallas convention.

Crowds, candidates, controversy, committees and their reports, cumbersome—and maybe cacophonous—business sessions, complicated procedures, confusion, consternation, confrontation and maybe even cantankerousness certainly will be present as they were in Dallas, but, while many elements may be comparable, the 1986 meeting may be calmer.

Absent is the intense political activity which preceded the Dallas meeting, when spokesmen for the various political camps criss-crossed the nation, stumping for—or against—the causes and candidates. This year, efforts appear to have been curtailed and more covert, with outright political efforts emerging only sporadically.

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Contributing to a lessened level of controversy is the disposal of twin court suits against the SBC and its Executive Committee, complaining about the presiding and balloting in the 1985 annual meeting. Although U.S. District Judge Robert Hall decided the case in favor of the SBC, the specter of the suit looms over the convention because the plaintiffs have appealed.

Whether controversy will erupt over the seating of the nine plaintiffs in the two suits as messengers is unknown, but the events in Dallas, the suit and its aftermath still cause deeply divided opinion and loyalties.

The seeming lack of political activity leading up to Atlanta has caused officials to downscale preliminary estimates of attendance. After Dallas, 70,000-plus messengers were predicted for what some called the "Second Battle of Atlanta." Now, the figure is estimated to be 45,000, give or take 5,000.

Overt political activity—particularly involving denominational employes and executives—has been toned down considerably in 1986, possibly because of the a 22-member Peace Committee, named in 1985 to determine the sources of the controversy and to come up with recommended solutions.

Despite the Peace Committee, the 1986 annual meeting has an atmosphere of culmination. For fundamental-conservatives, it may complete a 10-year campaign to turn the convention to a more conservative stance. For moderate-conservatives, who have fought an unsuccessful campaign to stop the fundamental-conservatives, 1986 may be the final, calamitous defeat.

There will be crowds. The Atlanta meeting has the potential to surpass the 1985 annual meeting which set a record when 45,519 persons registered, nearly doubling the previous record, set in 1978 in Atlanta when 22,872 persons turned out.

Because Atlanta held the previous record, and because 70 percent of Southern Baptists live within a day's drive of the capital city of Georgia, convention officials say a record number of messengers may test the facilities of the massive and sprawling convention center.

There will be candidates. Under SBC custom, "candidates" do not seek the presidency, but only announce "their willingness to be nominated" for the post.

This year, two familiar men are willing. Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., is seen as the fundamental-conservative standard bearer, while Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, is predicted to be the favorite of the moderate-conservatives.

Rogers served one term as president, 1979-80, and declined the traditional second one-year term. Moore currently is first vice president, having been defeated in a bid to unseat incumbent President Charles F. Stanley at the 1985 annual meeting and then winning the second spot.

Both men have tradition going against them. If Rogers is elected, he will be first man this century to serve non-consecutive terms. Only two men—P.H. Mell of Georgia, who was president 1863-70 and 1880-87, and James P. Boyce of Kentucky, president 1872-79 and 1888—have been elected to non-consecutive terms. Since Boyce and Mell's time, the rules have been changed and the president is now limited to two consecutive one-year terms, but is not prohibited from seeking election after one year has elapsed following his last term.

If Moore is elected, he will have to overcome the current custom against a vice president succeeding to the presidency. Current tradition holds that election as a vice president is the kiss of death to presidential aspirations. In the 19th Century and early 20th Century, succession was common, but since 1950, only three men have been vice president and president, but none of them succeeded to the office. Brooks Hayes of Arkansas was vice president in 1950 and president 1958-59; C.C. Warren of North Carolina was vice president in 1952 and president 1956-57, and Owen Cooper of Mississippi was vice president in 1968 and president 1973-74.

The last vice president to be nominated for president was John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church of Shreveport, La., who served two terms as vice president with James T. Draper Jr., 1982-83. In his race for the presidency, Sullivan came in third in a three-man race, losing to current President Stanley.

Since the presidency is the center of the denominational battle, the election will be crucial to the outcome of the SBC's future. Under accepted strategy, those unhappy with the direction of the convention have attempted to elect fundamental-conservative presidents, who appoint like-minded people to the Committee on Committees, which nominates persons of similar concern to the SBC Committee on Boards, which then seeks out fellow believers to nominate to positions on boards of trust of the 20 national SBC agencies.

Candidates and campaigns for president constitute only one controversy among many. Other items in the three-day meeting are expected to generate intense contention and conversation:

--The program. The Committee on Order of Business has put most of the critical and controversial items of business on the first day, saying the agenda will allow for maximum participation. Others, however, disagree and may challenge the agenda.

--The personalities. President Charles F. Stanley has appointed three parliamentarians and two assistant parliamentarians to assist with presiding. One of the parliamentarians is an ordained Church of Christ minister and Republican activist. While Stanley says he appointed the man for his expertise and that it does not matter that he is not a Baptist, some observers expect cries of indignation if the non-Baptist participates in a controversial call.

--The procedure. The Executive Committee has recommended a change in Bylaw 16, which regulates the election of the Committee on Boards, adding wording to allow one-by-one challenges but prohibiting one messenger from suggesting an alternate slate. It was a ruling on this bylaw in 1985 which resulted in the filing of the federal suit.

The revision will be dealt with early in the business of the convention, but must receive two-thirds majority of those present and voting to be adopted. Stanley has said he will allow one-by-one challenges but rule slates out of order, regardless of what messengers do in reference to the amendment.

The whole issue of the bylaw, its interpretation and involvement when the Committee on Committees nominates the Committee on Boards is expected to be greeted by strong difference of opinion.

--The proposals. The Committee on Committees report nominating the 1987 Committee on Boards and the report of the 1986 Committee on Boards both are likely to draw opposition. Claims by the current vice presidents--Moore and Henry Huff, a Louisville, Ky., attorney--that the Committee on Committees is not representative and bad feelings stemming from last year's meeting may tangle the nominations in parliamentary red tape.

Also, the chairman of the 1986 Committee on Boards, Lee Roberts Sr., a businessman from Marietta, Ga., has become controversial himself with his appearance at fundamental-conservative rallies, vocal support for Rogers' candidacy and comment that liberal theology is "slop."

--The place. With 45,000 or so messengers crowded into a hall meant for exhibits, unable to see, unable to participate fully, facing inadequate food service and restroom facilities, the facilities may contribute a cantankerousness to the processes. With severely crowded facilities, the Christian virtues of patience, love, gentleness and long-suffering will be required of those who brave the heat and humidity of mid-June Atlanta to do the often confusing, often complicated and currently controversial business of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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CORRECTION: In May 27 story entitled "SBC Messengers Invited to Black Worship Service," the time for the meeting is incorrect. The meeting will begin at 7:15 p.m., not 8 p.m. as first reported.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Metro Follow-Up Session
Aids LA Black Churches

By Frank Wm. White

LOS ANGELES (BP)—Proclaiming the gospel and evangelism—not programs—are keys to developing a Sunday school, Leroy Gainey, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Syracuse, N.Y., told Sunday school leaders here.

Gainey told the leaders of 19 Los Angeles-area churches to rely on the basics of Sunday school principles to establish a strong Bible study in their churches.

Gainey led the opening worship session of the first Sunday school training clinic exclusively for black churches.

Later, Bill Crider, minister of education, First Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, Miss., told members of Opportunity Baptist Church that Sunday school is the means to implement the Great Commission.

"The Great Commission is the marching order for all churches. Sunday school provides the plan for the Great Commission," Crider said.

Black churches are beginning to develop Bible study, discipleship and evangelism to reach blacks as well as others in their communities, said Sid Smith, Southern Baptist Sunday School Board consultant for black church development.

That interest led to the Los Angeles clinic patterned after metro enrollment-training clinics conducted by the Sunday School Board and state conventions, Smith explained.

The week-long clinic sponsored by the Sunday School Board, the Southern Baptist General Convention of California and the Mississippi Baptist Convention provided training for churches that had participated in a February 1985 Los Angeles metro clinic. Additional sessions were offered for churches which had not participated in the earlier clinic.

"Sunday school development among black churches was one of the greatest results of the Los Angeles metro clinic," said Jerry Harris, Sunday school director for the California convention.

"We wanted to capitalize on that and encourage continued development," Harris said.

"We are on the verge of some major breakthroughs in black religious education. Churches are now optimistic with a new understanding of the possibilities," Smith said.

About 10 to 15 percent of black Baptist church members are involved in Sunday school. A focus of black church development is to incorporate Sunday school into the lives of church members, Smith said.

The follow-up clinic brought together leaders from Southern Baptist churches across the nation to help train Los Angeles Sunday school leaders, Smith said.

Directors and clinic workers included eight church leaders from the Mississippi Baptist Convention and others from Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York and California.

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