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Group Consolidates  
Power Within SBC

By Stan Hastey

ATLANTA (BP)—Fundamental-conservatives consolidated their power within the Southern Baptist Convention at the 14.4-million-member denomination's 129th session in Atlanta June 10-12, winning nearly every vote in a show of strength that left many moderate-conservatives demoralized, if not defeated.

Although some leaders of the moderate-conservative forces who unsuccessfully have sought to stem a fundamental-conservative tide over the past seven years in the SBC said they will continue to fight, others expressed despair at their prospects for the near future.

This year's three-day meeting—held at the Georgia World Congress Center—was relatively calm in comparison with last year's tumultuous sessions in Dallas where many moderate-conservatives reacted angrily to what they believed was parliamentary heavyhandedness by SBC President Charles F. Stanley.

This time around, moderate-conservatives appeared more resigned to defeat and to their increasing apparent minority status in the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

For their part, fundamental-conservatives ruled the day, cheered their elected leaders, and elected their choice for the denomination's top post, but generally seemed more subdued in celebrating victory than in past years.

Topping the list of their accomplishments was the election of Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., as president. Rogers, who was SBC president in 1979-80, won over moderate-conservative candidate W. Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas, with more than 54 percent of the vote.

Rogers was the first in a succession of fundamental-conservatives elected since 1979, when forces, disturbed over perceived liberalism in the denomination, announced their intention to elect presidents who would reflect their views.

At the heart of the effort has been control of boards of trustees of 20 denominational agencies and institutions, including six theological seminaries.

By using the appointive power of the presidency, fundamental-conservative leaders reasoned they could capture control over a 10-year period.

Rogers' election ensures the movement of nine consecutive years in power. He captured 21,201 votes, compared with Moore's 17,898. Moore lost the presidency for the second straight year.

In contrast with other recent annual meetings, however, the contests for the convention's two vice presidents did not appear to hinge on ideological labels. Elected first vice president was Jack Stanton, director of the Institute of Evangelism at Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, Mo. He won 58 percent of the vote in a two-man race with Louisville, Ky., attorney and incumbent Second Vice President Henry Huff.

In a five-way contest for the new second vice president, Ray Roberts of Asheville, N.C., won a first-ballot victory with 53 percent of the total vote. Roberts, a former executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, is a member of the 22-person SBC Peace Committee.

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Elected without opposition to new terms as recording secretary and registration secretary, respectively, were Martin Bradley, manager of the research services department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, Tenn., and Lee Porter, design editor in the Sunday school department at the Sunday School Board.

Anticipated clashes over nominations by the powerful Committee on Boards to the denomination's 20 agencies and institutions largely failed to materialize, as fundamental-conservatives easily brushed aside four individual challenges.

In one of the three-day meeting's most hotly debated items of business, messengers refused on a ballot vote to consider withdrawing the SBC from the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a Washington office that advocates religious liberty and separation of church and state on behalf of eight U.S. Baptist denominations.

Instead, the convention—by a vote of 12,001 to 9,556—referred a motion by M.B. (Dan) Daniels of Mobile, Ala., to the SBC Executive Committee for a year-long study. That panel must report its disposition of the matter to next year's convention.

Daniels, a state senator, is a member of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, where Committee on Order of Business Chairman Fred H. Wolfe is pastor.

Daniels told messengers he wants to see the SBC establish an "exclusive Southern Baptist presence" in the nation's capital "more truly reflecting our views." The Baptist Joint Committee has been under attack by some fundamental-conservatives for opposing proposed amendments to the U.S. Constitution on school prayer and other features of Reagan Administration church-state philosophy.

President Reagan himself caused something of a stir on the convention floor when his open letter to messengers was read by Stanley immediately following the announcement Rogers had been elected.

Reagan's letter stated in the last decade "the liberalism that seemed triumphant has been thrown on the defensive." Alluding to "bedrock principles" that need to be recovered, his message asked Southern Baptists to reverse the "tragedy" of abortion and seek a return to school prayer.

Stanley, whose two-year SBC presidency ended in Atlanta, also used his presidential address to urge messengers against changing their philosophy of leadership "at a very crucial moment in the life of Southern Baptists." The admonition, coming just ahead of the vote to elect his successor, raised cries of foul play from some moderate-conservatives who accused the Atlanta pastor of endorsing Rogers.

Rogers used his convention sermon—an hour bestowed on him by messengers at last year's meeting—to exhort Southern Baptists to cease their internecine warfare and use their energy instead to do battle with the "organized, mobilized, demonized forces of hell."

He added, "It has always been the devil's purpose to bring disunity to the people of God and get them to battling one another rather than bombarding the gates of hell."

In a dramatic moment during the sermon, Rogers gestured toward Moore—who after his defeat by Stanley last year was elected first vice president—and declared, "I love Dr. Moore. He's my brother in Christ." He said he had written the Texas pastor before the convention to say, "However it (the presidential vote) comes out, I love you; I respect you."

Earlier, at a news conference after his election, Rogers said he is convinced 90 percent of Southern Baptists support his view of biblical inerrancy. Referring to the 54-46 percent split in the vote electing him, the two-time SBC president declared, "I don't believe by any stretch of the imagination that we are divided 55 to 45." He said he accordingly would appoint "those I believe will be the best Southern Baptists denominationally, theologically, morally and intellectually."

Messengers also extended the life of the Peace Committee—a 22-member body named last year to look into causes and solutions for the extended denominational battle—for another year. It will make a final report at next year's meeting.

Committee Chairman Charles G. Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va., told reporters at a news conference he does not anticipate a binding doctrinal creed to come out of the panel's deliberations over the next year.

"I think the Baptist Faith and Message is sufficient," he said. That document, adopted in 1963, contains 18 articles of faith but is non-binding on individuals, congregations or any other organized unit in denominational life.

The Peace Committee has met eight times over the past year, delving into both theological and political dimensions of the SBC conflict.

Twelve resolutions—also non-binding—were presented to messengers by the Resolutions Committee and approved, some with modifications. All but four dealt with public policy issues. Of that quartet, one called on its agencies "to increase the involvement of blacks and other minorities in employment, missions and programs."

Another, on strengthening missions, was amended by ballot vote to urge SBC congregations to give at least 10 percent of all undesignated funds to the denomination's Cooperative Program of unified missions support. The amendment carried by a 5-4 margin.

In an unusual development, the 10-member resolutions panel presented a statement that apparently had been lost in the shuffle of deliberations. It asked messengers to reaffirm "faith in the entire Bible as stated in the Baptist Faith and Message." When the resolution's author asked what had happened to his proposal, committee members huddled on the platform and decided to put the question directly to messengers. They OK'd it.

Resolutions on public issues reaffirmed support for religious liberty, with special attention to free exercise of religion; objected to censorship in some textbooks of references to religion in American history and culture; urged Congress to protect the tax exemption of church pension boards in tax reform legislation currently being debated; and urged President Reagan not to appoint a replacement for William A. Wilson, retired Ambassador to the Vatican.

Other resolutions decried pornography, gambling and sex education "taught from a secular humanistic viewpoint" and urged Southern Baptists to pray for farmers and their families and communities suffering from the current depression on many family farms.

In all, the Resolutions Committee processed and disposed of 51 proposals, 28 of which it declined to act upon. The remaining 23 were addressed in the dozen resolutions approved.

Besides the proposed resolutions, messengers streamed to microphones throughout the cavernous Congress Center to make 64 separate motions on a wide variety of subjects. Only three were acted upon by messengers. All others were referred to denominational agencies and institutions, many to the SBC Executive Committee.

One of the three approved designates 1987 as a year of thanksgiving in the denomination. Another instructs the Executive Committee to dedicate this year's SBC Annual—the official volume documenting the Atlanta meeting—to the memory of the late Louie D. Newton, a former SBC president who died June 3 at age 94.

On the recommendation of the Executive Committee, messengers adopted without debate a \$136 million Cooperative Program allocation budget. Of that, \$126.6 million will be sent on to denominational agencies and institutions. Another \$5.9 million goes to capital expenditures, primarily building projects, with the remaining \$3.5 million to be allocated to agencies according to their percentages in the basic budget.

Another Executive Committee recommendation, to permit one-by-one challenges from the floor in electing the Committee on Boards, was adopted easily. Before doing so, messengers turned aside a moderate-conservative effort to permit substitute slates for the powerful panel, whose purpose is to nominate trustees to the agencies and institutions. Composition of the Committee on Boards has been a central objective of fundamental-conservatives.

In an organizational meeting, the Executive Committee elected its officers for 1986-87. Re-elected chairman was Fullerton, Calif., layman David C. Maddox. Another layman, Harmon M. Born of Atlanta, was elected vice chairman, while a minister, Darrell W. Robinson of Mobile, Ala., was chosen recording secretary. The Executive Committee is the legal entity that functions as the Southern Baptist Convention between annual sessions.

Final registration for the Atlanta meeting reached 40,889, compared with the record 45,519 last year in Dallas.

An Atlanta first was the use of a professional parliamentarian, C. Barry McCarty, an ordained Church of Christ minister, to advise President Stanley.

When the convention meets next June 16-18 in St. Louis, Mo., the convention sermon will be delivered by Jacksonville, Fla., pastor Jerry Vines. Messengers also chose Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Evangelism professor Roy Fish as alternate preacher and Fort Worth, Texas, music evangelist John McKay as music director.

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Baptists Shelter Youths  
In South African Fighting

By Marty Croll

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CAPE TOWN, South Africa (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries and the Baptist Union of South Africa have begun sheltering homeless black African youths near the violence-stricken area around Cape Town, South Africa.

Using relief funds from Southern Baptists and donations from within the Baptist union, workers at the home are preparing for an influx of refugees fleeing battles between rival blacks in the sprawling shanty settlement of Crossroads.

The home, named Khayamandi, was opened in the black community of Langa in May to help Xhosa-speaking youths who left their homelands to come to the city and survive by living on the street and doing odd jobs. But now, Khayamandi (meaning "sweet home") promises also to be a shelter for youths whose homes in nearby Crossroads have been burned and whose parents have been killed.

The Western Province Baptist Association, part of the Baptist union, has taken special interest in Khayamandi, but other Baptists are interested, too. "I'm getting calls from all over the country (South Africa) from Baptists asking, 'How can we help, and what do you need?'" said missionary Terry Blakley, project director for the orphanage.

"It is cold here and it is raining, and Red Cross tents have been burned down by faction fighting," said Blakley. In winter on the cape along the South Atlantic Ocean, wind and rain are relentless. Up to 70,000 people are said to be without homes, some wandering about looking for places to stay and many wrapped in wet blankets and shivering in the rain.

Not only churches, but individuals, too, are calling in donations to Blakley. "They want to help," she said. "People have been frustrated because they've not known what to do or how to do it. This is a channel through which they can express their Christian concern."

Blakley and her husband, Keith, who work with Baptist youth at the University of Cape Town, were touched about a year ago with the plight of the thousands of young boys called "strollers." Strollers haunt shopping areas, where they offer to carry bags or do other odd jobs to earn money. They sleep on the streets and sniff glue to escape hunger and the nausea that accompanies disease.

In May, just after the Blakleys and Baptists in the area secured a site for an orphanage in the nearby township of Langa, fighting broke out in Crossroads. When Xhosa-speaking African ministers told Blakley they knew of several refugee orphans from Crossroads, she sought relief funds from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

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The earliest request, dated June 11, included \$13,000 to feed and shelter up to 50 orphans whose parents have been killed at Crossroads. The money will be released only after missionaries receive written confirmation the Western Province Baptist Association will take over operations of the home after a year. That confirmation was expected any day.

Trouble in Crossroads erupted when black Africans who fled their homelands began fighting each other in the squatter region. One group was said to be trying to win favor with the government by driving out groups heavily opposing South Africa's policy of apartheid.

Many Crossroads residents live there because they were forced to leave home when earlier laws barred them from living near "white" cities. Although these laws are being scrapped this year, they have left a legacy of violence between successive waves of squatters.

Unrest has begun spilling out of Crossroads and into more stable areas such as Langa, where the Baptist home is located. Within walking distance of the home, Southern Baptist missionary Charles Hampton came upon youths who threw rocks and cement chunks at his truck. His windshield was smashed, but he was unhurt.

A state of emergency declared in the region has prevented the Blakleys from visiting Khayamandi recently, leaving it in the care of Baptist nationals. On July 1 Oswald Chuka, a Xhosa-speaking African minister in the Western Province Baptist Association, will become its administrator. Chuka and members of Langa Baptist Church, including Pastor Michael Dwada, have been checking on the 20 boys in Khayamandi and taking food and supplies to them.

Blakley is one of 15 members of Khayamandi's operations committee, as organized by the Western Province Baptist Association.

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Grand Canyon College  
Takes Baseball Title

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PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)—The Arizona Southern Baptist Convention's Grand Canyon College claimed an un-precedented fourth National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics World Series title this spring.

The Grand Canyon College Antelopes beat two-time defending champion Lewis & Clark State College in a 6-5 10-inning game to reclaim the title Grand Canyon held from 1980 to 1982.

Although the Antelopes had lost to Lewis & Clark four times in the regular season, they defeated the Warriors twice in series play.

This was the Antelopes seventh appearance in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics World Series.

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