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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Georgia Baptists Elect Hutchinson,  
Split Cooperative Program 50-50

By Joe Westbury

ATLANTA (BP)--In a convention characterized by peace and harmony, Georgia Baptists elected their first fundamental-conservative president, adopted a historic 50-50 split of Cooperative Program funds and elevated a junior college to four-year status.

Clark Hutchinson, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church in Marietta, received 2,338 votes or 55 percent in a three-way contest between Billy Nimmons, a moderate-conservative candidate, and Hoffman Harris, a non-aligned road nominee.

Hutchinson was nominated by former SBC President Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta. Hutchinson also is acting chairman of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Nimmons, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dalton, received 1,199 votes, or 28 percent, while Harris, pastor of Briarlake Baptist Church in Atlanta, netted 673 votes or 16 percent.

A record 4,660 messengers gathered at Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, an Atlanta suburb, to elect a new president. Previous record registration was in 1984, when about 3,200 attended.

Before the convention, an anonymous election notice comparing statistics of the three pastors' churches was mailed to Georgia Baptist pastors. The one-page sheet said Hutchinson does not appear to have the support of any political organization, but is the clear choice of conservatives. It added that Nimmons "clearly has the support of the liberal/moderate political organization known as 'Concerned Southern Baptists,'" and reported Nimmons' church ordains women.

During business sessions, messengers to the convention voted to repudiate such political tactics as distributing anonymous publicity about candidates.

Embattled state Baptist paper editor Jack Harwell was honored for 20 years service at the helm of The Christian Index and was further affirmed by a standing ovation from the capacity crowd.

The next day messengers defeated a motion that would have instructed the staff of the paper not to print "letters or news articles which contain derogatory remarks about other Christians." Several messengers spoke against the motion, defending their right to receive all the news about Baptist activities and people.

Harwell, who this year became the longest serving editor of the newsjournal, has been under fire since 1979 for an alleged pro-moderate-conservative stance. An attempt to fire him at the 1979 convention failed.

The controversy surfaced again in May of this year, when Lee Roberts, a businessman and member of Eastside Baptist Church in Marietta, called for replacement of Harwell, following an editorial in which Harwell was critical of the nominations of the SBC Committee on Boards, which Roberts chaired.

As a result of the charges, a five-member review board to oversee the editorial policies of the newspaper was appointed in August by the Index board of directors.

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**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
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In major convention business, messengers approved a \$26,946,000 budget, an increase of 12 percent over the previous year. The budget includes a historic 50-50 split of Cooperative Program funds between the state and national level.

In approving the action, the convention became the third state body to evenly divide its receipts with the Southern Baptist Convention. Florida and Oklahoma conventions were the first to divide Cooperative Program receipts equally between state and national causes.

Messengers also voted to upgrade Brewton-Parker College at Mount Vernon from junior college to senior college status. The largest junior college in the denomination, Brewton-Parker will now provide South Georgia students with the only alternative to state institutions for their senior-level studies.

Without debate, messengers approved a resolution affirming the role of women "in their efforts to express their faith through ministry in the church," and the authority of a local church "over whom it ordains into the ministry and whom it calls as its minister."

Another resolution reaffirmed the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963 as "an adequate expression of both our doctrinal view and a safeguarding of the freedom of each Baptist to differ."

The 1987 Georgia Baptist Convention will meet Nov. 9-11 in Savannah.

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Messengers Approve  
New Colorado Loan

Baptist Press  
11/13/86

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (BP)—Approval to borrow up to \$3.5 million to pay off losses incurred by the Colorado Baptist Foundation and the Colorado Baptist Loan Corporation were approved by messengers to the annual meeting of the Colorado Baptist General Convention Nov. 4-6.

The loan, if approved by the executive board, would allow the convention to borrow the funds to clear out the debt incurred by the two organizations and "roll the debt up all into one payment," said Charles Sharp, executive director of the convention.

The two organizations, separate corporations operated by the convention, were set up to raise money and then to loan it to Southern Baptist churches in the state. The foundation began to experience losses as early as 1981 as a result of poor return on "over-the-counter" stock investments. The foundation assets were frozen in February of 1985.

The convention, under Sharp's leadership, has made a number of efforts to resolve the debt problem, including liquidating assets, stopping the operations of both organizations, paying demand loan account holders and working to meet obligations of the bond issues.

"The loan authorization will allow the convention to make one payment rather than several," Sharp said. "The action will go back to the executive board for final action, and if it is approved, we will be talking with several agencies, banks and others to obtain the loan."

Sharp told messengers the convention is "within 2 percent of the budget" through the first 10 months of 1986, and is "in good good shape" financially.

In other action, messengers adopted one bylaw amendment and rejected a second.

The approved amendment makes all of the convention committees rotating, with one-third going off each year. The change, approved without opposition, was proposed by the constitution committee of the convention.

The second amendment, proposed from the floor, would have made the president of the convention automatically the chairman of the executive board. It was defeated.

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A long-range plan called Colorado Vision 90, which sets the objectives of the convention through 1990, was adopted. Among its objectives are to share Christ with Colorado, with a goal of 20,000 baptisms from 1985 through 1990. There also will be an emphasis on starting new congregations with a goal of 56 new missions by the turn of the decade.

The proposal also aims at a ministry effort aimed at discipleship training, Bible study, helping in pastoral termination situations, working with families and a stewardship emphasis.

The long-range plan was proposed by a special committee made up of the program committee of the executive board, directors of missions across the state and the executive board staff. It was chaired by Sam Cotter, minister of music and education at Calvary Baptist Church in Craig.

Messengers adopted a budget of \$2,424,000, of which \$1,211,516 will come from the 220 congregations affiliated with the convention. Of the undesignated funds given by congregations in the state, 29.25 percent—\$354,368—will go to support the worldwide missionary, evangelistic and educational causes of the Southern Baptist Convention. The 29.25 percent is an increase of a quarter of a percent over 1986 contributions.

Michael Wilson, pastor of Central Baptist Church of Aurora, was re-elected president. David Bruce, pastor of Riverside Baptist Church in Denver, was elected first vice president; Lloyd Nielson, pastor of Lynn Gardens Baptist Church of Pueblo, second vice president; Gheadus Duke, secretary to the executive director of the convention in Littleton, recording clerk; and Weida Spannegal, a member of First Southern Baptist Church of Pueblo, assistant recording clerk.

In resolutions, messengers adopted a proposal calling on the churches of Colorado "to take a renewed diligence in teaching youth about premarital sex and offering moral education in place of sex education and birth control methods as is now being taught in the majority of our schools."

Another resolution called on the churches to take "a renewed stance in communicating to the television networks and sponsors who are "promoting non-Christian attitudes through television."

Messengers also resolved that homosexuality is wrong and in violation of Scripture, reaffirmed a 1983 resolution against "secular humanism," and reaffirmed a 1982 resolution which opposes abortion for any reason except when the life of the mother is endangered.

The 1987 annual meeting of the convention will be Nov. 10-12 at the Marriott Hotel in Vail.

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Mississippi Baptists OK  
\$19 Million Budget

Baptist Press  
11/13/86

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)—Mississippi Baptists took their convention theme, "A new heart and a new spirit," seriously when they closed their Nov. 10-12 meeting with almost no issues debated.

The 1,759 registered voting messengers to the convention which met at First Baptist Church, Jackson, re-elected by acclamation their president, Frank Gunn, pastor of First Baptist Church, Biloxi, to a second one-year term.

They passed without discussion a \$19 million 1987 budget, 36.5 percent of which goes to Southern Baptist causes outside the state. The nearly 2,000 participating churches in the convention have covenanted to increase the outside causes portion a half percent a year and have been doing so for eight years. The budget is a 2.43 percent increase over that of 1986.

And messengers approved no controversial resolutions. The ones which passed included honoring the late Owen Cooper of Yazoo City, the last layman who was president of the Southern Baptist Convention. They also asked Christians to continue giving a positive witness in a negative world.

The convention heard an encouraging report from its Mississippi Mission Campaign, which is endeavoring to raise a \$40 million endowment for Mississippi College, Blue Mountain College, William Carey College and the Baptist Children's Village. Two years into the campaign, a total of \$21,694,777 has been pledged, effectively tripling the four institutions' endowments less than halfway into the campaign.

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The only issue of debate concerned a motion by W.E. Green of Louin to have Clarke College in Newton handed over to him to operate as a school for ministerial training. Green was president of Clarke 1944-54 and said rumors were abounding that Clarke was about to close its doors.

Messengers overwhelmingly rejected Green's motion, substituting another reaffirming their 1980 decision to merge Clarke with Mississippi College.

Later in the day, during the Mississippi College report, President Lewis Nobles assured the messengers he had no plans to close Clarke College, the student enrollment had stabilized at about 200, and should Clarke ever get into trouble, he would recommend the trustees hand Clarke back to the convention.

Green, in the closing session of the convention Wednesday, made a motion to reconsider the convention action and was ruled out of order. Roberts Rules of Order require that a person who voted for a previously approved substitute motion must ask for reconsideration. No one came forward and the matter was closed. Green said he would gather students and return later to a future convention to ask again.

Messengers elected as first vice president Roy Myers, pastor of Rocky Creek Baptist Church of Lucedale, and second vice president Tommy Tutor, pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church of Clarksdale. Re-elected recording secretary was Clarke Hensley, retired executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission, and elected assistant recording secretary was J.W. Brister, director of missions for Hinds-Madison Baptist Association.

The convention will next meet Nov. 9-11, 1987, at First Baptist Church, Jackson.

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Louisiana Baptists  
Honor Robert Lee

Baptist Press  
11/13/86

PINEVILLE, La. (BP)—Louisiana Baptists paid tribute to Robert L. Lee for his 33 years of leadership, voted an increase in the national Cooperative Program contributions, re-elected the president, voted to extend two mission partnerships and approved 10 resolutions.

Lee, who retires Dec. 1, became assistant executive secretary in 1953. Three years later, when he was elected executive secretary (now director) he was the youngest person serving in that capacity among state Baptist executives. He now is the dean of executive directors.

Among gifts and honors presented to him during the Tuesday night session was a \$10,000 scholarship in his name provided by Louisiana College and an internship in his name established by the Baptist Message newspaper for seminary students studying religious journalism.

During a luncheon, women paid tribute to Lee's wife, Grace, for her leadership, especially in developing education programs for internationals in Central Louisiana and her role as wife of the executive director.

Messengers increased contributions to the national Cooperative Program one-fourth percent to 34.75 percent. The budget of \$16,600,000, same as the current year, includes \$5,652,088 to Southern Baptist mission causes.

Robert Magee was re-elected convention president. He has been pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Ruston since 1964. Also elected were Howard Parshall, chaplain at Pinecrest State School in Pineville, first vice president, and Connie Ward, pastor of First Baptist Church in Gonzales, second vice president.

Resolutions, in addition to one expressing appreciation for Lee's 33 years of "excellent leadership", included:

— A call for "responsible leadership in state government."

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— A gambling statement to "strongly urge the Louisiana legislature to reject any consideration of further legalizing gambling in Louisiana."

— Other resolutions called for raising the legal drinking age to 21; establishing an education program to combat misuse of drugs and alcohol; commending U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese and staff for the report on pornography and ways to implement the recommendations; and, relating to homosexuality, a call upon churches to work with youth and their parents to develop moral convictions that include a biblical understanding of sexual conduct, "in face of this present AIDS crisis."

Messengers also requested that churches "be encouraged to establish a fixed policy on enrolling their pastors and staff in the regular and Expanded Church Annuity program of the Southern Baptist Convention."

In action prior to convening the convention, the convention executive board elected Truman Kerr as interim executive director from the time Lee retires Dec. 1 until a successor is elected. Kerr has been assistant executive director since 1978.

The executive board elected Ernest Walker as chairman and Joe Ratcliff as vice chairman. Walker recently retired as pastor of Sale Street Baptist Church in Lake Charles. Ratcliff is pastor of First Baptist Church in Many.

Mission partnerships will include major crusades in five Zimbabwe cities July 23-Aug. 2, 1987, and an evangelistic crusade in Korea in 1988. Both are extensions of work that have been underway for several years in both countries by Louisiana Baptists.

Registration was 1,105. The next convention will meet at First Baptist Church in Monroe Nov. 9-11, 1987.



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