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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
Marv Knox, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
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. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

November 17, 1986

86-170

Pulpit Invitation Pulled;
Women's Ordination Cited

By Ray Waddle

N-100

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This copyrighted story appeared in the Saturday, Nov. 15, 1986, issue of The Tennessean, Nashville's morning newspaper. It is used by permission.)

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Oklahoma Baptist officials withdrew an invitation they made to Nashville (Tenn.) pastor Charles Page to preach there this week after they learned his church had recently elected three women as deacons.

An Oklahoma minister said yesterday (Nov. 14) the move to drop the pastor of First Baptist Church was taken to avoid "making waves" among state Baptists.

But Page called the ruckus "silly."

"It's one of those periphery issues that should not be a test of fellowship or faith," Page said. "It's been a family matter within our church, and it's been a very smooth transition for us. But we don't think it's anybody else's business, frankly."

Page, pastor of the 2,700-member First Baptist since March 1985, was to preach at Tuesday's (Nov. 11) annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, the state Southern Baptist organization. But the week before, Page received a call from a member of the convention program committee who said his panel decided it would be best to withdraw the invitation.

"It saddened me, but I can't say it surprised me," Page said. "This has been an issue that Baptists in Oklahoma have struggled with for years."

The role of women in church life has been the object of pointed disagreement between Baptist moderates and conservatives in their continuing struggle for power in the Southern Baptist Convention. Conservatives insist the Bible speaks against women's ordination, whether as deacons or ministers.

But Page said he believes the women's issue in Oklahoma predates the SBC's moderate-conservative controversy, which entered full stride in 1979.

According to one official, the Oklahoma group was concerned about the timing of First Baptist's election.

"We were trying to stay away from making waves at this time," said Paul Salyer, chairman of the committee that agreed to remove Page from the meeting's agenda. (Editor's Note: Salyer is pastor of South Lindsay Baptist Church of Oklahoma City.)

"We wanted to clear the possibility of having a convention that might create distractions. We didn't want to take away from our new executive director's installation or have him get off to a shaky start."

New Director William G. Tanner, former head of the Southern Baptist Home Mission board, was to speak earlier the same day Page was slated.

Last month, First Baptist members elected 15 new deacons, three of them women. It was the first time the church has widened the role of deacon to include women.

Female deacons are a rarity in Southern Baptist life, especially in the South and West, but Baptist tradition dictates that the matter be left up to individual congregations.

Another Oklahoma pastor said the decision to remove Page was directly related to the current fight within the denomination.

"It's a form of punishment by the extreme right that is in control," said Gene Garrison of First Baptist Church in Oklahoma City.

"I'm embarrassed by this. It's the most regrettable thing to happen in years."

Four years ago, Garrison's church was "dis-fellowshipped" from the local Baptist association for a year after the congregation elected three women deacons, he said.

"The real issue is whether we're going to exclude those who disagree with the people in control on issues that are peripheral," he said.

Page said the irony of the Oklahomans' decision was that the role of deacon is that of a "servant," not an authority or policy-making position.

"To say anyone can't serve is a foolish thing," he said. "It's not a board of directors. If we got half as bothered by the problems of the homeless, we'd get something done."

Page said a deacon's duties include visiting hospitals, consoling bereaved families and helping administer the Lord's Supper during worship.

Though Page has stayed out of the war of rhetoric that marks the conservative-moderate conflict, he said the Bible offers no clear answer on the question of female deacons.

However, he said he believes Scripture is more clear in its opposition to the ordination of women into the ministry.

First Baptist's election came after members voted in April to modify church bylaws regarding deacon requirements, changing the word "men" to "persons," according to Norma Baker, one of the women elected.

"It seems the Oklahoma group wanted to deal with Dr. Page by overlooking the fact that this is a local church matter," said Baker, who teaches psychology at Belmont College (a school affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention).

The other women are Ginnie Thornton, a homemaker, and Annie Ward Byrd, retired employee of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The church has 60 active deacons, who serve four-year terms. Fifteen rotate off each year.

Salyer said his committee made its decision unanimously. No group or individual that opposes women's ordination had stepped forward to complain about Page's impending preaching engagement, he said.

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Oklahoma Reconsiders
SBC-State CP Split

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Baptist Press
11/17/86

BETHANY, Okla. (BP)--Messengers to the 81st annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma instructed their executive board to restudy the state convention's 50-50 division of Cooperative Program funds with the national Southern Baptist Convention.

Messengers also affirmed a May action by the executive board in electing William G. Tanner as executive director-treasurer of the BGO, succeeding Joe Ingram, who retired. Tanner, the seventh man to serve in the convention's top staff position, was elected by acclamation during the Tuesday afternoon session at Council Road Baptist Church, Behany. An installation service followed immediately.

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The executive board elected Tanner May 5, during a special called meeting. The constitution specifies the election had to be affirmed by messengers at the next annual meeting.

The 1,324 messengers re-elected Rod Masteller, pastor of Putnam City Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, as president. He was first vice president this year but ascended to the presidency when Wendell Estep moved to South Carolina.

Other officers are Gary Smith, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church of Enid, first vice president; and Mike Hailey, pastor of Hobart First Baptist Church, second vice president.

Messengers adopted a 1987 budget of \$17,746,300, the same amount as the 1986 budget and virtually the same as 1985. The 1987 budget features the same 50-50 division of gifts between state causes and the worldwide missionary, evangelistic and educational ministries of the SBC.

Charles Graves, pastor of Nichols Hills Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, moved for the Cooperative Program study "to prevent severe negative impact" on state agencies, programs and institutions.

Graves, chairman of Oklahoma Baptist University board of trustees, said he fears the "economic difficulties confronting the state" and the resultant "negative impact" on church budgets could cause an "imbalance" in giving which would endanger state missions.

His motion authorizes the executive board "to make necessary adjustments in Cooperative Program allocations" if its study determines such a change is necessary.

The effort was opposed by Jim Sanderson, pastor of Jenks First Baptist Church. Sanderson said the motion was unnecessary because all convention agencies receive their funding on a percentage basis, including OBU. "Everybody takes the pinch together," he said. "We all get hurt or blessed together."

Graves' motion passed about 70 to 30 on a standing vote.

At the 1984 annual meeting Oklahoma became the second state convention to adopt the 50-50 split when it increased its percentage of gifts from 48 percent to 50 percent. The significance of a small change of percentage division was illustrated the next year when 1985 gifts to the state convention increased just \$34,000, but convention gifts to the national SBC increased \$331,000.

With Cooperative Program receipts through October running just 1 percent ahead of last year, there is a real possibility that for the first time in 52 years, one year's receipts may be lower than the previous year's.

With petroleum and agricultural difficulties, Oklahoma is suffering economic hard times. State officials pointed out that when oil prices decline \$1 per barrel, state revenues plummet \$11 million.

Messengers also adopted resolutions opposing a state lottery and supporting the conclusions of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.

A controversial issue occurred behind the scenes and messengers were not informed the convention's program committee "disinvited" Charles Page, pastor of First Baptist Church of Nashville, Tenn., who had been scheduled to preach at the annual meeting, and whose name appeared on the printed program as being the 3 p.m. Tuesday featured speaker.

A week before the convention, program committee member Paul Box, pastor of First Baptist Church of Moore, Okla., called Page to tell him the invitation to speak had been withdrawn.

First Baptist Church of Nashville recently elected three women to be deacons. The ordination of women has been a controversial issue among Oklahoma Baptists. Four years ago, First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City--pastored by the then second vice president of the SBC, Gene Garrison--was disfellowshipped by the Central Baptist Association for having ordained women as deacons.

When the program was introduced by Paul Salyer, pastor of South Lindsay Baptist Church in Oklahoma City and chairman of the program committee, no mention was made of Page's "disinvitation." The only reference was BGCO President Masteller's announcement the agenda had been changed and the 3 p.m. Tuesday slot would be given over to a special presentation to recently retired executive Ingram.

Next year's convention will be Nov. 9-11, again at Council Roads Church in Bethany.

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Baptist Leaders Join
Meeting With President

By David Wilkinson

N - ~~CL~~ Baptist Press
11/17/86

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Ronald Reagan pledged his administration will give "new priority" to the problem of pornography, reported Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian Rogers, one of 21 religious leaders who met with Reagan Nov. 14.

"The president made a strong commitment to do something about this problem, and we assured him of our own commitment and cooperation," said Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn.

Rogers and SBC Home Mission Board language missions director Oscar Romo were part of a delegation from the Religious Alliance Against Pornography that met with Reagan and Attorney General Edwin Meese to press for a beefed-up federal crackdown on illegal pornographic materials.

Rogers said the president agreed to speak out personally on the issue and to push for a coordinated effort between the Justice, Treasury and Postal departments to combat obscenity.

He noted "not much has happened" since he participated in a similar meeting with Reagan on the same issue three years ago. "But I'm going to try to be optimistic," he said. "If these things (proposed by Meese) are implemented, it can't help but make a tremendous impact on the proliferation of obscene materials."

Meese outlined plans for a "new offensive against illegal obscenity" during a half-day briefing preceding the Nov. 13-14 alliance strategy conference at the nation's capital. The plans incorporate many of the proposals set forth in the report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.

The briefing also included spokesmen from the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, the office of the U.S. surgeon general, the FBI, U.S. Customs Service and U.S. Postal Service.

The religious alliance, formed in July, has brought together a broad cross-section of religious leaders in a common battle against hardcore and child pornography. Other Southern Baptist members of the coalition are Harold C. Bennett, president of the SBC Executive Committee, and Jack Stanton, first vice president of the convention.

More than 20 Southern Baptists participated in the meeting, and Rogers and three other Southern Baptists were included on the program.

In an interview following the conference, Rogers commended the leadership of the denomination's Christian Life Commission but lamented that "Southern Baptists as a whole have not been out front on this issue like we should be and could be." Many concerned pastors and laypersons have become "disheartened," he said, frustrated largely by the reluctance of the federal government to lead a crackdown on obscenity.

At the White House briefing, Meese assured the religious leaders that the government's passive role in dealing with hardcore pornography will soon change. He reviewed plans to establish a Justice Department center for obscenity prosecution and creation of a high-level task force of attorneys who will assist local prosecutors with obscenity cases in addition to working directly with the prosecution center.

Meese said the crackdown also will include "an enhanced effort" in all 93 U.S. attorneys' offices to "vigorously prosecute" obscenity cases.

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He said he will direct U.S. attorneys at their annual meeting in February to make obscenity prosecutions one of eight priorities for their offices.

Throughout the alliance's meeting, speakers and participants expressed growing frustrations with the reluctance of most U.S. attorneys to prosecute obscenity cases.

"We need to light a fire under these U.S. attorneys," said Rogers. He urged pastors to "take the lead in informing and motivating public opinion" on the pornography problem.

"We cannot do what the government can do, and that is to enforce the laws," he said. "On the other hand, government cannot do what we can do, and that is to uphold morality, righteousness and even righteous indignation."

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Religious Leaders Mount
Anti-Pornography Effort

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
11/17/86

WASHINGTON (BP)—In what one speaker dubbed an "ecumenical miracle," 250 representatives of America's religious community met Nov. 13-14 to lift a united voice of protest against hardcore pornography.

The meeting of the Religious Alliance Against Pornography included representation from nearly every major religious body in the United States—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon and Greek Orthodox.

While representation was diverse, the stated purpose of the conference was intentionally narrow—to mount "a vigorous and responsible effort to attack and eliminate hardcore and child pornography."

That message, along with an appeal for help, was delivered to President Ronald Reagan and Attorney General Edwin Meese by 21 leaders of the alliance in a private White House meeting during the final session of the conference. The delegation included Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian Rogers and SBC Home Mission Board language missions director Oscar Romo, both members of the organization's executive committee.

The alliance was formed in July at a meeting led by Cardinal John O'Connor, Cardinal Joseph Bernadin and Jerry Kirk, president of the Cincinnati-based National Coalition Against Pornography. In addition to Rogers and Romo, the alliance's 50-member steering committee includes Harold C. Bennett, president of the SBC Executive Committee, and Jack Stanton, first vice president of the convention.

While noting many participants have concerns about other kinds of pornography, conference speakers repeatedly emphasized the coalition's targets are "illegal obscenity"—pornographic materials which lie outside the broad-sweeping protection of the First Amendment.

"We're not talking about air-brushed nudity portrayed in men's magazines," declared one speaker. "We're talking about material that clearly exceeds the definitions of obscenity established by the Supreme Court."

"We are against censorship," alliance Chairman Kirk told a news conference following the visit with the president. "But we are for enforcement of obscenity laws."

Throughout the conference, veterans of anti-pornography efforts voiced frustration over the federal government's unresponsiveness, especially in prosecuting obscenity violations.

In a half-day briefing preceding the conference, family life leader James Dobson, a member of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, noted the "salient finding" of the commission was "the absolute paralysis" of government in dealing with the \$8 billion pornography industry.

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While reiterating their commitment to First Amendment protections, speakers also documented the justification for an all-out assault on hardcore pornography. They occasionally used audio-visual presentations to illustrate descriptions of magazines and video cassettes depicting graphic sexual violence against women and sexual abuse of children.

They described materials picturing homosexual and heterosexual involvement of children as young as age three, incest, bestiality, torture and rape.

Ken Wooden, a former television reporter and now president of the National Coalition for Children's Justice, noted children are not only abused directly through child pornography but are increasingly being exposed to hardcore materials.

Wooden, who has talked to more than 30,000 children about child molestation, said more than 500 out of 700 children in one elementary school told him "they can see all the pornography they want." Many of them, he said, could give the titles of the videocassettes they had seen.

During the conference, religious leaders discussed strategies for raising their constituencies' awareness of the pornography problem and mobilizing them to fight against it.

"We're mainstreaming the debate" about the devastating impact of pornography, declared Father Bruce Ritter, a member of the pornography commission who has worked extensively with abused children.

Eileen Lindner, associate general secretary for the National Council of Churches, reminded conference participants that "it is our job—our right—to work as citizens to curtail this great threat to the human family and especially the women and children."

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Nelson Elected Missouri's
Interim Executive Director

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Baptist Press
11/17/86

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)—Retired Executive Thomas W. Nelson has been unanimously elected interim executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention. Nelson, who assumed office immediately, was elected by the MBC executive board during a special called session.

The executive board meeting was held in Jefferson City following the Nov. 7 memorial service for the late Rheubin L. South. South, who died of leukemia Nov. 6, had been MBC executive director since 1975.

MBC President John Hughes, pastor of First Baptist Church, Independence, said the board wanted to select someone who was known by Missouri Baptists as well as someone who was familiar with the work of the executive board.

Prior to South's election as executive director in 1975, Nelson served 11 months as interim executive director. "Tom Nelson was a natural choice," Hughes pointed out. "He did a good job before and we are glad he is available again."

Nelson is best known in Missouri as the retired executive director of the Missouri Baptist Foundation, a post he held for 16 years. He also is the former pastor of First Baptist Church, Jefferson City.

Most recently he has served as interim executive director of the MBC Foundation, a post he relinquished Nov. 1. He continues to serve as a consultant to the foundation.

Nelson told Word & Way, newsjournal of the convention, he appreciated the confidence of the executive board and was glad to serve again. He said he had no specific goals for his time of service but would call the administrative staff together as soon as possible to determine immediate goals and projects.

"Much of what happens depends on staff performance," he said, "and I am quite confident in their abilities."

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Thirty-four of the board's 51 members attended the special called meeting. In other actions, they approved a title change for program coordinator Willard Zeiser to "assistant to the interim executive director and program coordinator." They also voted to pay South's salary through November.

Hughes explained that the board's administrative committee examined the program coordinator's job description and did not find authorization for doing many of the tasks he had been asked to do during South's illness.

"We wanted to thank Willard for his work during the past months and authorize him to help the interim executive if Dr. Nelson desires," Hughes said.

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Tennessee Messengers
Broaden Representation

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Baptist Press
11/17/86

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. (BP)--A record number of messengers to the 112th Tennessee Baptist Convention approved a record Cooperative Program mission budget, amended committee guidelines to call for broader representation and defeated three attempts to place limitations on Tennessee Baptist Adult Homes Inc.

The unofficial registration for the convention at Freedom Hall Civic Center in Johnson City was 1,776--passing the previous record of 1,748 at the 1984 state convention.

The messengers elected without opposition 134 trustees for 10 Tennessee Baptist Convention institutions, agencies and the executive board, and 53 members of 10 convention committees. They also designated Jan. 18, 1987, as "Baptist Hospital Sunday" and elected Jerry Oakley, pastor of Springfield Baptist Church in Springfield, as state convention president. Also elected were Vice President Hoyt Wilson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lexington, and Second Vice President J.C. Parrott, pastor of Black Oak Heights Baptist Church in Knoxville.

The Cooperative Program budget for the November 1986-October 1987 convention year is \$22.5 million--a 7.14 percent increase over the 1985-86 goal and an increase of 8 percent above last year's receipts of \$20,831,030.34.

The new budget will increase the percentage shared with missions and ministries supported by the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program from 36.75 percent to 37 percent.

Convention messengers approved a recommendation from the Constitution and Bylaws Committee that the convention guidelines for the Committee on Boards' and the Committee on Committees' nominations should have "a broader representation from churches in geographical areas."

In a related matter, the messengers referred to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee a motion by James Stroud of Knoxville which would have amended the committee guidelines and the bylaws concerning the involvement of institutional executives in filling vacancies on their trustees.

Presently, the Committee on Boards asks these executives to submit three names for each vacancy, and if one of these three is not to be nominated to the convention, the committee is to confer with the executive.

Stroud's amendments would have permitted the executives to submit names and the committee "may confer" with the executives if one of these names is not to be nominated.

Another matter dealing with nominations came in a bylaw amendment proposed by Ron Phillips of Hixson, which would have authorized the convention president to nominate members to the Committee on Committees. Presently, these nominations come from the 15-member Committee on Boards.

Phillips said his amendment would satisfy a "concern that all views be represented" in the nomination process. The Committee on Committees nominates members for 10 convention committees, including the following year's Committee on Boards.

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Phillips then moved that his bylaw amendment be referred to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

Bill Sherman of Nashville spoke against the motion to refer because he said the amendment was not a "good idea." Sherman said, "We want broader participation, but we need to avoid any idea that brings division."

The motion to refer was defeated on a hand vote.

Phillips then said he "considered Bill Sherman's statements out of order" and that he would like to withdraw his amendment and write a letter to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

President James McCluskey said the motion to amend the bylaws could not be withdrawn if there were any objection. No objection was voiced, so he declared the motion withdrawn.

The messengers defeated three attempts to limit the budget and activities of Tennessee Baptist Adult Homes Inc.

When the Cooperative Program budget-goal came up for approval, Bill Bargiol of Harriman moved to amend the budget to delete the \$109,586 homes' allocation. He noted he was not calling for the institution to "shut down" but to use its unrestricted reserve funds, which he said totaled \$247,147.

The amendment to the budget was defeated by an estimated 10-1 margin on a hand vote.

Later James Robertson of Knoxville moved that the adult homes' directors be "encouraged not to employ a full-time executive director until a study of future plans is completed." The motion was defeated overwhelmingly on a hand vote.

A third challenge to the homes came on a motion from John Carpenter of Jonesborough, which concerned a trust fund established by Ben Roach to provide a retirement home for pastors, missionaries and their spouses in upper East Tennessee. According to the trust, the project is to be accomplished by Sept. 1, 1987.

Carpenter's motion asked the directors to work with the executive board of Holston Baptist Association; to request the Chancery Court for a 24-month extension; to bring specific plans to the 1987 state convention; and to not spend any of the Roach Trust funds until convention messengers approve this plan.

When this motion was presented for discussion, Bargiol offered an amendment, which was approved, to also ask the homes' directors to enter into no contract which would restrict religious worship in any facility it would operate. After discussion, a hand vote on the motion as amended was ruled "unclear," and a ballot was taken. Later it was announced that the motion as amended was defeated.

In other actions the messengers approved without opposition four resolutions: urging continuing efforts on religious liberty; commending Tennessee Baptist hospitals for their religious emphases despite pressures; commending Holston Baptist Association on its 200th anniversary; and expressing gratitude for all who contributed to the 1986 state convention.

Next year's convention will be hosted by Radnor Baptist Church in Nashville, Nov. 10-12, 1987.

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Tarheel Baptists Hold
Calm, Harmonious Meet

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Baptist Press
11/17/86

GREENSBORO, N.C. (BP)—Veteran observers called the 156th annual meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina the "calmest, most harmonious" session in recent memory.

More than 3,900 messengers registered to be part of the decision-making in establishing the new "fraternal, voluntary" relationship between Wake Forest University and the convention.

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The proposal, recommended by the general board of the state denomination after it had been hammered out by committees representing the university and the convention and approved by the Council on Higher Christian Education, was approved by an 81 to 19 percent margin. Messengers cast 2,689 votes for the new arrangement which goes into effect Jan. 1, 1987, while only 649 voted against it.

The new relationship has two distinguishing features from the previous arrangement between the state convention which was organized in 1830 and the university which was founded in 1834: The convention no longer elects the trustees which govern the university, and the school no longer shares in Cooperative Program funds.

Leadership of the convention and the university have said publicly the ties and ministry of each to the other would not change. The school, now located in Winston-Salem but founded in Wake Forest, has been a source of contention and debate on the convention floor for the past 30 years. Many messengers wanted to bring an end to the continual conflict.

In other actions, the messengers approved a new structure for the operation and support of the convention's Bible institute at Fruitland, near Hendersonville, in Western North Carolina.

The school has been made an agency of the denomination's general board, a unique arrangement within the state convention structure. It will be governed by a board of directors, elected by and responsible to the general board. One-third of the board will be alumni of Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute.

All other agencies and institutions of the state convention are governed by trustees elected by the convention in annual session. The vote was near unanimous for the new arrangement which is interpreted to strengthen the work and influence of the school which trains those who serve in churches regardless of previous education or lack of formal training. Some Fruitland graduates go on to attend college and seminary.

Other than the decision on Wake Forest University, the decision which prompted the most debate was a resolution which called upon the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board to reconsider its decision regarding salary supplements for ordained women who serve as pastors of churches. After discussion, the resolution passed by a two-to-one margin with the same language proposed by the Committee on Resolutions.

Except for the traditional resolution expressing appreciation for the hosts and program, there were no other resolutions. This was the least number of resolutions in recent years, indicating some disenchantment with the pattern of expressing positions on several issues which are not binding on affiliated churches.

The entire slate of officers which served in 1986 was re-elected for 1987 despite the fact that other persons were nominated for each of the positions.

William E. Poe, an attorney and member of First Baptist Church of Charlotte, who serves on the SBC Peace Committee, was re-elected president. Leon Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church of Goldsboro, was re-elected first vice president, and Betty Gilreath, a member of Charlotte's Providence Baptist Church and former president of the Woman's Missionary Union in North Carolina, was re-elected second vice president.

The messengers approved a record budget for 1987 of \$27,637,000 of which \$1,512,000 is a challenge goal above the base budget of \$26,125,000. Current receipts for the Cooperative Program are running more than 6 percent above 1985 and it appears the 1986 budget will be met for the first time in many years.

Southern Baptist Convention causes will receive 35.50 percent of Cooperative Program funds, up from 35.45 percent in 1986. The increase is the result of previous convention action to steadily move toward a more equal division between state and national convention use of Cooperative Program funds.

The 1987 convention again will meet in Greensboro Coliseum Nov. 9-11.

Arizona Southern Baptists
Demonstrate Cooperation

PHOENIX (BP)—Messengers to the 58th annual meeting of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention responded to the meeting's theme, "Cooperation ... The Baptist Way," by electing four officers by acclamation and adopting 11 resolutions with no debate.

Meeting in North Phoenix Baptist Church, the 534 messengers adopted a \$5.16 million budget for 1987, a 6.5 percent increase over the current year. The budget includes projected receipts of \$2.5 million from Arizona churches. The percentage of Arizona Cooperative Program funds sent on to the Southern Baptist Convention will increase one-half percent to 28 percent.

George Webb, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Holbrook, was elected president. Dave Wallace, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Williams, was elected first vice president, and Hershel Henkel, who retired as a director of associational missions last year and is now pastor of First Baptist Church, Tombstone, was elected second vice president. Jay George, pastor of Overton Road Baptist Church, Tucson, was re-elected recording secretary.

Resolutions condemned drug and alcohol abuse, opposed pornography and addressed sex education and adolescent pregnancy. Messengers adopted a resolution criticizing "adolescent sex education programs taught from a secular humanistic viewpoint" and calling for families and churches "to educate children about spiritual insights and Christian understanding of sexuality."

Other resolutions pledged commitment to Planned Growth in Giving, a Southern Baptist Convention program aimed at leading individuals, churches and state conventions to systematically increase their level of giving over the next 15 years; encouraged increased support from churches and the state convention staff in the strengthening of missions; voiced support for "Arizona 100/90, the People Challenge," with the goal of reaching 100,000 in Sunday school enrollment by 1990; emphasized the importance of discipleship training; and encouraged churches to work together on the problem of forced termination of ministers.

Messengers also commended the Baptist Foundation of Arizona for its commitment to new work in the state, expressed gratitude to the state convention staff "for their positive, cooperative spirit of leadership" and expressed appreciation to all those involved in the annual meeting.

An item originally presented as a resolution was referred by the Order of Business Committee to the state Executive Board without discussion by the messengers. Robert S. Campbell, pastor of Gila Bend First Southern Baptist Church proposed that "beginning with fiscal 1988, the convention operating budget shall increase by only the dollar amount equal to that spent in the field on missions."

Messengers unanimously approved a constitutional amendment merging the Arizona Executive Board's six standing committees into four in order to more evenly distribute the work load.

The next meeting of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention will be Nov. 10-11, 1987, in the Phoenix metropolitan area.