



BAPTIST PRESS

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November 18, 1986

86-171

Supreme Court Sends Back
Religious Job Bias Case

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)--Although holding that an appeals court decision in a religious job bias case was reached from an erroneous approach, the Supreme Court Nov. 17 affirmed that decision, sending the case back for further proceedings.

The case involves an Ansonia, Conn., public schoolteacher who claims the local school board should provide him with paid leave to observe up to six religious holidays annually. The teacher, Ronald Philbrook, is a member of the Worldwide Church of God, which requires members to refrain from secular employment during designated holy days.

The Ansonia Board of Education, in annual agreements negotiated with the local chapter of the American Federation of Teachers since the 1968-69 school year, has allowed teachers to take three days' annual leave for mandatory religious holidays. Teachers also annually receive 18 days of leave for illness, but may use accumulated leave for purposes other than illness--including three days annually for "necessary personal business." The contract agreement, however, restricts teachers from using those three days for specific activities--including religious observance--already provided for in the contract.

Philbrook contends the school board's policy of allowing him to take additional days off without pay for his church's holy days constitutes religious discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII requires that an employer "reasonably accommodate to an employee's ... religious observance or practice without undue hardship on the conduct of the employer's business."

In 1973, Philbrook filed a complaint with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. He proposed two alternatives--either to allow him to use the personal business leave for religious observance or to permit him to pay for the cost of a substitute teacher rather than having his salary docked.

Upon the school board's rejection of his proposals, Philbrook went to court. A U.S. district court judge, however, ruled Philbrook had failed to prove a case of religious discrimination because the school board had not placed him in a position of violating his religion or losing his job.

The 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that decision, holding the accommodation obligation includes a duty to accept the proposal the employee prefers unless that proposal causes undue hardship on the employer. The court remanded the case for consideration of the hardship that would result from Philbrook's proposals.

In delivering the Supreme Court opinion, Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist said the court found no basis in Title VII for requiring an employer to choose any particular reasonable accommodation since "any reasonable accommodation by the employer is sufficient to meet its accommodation obligation." Thus the appeals court, he said, erred by requiring the school board to demonstrate the hardship of Philbrook's alternatives.

Under the appeals court's approach, Rehnquist said, "the employee is given every incentive to hold out for the most beneficial accommodation, despite the fact that an employer offers a reasonable resolution of the conflict."

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As to whether the school board's leave policy constitutes a reasonable accommodation of Philbrook's religious beliefs, however, Rehnquist said the Supreme Court must remand the case to the district court for further proceedings. The chief justice said neither lower court had explicitly considered that question, thus providing the high court with insufficient factual findings.

While expressing the court's opinion that requiring a teacher to take unpaid leave for holy day observance exceeding the amount allowed by the contract agreement would be reasonable, Rehnquist said such unpaid leave would not be a reasonable accommodation if paid leave were provided for all purposes except religious ones.

Rehnquist said a factual inquiry into past and present administration of the personal business leave provisions is necessary and instructed the district court to make that inquiry.

Two justices filed separate opinions in which they concurred in part and dissented in part.

In his dissent, Justice Thurgood Marshall contended the school board policy forces Philbrook to choose between following his religious precepts with a partial forfeiture of salary and violating those precepts for work with full pay.

"It is precisely this loss of compensation that entitles Philbrook to further accommodation, if reasonably possible without undue hardship to the school board's educational program," Marshall said. "It may be that unpaid leave will generally amount to a reasonable accommodation, but this does not mean that unpaid leave will always be the reasonable accommodation which best resolves the conflict between the needs of the employer and employee."

Justice John Paul Stevens disagreed with the court's decision to remand the case, calling such action "unnecessary and confusing." He argued the employer has no legal duty to resolve the conflict in the way the employee requests as long as the solution that is adopted is reasonable.

"I find it equally clear that the employer has no statutory duty to do anything more than strictly necessary to resolve the conflict," Stevens added.

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Missouri Laymen Unite
Against Controversy

By Trennis Henderson

Baptist Press
11/18/86

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)—Seeking to "bring things back to what our heritage is" as Southern Baptists, a group of Missouri Baptists in the Kansas City area have founded an organization called "Missouri Laymen United."

Spearheaded by Jo Ellen Witt, a member of First Baptist Church of Weston, the not-for-profit corporation is at least the third such organization to surface in recent weeks. A group of Texas Baptists calling themselves "Laity for ... the Baptist Faith and Message" and a group named "Florida Baptists for Cooperation" have organized with similar goals and objectives.

Witt told Word & Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention, the statement of purpose for Missouri Laymen United is "to seek to preserve Baptist heritage and principles in the Southern Baptist Convention through an informed, concerned laity working together in unity of spirit and faith."

Acknowledging that "some people might feel threatened" by the organization, Witt insisted it is designed "basically for peace. We want to get peace back within the convention."

The group held its first public forum at Second Baptist Church of Liberty, inviting "a couple of laymen from all the churches in the area where we felt like the pastors would be supportive of what we were doing," Witt explained. That meeting, which attracted more than 100 people, featured presentations by Gordon Kingsley, president of William Jewell College in Liberty; Mary Lois Sanders, a former Southern Baptist missionary to Brazil; Wanda Haworth, a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board trustee and a member of Centertown Baptist Church in Centertown; and Bob Perry, director of missions for Clay-Platte Baptist Association.

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Steve Stratten, vice chairman of Missouri Laymen United, said Kingsley's discussion focused on "the background of Baptist heritage, beliefs and tenets." He said the college president addressed such topics as Scripture as final authority, the priesthood of believers, autonomy of the local church and the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Stratten, an attorney and a member of First Baptist Church of Excelsior Springs, said the other three speakers shared personal observations about the current conflict within the Southern Baptist Convention and how it is hurting the cause of missions on associational, home and foreign fields.

"There was no name-calling," Stratten said of the meeting, "just personal observances and how they feel the conflict is impeding the work of missions."

Witt, who is chairman of the Missouri organization, emphasized, "Laymen have got to get involved to educate other laymen. As laymen, we can do that. My job is not threatened by what we do. A pastor, missionary or seminary professor can't do this."

Witt described herself as "a totally uneducated layman" prior to attending her first SBC annual meeting in Dallas in 1985. She said she was distressed by "the political nature of everything, the antagonism I saw between people. It made me see we were totally off target."

"I am hoping that as people become aware, become educated, that there won't be a problem of one side or another," she said. "That's what we want to get away from. Basically, I'd just like to see some peace, and the emphasis off the politics and back on what our purpose should be."

Vice chairman Stratten agreed: "A lot of the controversy has come from pastors. There is a need for laymen to get more actively involved in the affairs of the convention."

He said his goal within the organization is "to help educate the laity so that they can be involved in a healing process and find unity in diversity. Within that diversity, we need to unify and cooperate with one another to do the work of missions. If the laity takes the initiative, I think there would be more credibility and broad-based support."

Serving with Witt and Stratten are Secretary-Treasurer Leonard Thornton, a member of Second Baptist Church in Liberty, and pastor advisory committee Chairman Bill Link, retired pastor of Second Baptist Church.

Future plans for the organization include publishing a newsletter and hosting more public forums. The next two meetings, scheduled for Dec. 9 at Wyatt Park Baptist Church in St. Joseph, and Dec. 11 in the Kansas City area, will feature a discussion of the issue of inerrancy. The guest speaker at both meetings will be Ray Summers, retired head of the department of religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Witt said a future meeting, tentatively scheduled for next spring, will feature Georgia Baptist layman Norman Cavender.

Explaining his understanding of Missouri Laymen United, Perry noted, "It's something that Jo Ellen is doing out of her concern as one Southern Baptist layperson. Her real interest is not to tell people how to vote but to help them get in touch with what is going on and to increase their level of involvement."

Declining to endorse one specific organization, Perry added, "I am totally supportive of Southern Baptist laypeople becoming better informed about denominational life and becoming more involved at every level of the denomination. I think greater lay participation can help Southern Baptists deal with some of the issues we've been confronting on the national level."

Emphasizing the need for unity, Stratten said: "If the convention is to survive, we need to be more tolerant of everyone, whether they are fundamentalists or moderates. The work of the convention—primarily missions—is being hampered by the divisiveness."

Kentucky Baptists
Elect A.B. Colvin

ELIZABETHTOWN, Ky. (BP)—A convention with potential for uncharacteristic discord became one of harmony when the Kentucky Baptist Convention met Nov. 11-13 in Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.

One messenger said Kentucky Baptists once again proved that while they may arrive at a state meeting with questions in their minds their concerns are likely to melt into "sweet fellowship" long before the final amen.

For 1,746 of them, along with 407 visitors—probably the largest attendance at a convention in their history—it was a meeting of contrasts.

A.B. Colvin of Louisville, a former long-term executive board employee, was elected president. Colvin received 774 votes, and Louisville pastor Ferrill Gardner of Carlisle Avenue Baptist Church received 372 votes.

Eugene Siler, a federal judge from Williamsburg, was elected first vice president, narrowly defeating Jack Amos, a medical doctor from Hopkinsville, 355 to 345.

A motion calling for a one-year moratorium on resolutions—an effort to carry out the current Southern Baptist Convention peace-keeping spirit—failed to get a unanimous vote but passed easily. No resolutions were proposed or adopted, in keeping with the action.

The report of a special committee to study liability, ownership and dissolution provisions of KBC agencies and institutions was approved. Only one amendment was made to a long printed proposal.

The committee worked with institutional leaders and trustees to develop covenant proposals between the convention and the institutions, all of which were published by the Western Recorder, newsjournal of the KBC, two weeks before the convention. The covenants relate to five educational institutions, five hospitals and the children's homes. The amendment to the proposal calls for the convention to draft additional covenant agreements with the Western Recorder and the Kentucky Baptist Foundation.

Messengers studied the covenant proposals in a two-hour business session, looking individually at the agreements with the educational institutions and studying the hospital relationships and the children's home agreement collectively.

Convention Executive Director-Treasurer William Marshall said he believes the new agreements will make the ties between the convention and the institutions even closer.

A recommendation from the executive board to realign the Kentucky Baptist Foundation did not reach the floor of the convention because of a technicality. A messenger raised a point of order when the procedure used was found in violation of the convention's constitution. The constitution calls for publication of recommendations from the executive board in the Western Recorder at least 30 days prior to annual meetings, and this procedure was not followed.

A messenger moved that the convention president appoint a balanced committee to study the relationship between the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the Western Recorder, including a study of the "balance of coverage in light of the (SBC) Peace Committee's requests." The motion was referred to the newsjournal's board of directors.

In a departure from recent tradition and at the urging of its executive board, the convention agreed to temporarily lower its financial sights in a "realistic" response to current giving patterns. The 1986-87 budget goal of \$18,189,596, was reduced to the 1985-86 level of \$17,008,157. The percentage of the budget passed on to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program was lowered from 38.125 percent to 37.5 percent.

The convention began a year of celebration at the close of the annual meeting in preparation for the 150th anniversary of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. That historic session will be held in Louisville's Walnut Street Baptist Church Nov. 10-11, 1987.

Maryland/Delaware
Baptists Celebrate

BALTIMORE (BP)—The 151st annual meeting of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware required an extra day—because the convention was celebrating.

The convention—mother of three other full-fledged conventions, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania/South Jersey—concluded a year's observance of its 150th anniversary with a gala celebration on Sunday, Nov. 9. The annual meeting was held Nov. 10-12 at Temple Baptist Church, Baltimore. Attendance of almost 800 was the highest in recent years.

With that historic background, the convention voted to move its present headquarters from nearby Lutherville to a strategically located site in South Columbia. The convention also passed a \$2.4 million Cooperative Program budget and approved resolutions of appreciation for the work of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and affirmation for the six Southern Baptist seminaries, their presidents, and their faculties.

Pointing to the 1988 observance of the Year of the Laity, the convention elected as president David Flumbaum, a layman and college administrator from Middle River Church in Baltimore. In his local church, Flumbaum has been a deacon and is currently church training director.

The new president, who succeeds Colesville pastor Ralph Ehren, is associate dean of instructional services planning and development at Dundalk Community College.

Headquarters for Maryland and Delaware Baptists for the past 20 years has been 1313 York Road in Lutherville. The current building is located in a heavily populated business community where building sites are at a premium.

After completing extensive studies during the past year, the executive board recommended sale of the York Road site, purchase of a five-acre site adjacent to South Columbia Church for approximately \$250,000, and construction of a modern office building. Offers for the current site have ranged up to \$2 million plus. If such an offer is successfully negotiated, the new building—plus cost of the site—could be constructed without the convention's requiring a financial loan.

During the studies, it was determined that the Baptist Book Store, which leases space from the Baptist Building, will locate somewhere in the Baltimore 695 Beltway area.

Messengers also approved several standing committee changes within the convention's executive board structure. The changes affect duties and responsibilities of committees, new names for several committees, and changes of meeting days.

A change in the constitution was approved at first reading, and if approved at next year's meeting, the executive board will be called the general mission board—and the executive committee will become the administrative committee.

Also distributed during the Convention was a 40-page special edition of the "Baptist True Union". The paper was packed with features of historical characters—and photographs of early Baptist leaders of the convention.

Messengers approved 21 recommendations from its Directions 2000 Committee—dealing with reaching people, developing believers, and strengthening missions.

The convention expects to receive \$3.7 million from its 320 church and mission congregations for the 1987 budget, an increase of 5 percent. The CP budget increase is 4 percent, and will be split 60 percent BCM/D and 40 percent Southern Baptist Convention. The convention's 1987 is based on 1985 actual receipts.

Maryland/Delaware Baptists will next meet Nov. 9-11, 1987 in Ogletown Baptist Church in Newark, Del.

Florida Baptists Retreat
To 50-50 Split Of CP Funds

By Greg Warner

PENSACOLA, Fla. (BP)—Florida Baptists, meeting in annual session Nov. 10-12 in Pensacola, reluctantly retreated from their record-setting pattern of giving to the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program.

After debate, messengers reduced the portion of the state convention's budget that goes to support SBC worldwide missionary, evangelism and educational causes by one-tenth of a percent. Beginning in January, the Florida Baptist Convention will return to a 50-50 division of funds between state needs and SBC causes rather than move up as planned to a 50.2 percent share for the national convention.

Despite the reduction, the approved 1987 budget keeps Florida Baptists at the top of percentage giving among Baptist state conventions. Two other state conventions, Oklahoma and Georgia, also share funds on a 50-50 division.

Discussion of the budget dominated Florida Baptists' peaceful three-day meeting, which attracted 1,792 messengers and 787 visitors to the state's westernmost city.

Messengers adopted a \$21,782,139 total budget, of which \$1,613,492 is the advance stage.

Florida has been the nationwide leader in percentage giving to the Cooperative Program. In 1984, the Florida Baptist Convention became the first state group to approve spending equal portions of the money it receives on state and national causes. At last year's annual meeting, Florida Baptists raised the SBC share from 50 percent to 50.1 percent and were scheduled to move up to 50.2 percent this year.

Sluggish growth in giving and a pressing need to pay convention debt prompted the State Board of Missions to recommend the turnaround for the 1987 budget, however.

Although the reduction is small, it is believed to be the Florida Baptist Convention's history that the portion going to the SBC Cooperative Program percentage has been cut.

Ironically, Florida Baptists still will send more money to the Cooperative Program next year than ever before, according to projections. Although the Cooperative Program will receive a smaller portion of the money Florida Baptists contribute to their state convention, the total giving from Baptists in the state is expected to increase 8 percent next year.

"If we grow even 1 percent, we will send more money," Executive Director-Treasurer Dan C. Stringer told the Florida Baptist Witness, newsjournal of the convention.

The 0.1 percent budget reduction will reduce the Cooperative Program portion an estimated \$20,000 next year, Stringer said, but an 8 percent growth in giving from churches will produce \$80,000 more for the national convention. As a result, it could net an estimated \$60,000 more from Florida Baptists in 1987 despite the vote of the convention.

That would please messengers who offered unsuccessful budget amendments and other suggestions to soften the blow of the percentage reversal.

In addition to adopting the 1987 budget, messengers heard a battery of preachers, received reports from the convention staff, elected officers and adopted resolutions against pornography, lotteries, occult activities and evolutionary teachings in public school textbooks.

Another resolution thanked Patrick Anderson, a criminologist from Lakeland, for leading Florida Baptists' unsuccessful campaign to defeat a referendum on state-sponsored lotteries.

Bill Coffman, pastor of Arlington Baptist Church in Jacksonville, was elected president of the state convention. Messengers chose Anderson, a professor at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, first vice president; Osmer Crippen, a layman from Orange City, second vice president; and Joseph Folmar, pastor of Brentwood Baptist Church in Jacksonville, recording secretary.

The 1987 meeting of the Florida state convention will be Nov. 9-11 in Daytona Beach.

KNBC Celebrates
Ethnic Diversity

LEAWOOD, Kan. (BP)—Kansas-Nebraska Southern Baptists celebrated their ethnic diversity during their 1986 annual meeting in Leawood Baptist Church.

The concluding session was given over to a "praise service" devoted to the changing face of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists. Featured were soloists, choirs and speakers from among the 21 ethnic Southern Baptist congregations in the two-state convention.

During the session, all of the 1986 officers were re-elected. They are: John Click, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Wichita, Kan., president; Harold Finch, a businessman from Overland Park, Kan., and co-founder of Wellspring Mission Volunteer Foundation, vice president; Mary Jo Robertson of Kansas City, Kan., recording secretary; Dave Sellars, pastor of Northern Heights Baptist Church in Norfolk, Neb., assistant recording secretary.

The 319 messengers adopted a 1987 budget of \$3,049,380, of which \$1,550,004 is expected to come from the 280 congregations affiliated with the KNBC. The budget provides that 29 percent—an increase of 1 percent over last year—will be sent to support the worldwide missionary, evangelistic and educational ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention. The amount to be channeled through the SBC Cooperative Program is \$449,496.

The convention voted on five resolutions:

— Expressing appreciation to the pastor, staff and members of the host church; and to the officers and staff of the convention.

-- Voicing opposition to the Kansas state constitutional amendment allowing pari-mutuel wagering, state-operated lotteries, and public consumption of alcoholic beverages.

-- Expressing appreciation to and affirming the work of the Baptist Joint Committee for their efforts to preserve the heritage and freedom which we have long defended concerning separation of church and state.

-- Declaring its affirmation on the findings of the report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, and committing resources and energies to affirm and encourage our local, state, and national offices to enforce current obscenity laws and to enact stronger ones.

-- Affirming the presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries and the SBC Peace Committee in their efforts to produce harmony among Southern Baptists.

The convention also bid farewell to Dewey Hickey, director of extension missions and the Brotherhood, who will become executive director of the North and South Dakota Baptist Fellowship, a division of the Northern Plains Baptist Convention.

The 1987 annual meeting will be Nov. 11-12 in Lincoln, Neb.

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California Baptists
To Remain 'Southern'

Baptist Press
11/18/86

STOCKTON, Calif. (BP)—A constitutional move to drop the word Southern from the state convention's name fell about 100 votes short as a record number of messengers gathered in Stockton for the 46th annual session of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California.

Messengers also approved wide-ranging recommendations from a special strategy committee which will provide objectives and goals for the convention as part of Bold Mission Thrust to the year 2000.

John Swartz, Escondido pastor for 18 years, was elected president after three ballots were taken in a nine-person field. Anna Jane Venosdel, of Fresno, was elected first vice president. Larry Cain, black pastor in Compton, was elected second vice president.

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The name change generated heated discussion, several parliamentary problems and three time extensions. One amendment to shorten the name, but leave the word Southern in place failed to get a majority by 100 votes before the original motion to change the name to California Baptist Convention fell about the same number of votes short of the needed two-thirds.

Messengers later were notified the same proposal to change the name would be added to the agenda of the 1987 meeting in Oxnard, Nov. 10-12.

Officially, 1,458 messengers registered, with visitors pushing the total above 2,000, easily surpassing previous registration totals for an annual session.

Also approved was an \$11 million budget, of which \$5,951,500 will come from California congregations, including a challenge budget of \$250,000. The new budget is a 4.8 percent increase over 1986 and represents 28.75 percent to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program, a one-fourth percent increase over 1986.

Messengers approved the formation of a special committee to plan the 50th anniversary celebration in 1990 in Bakersfield.

Included in a dozen resolutions approved were those which: supported efforts in combating drug and alcohol abuse; decried school textbooks which selectively omit the part of religion in the nation's history; expressed confidence in support for William Crews, new president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, who is a California pastor; asked for the elimination of child pornography; asked the state board of education to reconsider plan for sex education classes in the third grade; affirmed the recent immigration bill passed by Congress; and recognized and encouraged the work of a Russian broadcast organization headed by a Sacramento area pastor.

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Indiana Incumbent
President Challenged

Baptist Press
11/18/86

CLARKSVILLE, Ind. (BP)—Messengers to the twenty-seventh annual meeting of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana re-elected the incumbent president, passed a resolution on the editor of the state newsjournal, the Indiana Baptist, and passed a record budget.

For the first time in the history of the state convention an incumbent president eligible for re-election was challenged. Incumbent president, Don Deel, pastor of Eastlake Baptist Church in Merrillville, has identified himself as "a conservative" but says he is not aligned with any political faction in the SBC. He was elected president in 1985.

Tom Evitts, pastor of the host church, was nominated by Don Claybrook, pastor of Rolling Fields Baptist Church in Jeffersonville, who told messengers: "I thank the Lord we have an opportunity to rise above the straightjacket mentality that runs roughshod over other Southern Baptists ... Tom Evitts has that rare gift of combining intellectual freedom with a sold-out commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ."

When Deel was nominated no speech was made. The vote was 204 votes for Deel and 64 for Evitts.

Later Evitts criticized David Simpson, editor of the Indiana Baptist, for inferring editorially that his nomination grew out of an "organized, public, political effort to unseat Don Deel."

Simpson explained through the Indiana Baptist that the reference was to the Nov. 4 editorial. He said that phrase does not appear in the editorial. Further, some pastors, some of whom identify themselves as moderates, had met and discussed the possible nomination of Evitts. This nomination did in fact occur. Simpson concluded, "I stand by my analysis appearing in the editorial."

During the final session of the convention a resolution was presented commending Simpson for giving "a fair and balanced picture of the theological issues facing our Southern Baptist Convention in his editorial column."

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The resolution encouraged Simpson "in his editorials to continue to deal with all the issues that currently concern Southern Baptists. We thank Dr. Simpson for unapologetically and clearly rejecting the false doctrine of universalism." The resolution passed by a vote of 108-56 after lengthy discussion.

Messengers from the 301 churches and 50 missions adopted a budget calling for a Cooperative Program goal of \$1,716,560, an increase of \$91,560. Of the goal, 32 percent will be shared with Southern Baptist Convention causes. The total budget for 1987 is \$2,322,954.

Last year's first vice president David Wood, pastor of Floyds Knobs Baptist Church in Floyd Knobs, was re-elected over Executive Director Emeritus E. Harmon Moore. The election required two votes, with the first secret ballot vote tied at 130 each. On the second balloting Wood came out ahead with a 128-111 vote.

George Bowles, a layman from Oak Park Baptist in Jeffersonville, was re-elected second vice president. He served during 1985-86.

The State Convention of Baptists in Indiana is slated to meet at Northside Baptist Church, Indianapolis, Nov. 3-5, 1987.

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Baptist Church Blossoms
In French Tire Center

By George Gera

Baptist Press
11/18/86

CLERMONT-FERRAND, France (BP)—"Hello, are you the Mormons?"

"No, we're Baptists," Southern Baptist missionary John Perkins replied. "Can we help you?"

Mormons, Baptists—it made little difference to the caller: "I teach a religion class to high school students, and we're discussing sect groups in France. Would it be possible to meet with you?"

Perkins consented, knowing that non-Catholic groups in France often are labeled as sects, but trusting that the meeting would allow for a Christian witness.

The missionary subsequently got an opportunity to explain his faith in front of 100 high school students. And he gave each a copy of the Gospel of John and a tract relating the plan of salvation.

Perkins' presentation also caused the teacher to change his outlook. "I see now that you're not a sect," he remarked, "but really a valid Christian group."

Such encounters are a way of life for Perkins and his wife, Sarah, who in 1984 established the first Baptist church in Clermont-Ferrand, a city best known as the world headquarters for the makers of Michelin tires.

As a rule, French people do not understand why an American missionary couple would come to their country, Perkins says. Some observers say France has become "de-Christianized." It's a country strong on individualism and intellectual analysis. As one Frenchman told Perkins, "We may discuss religion, but we don't get personally involved with it."

Even so, the missionaries remain busy, building friendships, coping with disappointments and rejoicing at opportunities for leading those looking for something to believe in to Jesus Christ.

When Sarah Perkins started a conversation with the wife of a new department store manager in Clermont-Ferrand, the woman observed that their husbands' work is similar: each is opening a new enterprise in the city.

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Contact with this woman and several other professional women gave Mrs. Perkins an opportunity to start a women's English conversation group. "The trust level is high in the group and they really share their struggles," she says.

Baptists in France say it takes 10 or more years to establish a vibrant congregation, but the Perkinses are convinced that among Clermont-Ferrand's 250,000 people there are many who will find hope in the midst of their struggles through the Baptist church's Christian message.

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(Gera is Southern Baptist missionary press representative in France.)

Couple Gets Anniversary Gift
In Liberia They Can't Accept

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
11/18/86

ATLANTA (BP)—Charlie and Willye Mae Clement of Chamblee, Ga., celebrated their fifty-first wedding anniversary on a mission trip to Monrovia, Liberia, helping construct a new church building.

While there, they received an anniversary present they could not accept. A 20-year-old Liberian mother tried to give them her eight-month old daughter.

The Clements were talking to several other mission team members from First Baptist Church of Chamblee at the church construction site in Monrovia when the Liberian woman asked Mrs. Clement to take her baby.

"You want me to hold her?" she asked the mother. "No, you take baby to America," the Liberian woman replied.

The Clements could not believe the mother was willing to give away her baby. "Why would you do this?" Clement asked her.

In halting English, the mother explained she felt the baby would have a better life and better chance of survival in America. The Clements explained it was not legally possible to accept the baby.

Clement, 73, a retired plumbing, heating and air conditioner contractor, said he was overcome by the mother's love for her child. "She loved the baby so much she was willing to give it away," he said.

Ten members of the Chamblee church participated in the project as part of a partnership mission effort between the Georgia Baptist Convention and the Liberia Baptist Convention.

W. David Sapp, pastor of the Chamblee church, said the mission trip was a multi-faceted international venture involving four different projects.

Team members constructed a new church building for the Chocolate City Baptist Church in suburban Monrovia, led daily Bible study sessions for about 70 to 100 Liberian children, led immunization clinics and participated in a revival meeting resulting in 41 decisions and attendance that was six times normal.

When the team arrived, attendance was about 30 to 40 in services held in a church member's home. On the final service of the revival, held in the incompleted church building on a rainy night, attendance increased to 236. Even though a tarpaulin covered only half the roof, Liberians sat in the rain on concrete blocks and wooden planks.

"I couldn't help but wonder how many people would attend a revival at Chamblee if they had to sit in the rain on concrete blocks," said Sapp. "Our prayer is that the revival which started in Liberia will continue here in Chamblee," a northeast suburb of Atlanta.

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