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May 20, 1987

87-78

Registration Scheduled
For 28,000 Messengers

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Some 400 volunteers will be on hand in St. Louis June 14-18 to help register an estimated 28,000 messengers expected to attend the 1987 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Our goal is that every messenger be registered in approximately five minutes," said Lee Porter of Nashville, the SBC's registration secretary. "My own personal commitment is that I want to register every qualified messenger from every participating Southern Baptist church as efficiently as possible."

Porter, who has supervised the registration process since being elected in 1978, has participated in registering the messengers at the two largest SBC annual meetings in history, 1985 in Dallas (45,519) and 1986 in Atlanta (40,987). He does not expect the 1987 annual meeting to reach such high figures "because the demand for registration materials has not been as great this year as it has been in the last two years."

Registration will open at 3 p.m. Sunday, June 14, in the registration area on the second floor of the Cervantes Convention Center in St. Louis. Registration will close at 9:30 p.m. Sunday. It will continue from 8 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Wednesday (June 15-17) and from 8 a.m. until the close of the convention at 5 p.m. Thursday.

"The worst times to register will be during the first hour after we open at 3 p.m. Sunday and on Monday and Tuesday mornings from 8 to 9:30 a.m.," Porter said. "We are expecting to have long lines of people waiting at those times."

He added, however, that the "best times to register" will be from 5 to 6 p.m. and 8 to 9:30 p.m. Sunday and anytime after 9:30 a.m. on Monday and Tuesday. Registration generally slows down after the convention officially begins at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Porter said persons wishing to register should have the registration cards, available from state convention executive officers, and, in some states, from associational directors of missions. The cards should provide the necessary information and be signed by either the moderator or the clerk of the congregation.

"Most messengers have had cards in recent years," he said. "A decade ago, only about 50 percent of the messengers used the cards, but at the 1986 annual meeting in Atlanta, 98 percent of the messengers had the properly filled out cards. Only about 800 people had to go before the credentials committee because they did not have proper cards."

"If a messenger does not have a card, he or she will become involved in a process that is time consuming and rather involved. He or she will have to go before the Credentials Committee in order to be registered. Our rule is that anyone who does not have a registration card will have to go before the committee," he said.

Those who do go before the committee will have to have either a letter on the letterhead of the church signed by either the moderator or the clerk, or a telegram sent from the local congregation.

"Having a properly filled out and signed card will simplify the process greatly," he said.

He added the Credentials Committee, made up of 25 members appointed by SBC President Adrian P. Rogers, will not meet this year on Sunday afternoon, but will be available only after 8:30 a.m. on Monday. The Credentials Committee chairman is James Bryant, pastor of Grand Avenue Baptist Church of Fort Smith, Ark. Local arrangements committee worker assigned to coordinate the registration process is Bob Thompson, an educational consultant from St. Louis, who also was the local registration chairman for the 1980 convention in St. Louis.

According to Article III of the Southern Baptist Convention Constitution, every church "in friendly cooperation" with the convention "and sympathetic with its purposes and work" who has been a "bona fide contributor to the convention work" during the previous fiscal year is entitled to one messenger.

Other messengers, up to a total of 10, are gained at the rate of one for each 250 members or for each \$250 paid to the work of the convention in the preceding fiscal year.

Porter said only about one percent of the churches in the convention use the membership category in qualifying for messengers, while the remainder use contributions as the scale. Porter said a church must use one or the other, and may not use a combination to qualify for messengers.

He added churches which have constituted since the end of the last fiscal year — which ended Sept. 30, 1986 — may not register, since the constitution specifies only those congregations contributing "during the last fiscal year" may have messengers.

Porter added only messengers may register. "Our constitution has no provision for registering alternates. The church must certify to the convention those who have been elected as messengers and may not have more than 10."

He added visitors also should not register.

Messengers will receive a messenger badge, which will allow them to enter the convention hall. "Small children with their parents will be admitted to the floor of the convention, but a badge will be necessary to be admitted to sessions of the convention," he said.

Messengers also will receive ballots to be used in voting. "These are to be used only by the registered messenger and are not to be given to anyone else. The convention prohibits proxy voting," Porter added.

He said messengers may purchase for \$4 a Book of Reports, which includes reports and financial data from all of the agencies as well as detailed reports on other matters to come before the convention.

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Sears Challenges Baptists
To Wage War On Pornography

Baptist Press
5/20/87

LOS ANGELES (BP)--A war against pornographers who devastate homes, destroy lives and prey on women and children is being won all across America, participants at a Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission conference on pornography were told.

"Pornography is a powerful \$8 billion per year industry, but current federal laws prohibit the production and distribution of pornography which is judged to be obscene by specific obscenity standards," Alan Sears, legal counsel for Citizens for Decency through Law of Phoenix, Ariz., and member of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee, told Baptists at the two-day meeting in Los Angeles.

Sears, was executive director of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography which released its report last year, said he has been overwhelmed by the number of Southern Baptists who have told him their lives have been hurt or destroyed by pornography. Some Southern Baptist have died from suicide directly related to pornography, he said.

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Southern Baptists, must join the battle against pornography and obscenity either by joining other church and community groups now fighting the battle or by initiating their own efforts, Sears challenged.

"Pornography is a very lucrative and dangerous business," he asserted. "One adult bookstore with 12 peep-show booths where anonymous sex acts occur can generate from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 a year in untaxed income. Men who engage in sex acts in these places contract venereal diseases and come home and give the diseases to their innocent, unsuspecting wives."

"Pornography shops are training camps for sexual abuse," Sears charged. "Every single adult bookstore sets up a motive for sexual abuse to women and children."

According to Sears, the abuse of children comes both in physical abuse by parents, friends and relatives whose actions are motivated by their obsession with pornography, and by the pornographers who use children as models or participants in the production of obscene materials.

Pornographers, he said, also abuse children by targeting them as purchasers of pornography: "The main consumers of pornography are 12- to 17-year-old youth. They know far more about pornography than their parents or grandparents ever knew. The main target of dial-a-porn telephone numbers is teenagers. Some of these dial-a-porn numbers are designed solely to appeal to youth, and the content is very explicit."

One dial-a-porn operator also owned a newspaper in a major city and published the phone numbers on the front page of the paper where they would be easily accessible to young people, he said.

"Discrimination and abuse are not limited to women and children," Sears said. "I call pornography 'hate literature.' The Nazis and Ku Klux Klan are amateurs compared to the pornographers. Pornography exhibits blatant discrimination against blacks, Hispanics and Orientals. There is even a genre of pornography against Vietnam veterans."

N. Larry Baker, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, also spoke to participants and said churches have been apathetic about the issue of pornography. "Pornography's influence may not show up immediately," he warned, "but think about the impact of pornography on the mind. That which we foster in the mind becomes a part of our personality and our behavior."

"Pornography lurks in our minds seeking an opportunity to devour us," Baker said. "Southern Baptists' warning about pornography needs to be wider and more foreboding." Baker pledged an active role by the Christian Life Commission in providing resource materials and program leadership in a Southern Baptist fight against pornography.

In the closing session of the conference, Sears gave the following suggestions for organizing to fight pornography:

— Educate yourself and others about the issue of pornography and obscenity. Pornographic materials which meet the criteria of federal obscenity laws are not protected by the first amendment. Even soft-core pornography can be regulated as to time, place and manner of display.

— Fix the law. Enact new legislation related to dial-a-porn and cable television. Push for federal forfeiture laws which allow profits from obscenity convictions to be used to help pornography victims and to pay for law enforcement and prosecution costs.

— Deal with sources of pornography. Use local zoning laws to move pornography out of residential areas. Work with the local prosecutor to bring purveyors of legally obscene material to trial. Put economic pressure on vendors of soft-core pornography which is not illegal but is destructive.

"An \$8 billion industry is still no match for the power of the 72 percent of the population opposed to pornography," Sears concluded.

March Cooperative Program
Ranks 10th On All-Time List

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists contributed \$10,455,604 to their denomination's Cooperative Program unified budget in April, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the convention's Executive Committee.

The April total was \$510,491 more than the amount received during April of 1986, representing a 5.04 percent increase, Bennett said. It represents the 10th-best month in Cooperative Program history.

The latest receipts bring the Cooperative Program's year-to-date income to \$76,073,628 at the end of seven months of the fiscal year. That is 4.59 percent over the 1985-86 seven-month total.

The Cooperative Program is the Southern Baptist Convention's financial instrument for funding evangelistic endeavors and mission work across the United States and in more than 100 countries. Funds are channeled from individual Southern Baptists, through their churches and state Baptist conventions and to 19 SBC-wide entities, with each organization keeping a portion for its own operations.

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High Court Declines Review
Of Pastor-Church Dispute

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
5/20/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--Rejecting an appeal by a fired Presbyterian minister, the U.S. Supreme Court has reiterated its longstanding position that secular courts have no jurisdiction to intervene in disputes between churches and their ministers.

In a May 18 order, the high court dismissed the appeal of Andrew Templeman, formerly the part-time pastor of Community Church of New Boston, N.H., "for want of jurisdiction." Although the simple order of the court did not elaborate, that phrase made plain the court's reluctance to become involved in reviewing such issues already decided by church authorities.

Templeman, an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), ran into trouble with some members of the congregation over his work habits, the content of his sermons and declining church attendance. He was pastor of the New Hampshire congregation between 1978 and 1982.

After the complaints were referred to the ministerial relations committee of the Presbytery of Northern New England, Templeman was asked to resign. But a majority in his congregation rejected the resignation. Nevertheless, the committee subsequently dismissed him outright.

Templeman sued the presbytery for breach of contract and negligence in the process of reviewing his performance.

But after the presbytery filed a motion to dismiss on grounds the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and a provision of the New Hampshire constitution forbid state interference in internal church personnel disputes, a state court agreed. Its decision later was affirmed by the New Hampshire Supreme Court.

Urging the nation's high court to review the lower rulings, Templeman's attorney asked, "Is it not possible for a secular court to have jurisdiction over a contractual dispute involving a religious entity and an individual and render a decision based only on the contractual relationship without violating the doctrinal issues of the church, which are protected by the First Amendment?"

But attorneys for the presbytery countered by arguing the Supreme Court "has long and steadfastly held that the appointment and removal of clergy is strictly a matter of ecclesiastical government." (86-1522, Templeman v. Presbytery of Northern New England)

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CORRECTION: Please substitute the following graf for the 14th graf of (BP) story titled, "Alliance Talks 'Supplement,' Not 'Split' During Meeting," mailed 5/18/87:

This endeavor currently is the responsibility of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a coalition of nine Baptist bodies, including the SBC. The BJCPA has been under fire from more conservative Southern Baptists, particularly for opposing the School Prayer Amendment and for not supporting anti-abortion measures. Changes in the composition of the BJCPA will be presented to messengers to the SBC annual meeting June 16-18.

CORRECTION: In the following graf of the same story, please change the spelling of Henry Greene to Green.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

High Court Rejects Challenge
To Teacher Certification Law

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
5/20/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has left standing a lower court ruling that a state law requiring all teachers — parochial as well as public — to hold teaching certificates does not violate constitutional protections of religious freedom.

In a May 18 order, the high court refused to review a divided opinion of the Michigan Supreme Court upholding a 1921 law requiring teacher certification in all elementary and secondary schools in the state. The statute specifically mentions "private, denominational and parochial" schools. It further authorizes the state superintendent of public instruction to close down schools that refuse to comply with the teacher certification requirement.

Two church-operated schools in Michigan ran afoul of the law when they refused eight years ago to submit forms required by the state to demonstrate they met the certification provision. In July 1980, the Michigan attorney general began administrative proceedings to suspend the schools' operation.

The sponsoring churches — Sheridan Road Baptist Church in Saginaw and First Baptist Church of Bridgeport — filed suit in a state court on grounds the First Amendment protected their schools and the Ninth Amendment gave parents the right to send their children to schools of their choice. Both churches are unaffiliated, independent congregations.

Agreeing with those claims, the Ingham County Circuit Court ruled in 1982 the law requiring teacher certification did not ensure teacher competency and violated both religion clauses of the First Amendment by denying parents free exercise of religion and causing excessive governmental entanglement with religion.

That ruling was reversed two years later, however, when the Michigan Court of Appeals held the state had proved a "compelling state interest" for the law. The Michigan Supreme Court affirmed that decision in 1986 on an equally divided 3-3 vote.

In a written appeal asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case, the church's attorney — church/state specialist William Bentley Ball of Harrisburg, Pa. — argued the state had failed to prove a compelling interest in requiring teacher certification and had not sought less restrictive means to enforce its interest in quality education. Pupils in both schools, he insisted, had a long record of scholastic achievement.

Both schools were founded, he wrote, "for the sole purpose of affording a specific and pervasively religious education to children," and "have refused all forms of local, state or federal tax support."

Ball's request also noted what he called conflicting decisions in several state courts over the validity of teacher certification requirements. He also noted that only six states — Michigan, Hawaii, Idaho, South Dakota, Iowa and Washington — impose state teacher certification on non-public schools.

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Writing for the state, Michigan Attorney General Frank J. Kelley urged the court to reject the appeal. Earlier Supreme Court decisions, he wrote, "consistently support the authority of the states to impose reasonable educational standards on private, religious elementary and secondary schools."

He argued also that state legislatures, rather than the Supreme Court, "should be able to select the means for furthering the state's compelling interest in the secular education of all young people in the state." (86-1560, Sheridan Road Baptist Church v. Michigan Department of Education)

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Southern Baptist Woman
Abducted In Mozambique

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
5/20/87

MAPUTO, Mozambique (BP)--Kindra Bryan, a member of Second Baptist Church in Houston, is among seven people who were abducted May 13 while setting up a medical clinic in a rural area 400 miles north of Maputo, Mozambique.

U.S. State Department officials said they do not know where the group is being held but feel they were taken hostage by resistance forces known as Renamo.

Bryan, a registered nurse, was thought to be the only American in the group. They are part of Youth With a Mission, headquartered in Hawaii.

Stephen Bradley, minister to single adults at Second Baptist, said Bryan was helping establish a medical clinic and missions station in what government officials called "one of the most suffering areas in the world." Their leader had gone for supplies and returned to find the rural church, their clinic and a truck in flames.

Villagers reported five men kidnapped the medical missions team. The villagers said the men talked rough, but no shots were fired.

Bradley said no word has been received on the whereabouts of the hostages, but he praised U.S. congressmen and State Department officials who seem to be doing all that can be done while keeping in touch with the church and Bryan's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Claude Free of College Station, Texas.

Members of the church are praying for Bryan and the other hostages around the clock through their 24-hour-a-day prayer ministry, Bradley said, adding, "We feel confident God is going to do something through her."

Some of the church members have provided financial support for Bryan, who had been serving with Youth With a Mission for about six weeks.

Bryan had expressed concern about the warfare in the area but said she knew it was God's will for her to be there and that she knew he would take care of her, Bradley said.

Bryan was a leader in the MasterLife program at Second Baptist, he said.

"She has a real heart for people, which comes from her relationship with the Lord," he noted.

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CORRECTION: In Baptist Press story, "Edwards Joins Union University, Leaves RIVC" dated 5/1/87, please substitute the following for the fifth graph:

Roach, a Dallas homebuilder and a certified public accountant, added: "I think our financial crisis is behind us. The day-to-day finances are as critical as ever, but our overall financial crisis is less than it was two years ago."

Thanks,
Baptist Press