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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #75
Nashville, Tennessee 3720
(615) 244-235
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Mary 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, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
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. Hasty, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

November 12, 1987

N-HMB

87-171

Moderates Control Georgia
Convention, Support Mercer

By Jim Newton

SAVANNAH, Ga. (BP)--Georgia Baptists defeated attempts to investigate charges against Mercer University, denied a customary second term to incumbent President Clark Hutchinson and asked Christian Index Editor Jack Harwell to reconsider plans to retire early.

Moderates controlled almost every major vote in the Georgia Baptist Convention's annual meeting, which attracted a record 4,863 messengers to Savannah.

Messengers approved a motion expressing their "profound gratitude and appreciation" for Harwell's 21 years as editor of the Christian Index, the convention's weekly newsjournal, and "respectfully requested" that he reconsider plans to retire early at age 55.

The motion, made by T.L. McSwain of Augusta, also asked a review board appointed by the Christian Index committee in August of 1986 be "dismissed to preserve editorial freedom and integrity."

Harwell had announced plans in October to retire after the review board threatened to fire him if he wrote one more editorial it considered unacceptable. In Savannah, he told a cheering, standing crowd that in the light of the affirmation he had received, he would accept the invitation to reconsider his retirement, subject to negotiations with the Index board of directors and the Georgia Baptist Convention executive committee.

Messengers often clapped, shouted and booed in expressing their opinions throughout the meeting.

Hutchinson, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church in Marietta, narrowly lost a bid for re-election. It was the first time, convention officials said, that a convention president eligible for a traditional second term was not re-elected.

By a margin of only 51 votes, Jim Pitts, pastor of First Baptist Church in Valdosta, was elected president of the 1.2 million-member convention. Pitts received 2,109 votes to Hutchinson's 2,058.

Earlier, Pitts had preached the convention's doctrinal sermon, stressing such Baptist distinctives as the authority of the Bible, autonomy of the local church, priesthood of all believers, religious liberty and separation of church and state.

In nominating Pitts as president, Peter Rhea Jones of Decatur said a vote for Pitts is a vote for Baptist freedom. "He supports all Southern Baptist work, including Mercer," Jones said.

Pitts said in a news conference he was shocked and stunned by the election. He had no idea he would be nominated as president until after his sermon, he said. His election was considered a victory by Mercer University supporters.

Moderates also controlled election of three of the four vice presidents. They are J. Truett Gannon, pastor of Smoke Rise Baptist Church in Stone Mountain, first vice president; Charles Bugg, pastor of First Baptist Church of Augusta, second vice president; Edna Branch, president of the Georgia Baptist Woman's Missionary Union and a member of First Baptist Church of Tifton, third vice president; and Bill Harrell, pastor of Abilene Baptist Church in Martinez, fourth vice president.

Earlier, a motion asking for appointment of a special nine-member committee to study "matters of concern" at Mercer was voted out of order by the convention.

Ben Hatfield, retired pastor of First Baptist Church of Alpharetta, Ga., had moved that the convention's budgeted funding to Mercer be continued on the condition that Mercer cooperate with the proposed study committee. That committee would have been given authority to study matters of concern at Mercer and report back to next year's convention.

Tom Conley, pastor of Northside Drive Baptist Church in Atlanta, argued the motion was "out of order" since the convention had two hours earlier adopted the \$29.1 million budget that allocates about \$2 million to Mercer. Conley said the motion addressed "funding that has already been decided by this convention."

Hutchinson, turning to professional Parliamentarian Barry McCarty of Elizabeth City, N.C., ruled Conley's point of order was "not well taken." McCarty, a Church of Christ minister who has served Southern Baptist Convention Presidents Charles Stanley and Adrian Rogers, said this was the first time he had been employed as certified parliamentarian for a statewide Baptist convention.

When Conley asked messengers to vote on sustaining the president's ruling, Hutchinson's ruling was overturned, thus making Hatfield's motion out of order.

In a surprise announcement, Maurice Crowder of McCaysville withdrew a motion to change the convention's bylaws to limit nomination of trustees to people active in Baptist churches. Mercer has for many years had non-Baptist trustees.

During the report of the convention's nominating committee, moderates challenged three nominations to the committee on order of business, the executive committee and the Christian Index committee but were successful in only one challenge.

The convention voted to substitute Bill Young, pastor in Avondale Estates, for Fred Powell, senior associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, as member-at-large on the executive committee. Powell previously had been quoted in the media as opposing Mercer University and announcing the Atlanta church was withholding contributions to Mercer.

In another action, the convention adopted a motion deploring a recent mailout attacking Mercer's president, staff, trustees and students. "This is not the way to deal with problems in our convention," said Robert J. Rutland of Lithonia, who later was elected a Mercer trustee.

He was referring to a mailing to 6,000 Baptists by Lee Roberts, a Marietta mortgage banker who teaches a Sunday school class at the church where Hutchinson is pastor. Roberts charged Mercer President Kirby Godsey with theological heresy, and with permitting "drunkenness, immorality and debauchery" on the Mercer campus.

Godsey called Roberts' charges "the most scurrilous, vicious attack" ever leveled against Mercer, and responded to each charge in a presentation to the convention. Messengers responded with a standing ovation. Godsey said the real issue was control of the university by what he called "political fundamentalists."

Roberts, in a news conference, said he did not believe there were any winners in the convention votes. "The convention did not solve the problems with Mercer, it compounded them," he said.

Mercer had done a splendid job of getting out the votes, and of vote buying, Roberts said, adding Mercer had given faculty and staff members the day off with pay to attend the convention and had bused hundreds of students to the convention. Godsey denied the charges, saying the only students who were bused to Savannah were 150 members of the choir and orchestra, and that only elected messengers could vote.

Godsey called Pitts' election and other actions of the convention "a great victory for Baptist freedom" and a reversal of a national trend in which "political fundamentalists" have not lost a major vote in the Southern Baptist Convention during the last eight years.

Pitts said he hoped to bring healing to the Georgia convention and put the emphasis on evangelism and missions instead of on political controversy.

Receipts from the convention's newly approved \$29.1 million budget will be divided on a 50-50 percentage basis between Georgia Baptist causes and worldwide Southern Baptist endeavors, with half the receipts going to the national convention's Cooperative Program unified budget.

Major emphasis during one session focused on a "parade of ministries" featuring the work of several hundred state missionaries, volunteers and home and foreign missionaries. Theme for the convention was "Prayer: God's Plan for Power."

The convention closed with an appeal for Baptists to emphasize evangelism and missions by Paul Camp, director of missions for Macon Baptist Association.

During an unrelated pre-convention session, the Georgia Baptist Women in Ministry Conference presented its annual "churchwoman of the year" award to Nancy Sehested, pastor of Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and former associate pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga.

Next year the convention will meet Nov. 14-16 in Macon.

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Reagan Proposes
Anti-Porno Bill

N- (O) (CC)
By Tim Fields

Baptist Press
11/12/87

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Ronald Reagan has announced he is sending to Congress a legislative proposal to combat child pornography and obscenity in the United States.

Reagan made the announcement Nov. 10 at the close of a White House briefing with anti-pornography activists including N. Larry Baker, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Baker, a member of the executive committee of the Religious Alliance Against Pornography, attended the briefing along with other RAAP representatives. RAAP is a coalition of religious leaders representing a broad spectrum of denominations that focus their attention on fighting hardcore and child pornography.

Reagan said the bill, known as the Child Protection and Obscenity Enforcement Act of 1987, has a two-fold purpose: "The first is to update the law to take into account technologies newly utilized by the pornography industry; and second to remove loopholes and weaknesses in existing federal law, which have given criminals in this area the upper hand for too long. This bill represents one point of a seven-point plan created by Attorney General Edwin Meese to crack down heavily on the producers, distributors and retailers of obscene material.

"In the last several years distributors of obscenity and child pornography have expanded into new areas. They are employing new technologies and reaching new audiences. This is how any business grows and develops, except that this business is illegal.

"Neither our Constitution, our courts, our people, nor our respect for common decency and human suffering should allow the trafficking in obscene materials -- which exploits women, children and men alike -- to continue. This administration is putting the purveyors of illegal obscenity and child pornography on notice: Your industry's days are numbered."

The bill contains the 11 proposals related to child pornography, obscenity provisions and child protection amendments:

-- Prohibit use of computers to advertise, distribute or receive child pornography.

-- Prohibit a parent or legal guardian of a minor from selling the minor or assigning legal custody of a minor for the production of pornography.

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-- Require producers and certain distributors of pornography to create and maintain verifiable records as to age and identity of each performer appearing in depictions of "actual sexually explicit conduct."

-- Make child pornography violations an offense under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations statute, which would allow seizure and forfeiture of assets attributable to profits derived from the offense.

-- Establish a new criminal offense that would prohibit the receipt or possession of obscene material with intent to sell or distribute.

-- Expand scope of current law that prohibits use of a facility or means of interstate commerce to transport obscenity so a prosecutor would only be required to prove a means, such as a truck or plane was used to transport the material, not that the defendant actually transported it.

-- Permit both civil and criminal forfeitures to allow the government to seize assets used to make profits obtained through violations of obscenity laws.

-- Make possession or selling obscene visual depictions or child pornography on federal property, including military bases, a criminal offense.

-- Add felony obscenity offenses to the list of offenses for which the government would be authorized to seek court orders allowing wiretaps.

-- Make use of obscene language or distribution of obscene matter by cable television or other subscription television services a criminal offense.

-- Prohibit making of obscene phone calls for commercial purposes to any person, regardless of age, regardless of whether the maker of the communication placed the call and regardless of whether the communication was made directly or by a recording device.

In calling for support of the legislation, Reagan said when the bill is passed, "We will all be able to go about the business of cleaning up some of the filth that floods our nation."

Reagan said one of the most serious obscenity problems is dial-a-porn: "This bill will provide prosecutors with a powerful weapon to attack the so-called dial-a-porn business that profits from obscenity.

"I have read statistics that one company has received up to 800,000 calls a day and 180 million calls in a single year, and law enforcement officials have estimated that a great number of these calls are made by children.

"Every time a child calls one of these numbers, he or she hears an explicit sexual dramatization. The time has come for this to stop."

Reagan called on prosecutors, law enforcement officers and the American people to help shut down "a very large, very powerful and very harmful industry."

"This legislation is not only a wholesome response to the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (which recommended much of the proposed legislation), but to the grass-roots movement of concerned parents and grandparents rising up in cities all across America -- cities such as Cincinnati, Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Dallas and others -- where concerned citizens have said 'We want laws against child pornography and hardcore illegal obscenity and we want them enforced.'

"I look to the American people to support this legislation and to the Congress to enact it with all due speed. This legislation will help protect all Americans from the corruption, the disease, the violence, the degradation and the victimization that flows from this despicable industry."

Baker said the legislation proposed by Reagan is a positive step for all Americans: "The bill strikes at a cancer in our national life and gives tools to law enforcement personnel to excise the evil. It can help protect our children who are being savaged by child-porn merchants.

"This bill offers Southern Baptists a door of opportunity. Our action in support of it will encourage its passage. "Letters, calls and telegrams to United States senators and representatives from hosts of our people will encourage our elected leaders to move swiftly and forcefully to deal with hardcore and child pornography."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Christian Life Commission

Mississippi Baptists
Elect Futral, OK Budget

N-CO
(MISS)

Baptist Press
11/12/87

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Mississippi Baptists elected a politically unaffiliated pastor as their new president and approved an \$18.9 million budget during their annual meeting Nov. 9-11 at First Baptist Church of Jackson.

The 1,744 registered messengers also unanimously passed resolutions that endorsed the biblical strategy of gleaning and expressed concern over the teen pregnancy rate.

Jim Futral, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Jackson, was elected to succeed outgoing President Frank Gunn, pastor of First Baptist Church of Biloxi.

Futral was elected on a first ballot that included Gerald Harris, pastor of Colonial Heights Baptist Church in Jackson, and Eddie Hamilton, pastor of Oak Forest Baptist Church in Jackson. Futral received 662 votes, or 50.91 percent of the ballot. Hamilton received 327 votes, and Harris, who has held meetings related to the conservative movement in the state, received 292.

Messengers approved a motion that, in the interest of unity, Futral be elected unanimously. They later elected Harris as first vice president and Hamilton as second vice president.

Messengers avoided dealing directly with a resolution that would have asked state Baptist agencies to request the state legislature not to pass legislation concerning "licensure or regulation of churches, church-related homes or other ministries that would entangle the state into church affairs." Rather, they referred the resolution to the state Baptist agencies for their consideration. The Mississippi Baptist Children's Village, the convention's child-care agency, currently voluntarily is licensed with the state.

The resolution concerning gleaning noted tons of food are left unharvested and some of that food could ultimately go to feed the hungry. The teen pregnancy resolution asked the state's school nurse program to teach sexual abstinence before marriage and that the program not be involved in dispensing birth control devices, or counseling or making referrals for abortion.

The 1988 budget, which helps fund Southern Baptist related missions and education causes in the state and around the world, is a 4.2 percent increase over the \$18.15 million budget of 1987. Thirty-seven percent of the budget will go to Southern Baptist causes outside the state through the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget, one-half percent from the previous budget.

In the budget was a \$55,095 line item that will go to pay one-fifth of Clarke College's current indebtedness. The troubled junior college in Newton, now operated as a campus of Mississippi College but with separate funding, is suffering from a decreasing enrollment -- 109 full-time students -- and an increasing debt.

Neshoba County Baptist Association presented a resolution asking for restoration of a pre-1983 funding formula that gave Clarke College a larger share of administrative funds. As a campus of Mississippi College, the school is losing its administrative funds on a pro rata basis of about \$30,000 per year until 1991. In earlier meetings, the Mississippi Baptist education commission consistently voted to continue the present formula, which yearly decreases the administrative funds for Clarke.

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Among constitutional changes endorsed by messengers was one which allows the Baptist board of ministerial education to allot funds to college students at the three Baptist colleges in Mississippi who are studying for any area of church-related ministry. Previously the funds were given only to students planning to enter the preaching ministry.

The other constitutional change clarified that the Baptist education commission has no oversight of the Baptist colleges but serves primarily to distribute Baptist funds and to strengthen the colleges.

The 1988 Mississippi Baptist Convention will meet Nov. 14-16 at First Baptist Church of Jackson.

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Record Number Of Messengers
Attend North Carolina Meeting

By Larry E. High (NC)

Baptist Press
11/12/87

GREENSBORO, N.C. (BP)--North Carolina Baptists turned out in record numbers Nov. 9-11 at the Baptist State Convention to elect new officers, conduct business, hear reports of convention work and worship around the theme, "Sharing the Dream -- Truth and Love."

Among their actions, 5,638 messengers -- the most ever registered for an annual meeting -- elected three officers endorsed by the "Friends of Missions" organization, adopted resolutions affirming the administration, staff, faculty and student body of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and the staff and work of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs; approved a \$28 million Cooperative Program budget for 1988; and accepted an invitation to enter into a five-year mission partnership with the Sao Paulo, Brazil, Baptist Convention.

The record registration was attributed to unusually high interest among North Carolina Baptists in the election of convention officers for the coming year. In the weeks preceding the 157th annual convention session, six candidates publicly announced their intention to seek the post of convention president or vice president.

Ted Stone, a Durham drug rehabilitation advocate, was the first candidate nominated for the presidency being vacated by William Poe of Charlotte who served the maximum two-term limit. Stone was nominated by Henry Cook, pastor of Beulah Baptist Church of Statesville.

Ned Mathews, pastor of Parkwood Baptist Church in Gastonia, was nominated by Dale Lawson, pastor of Mulberry Baptist Church of Charlotte.

The final nomination was made by W. Randall Lolley, president of Southeastern Seminary and a member of Wake Forest Baptist Church in Wake Forest, who proposed Leon Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church in Goldsboro.

Messengers elected Smith by a wide margin on the first ballot, giving him 62.3 percent (3,375) of the tabulated votes. Mathews was second with 36.3 percent (1,967) and Stone placed third with 1.3 percent (73) of the votes.

Three pastors were nominated for the convention's first vice presidency. Gene Watterson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Shelby, out distanced the other nominees with 57.3 percent (2,603) of the votes. Curtis Barber, pastor of Beulah Baptist Church in Bennett, received 26.3 percent (1,198), and Robert Goode, pastor of Florida Street Baptist Church in Greensboro got 16.4 percent (744).

Helen M. Cashwell of Raleigh was elected second vice president, receiving 56.8 percent (2,528) over Billy Cline, pastor of Merrimon Avenue Baptist Church in Asheville, who received 43.2 percent (1,919).

Statements expressing "support and affirmation of the present administration, faculty, staff and student body of Southeastern Seminary" and proclaiming "gratitude and support for the staff and the work of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs" were among five adopted resolutions.

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Other resolutions pledged "to educate ourselves and others concerning the deadly AIDS virus and to reach out and minister throughout our communities in any way we can to AIDS victims and their families to the glory of God," and renounced "our sins and short comings against God, our black brethren and our neighbors of other minority groups."

The Southeastern Seminary resolution encourages trustees "to maintain the rich Baptist heritage and tradition that has been part of Southeastern Seminary's own heritage and tradition."

In the resolution concerning the Baptist Joint Committee messengers opposed "efforts of the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee to disrupt the work and witness of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs."

The \$28 million Cooperative Program budget for 1988, which includes a \$1 million challenge section, was adopted without debate. The \$27 million basic budget will again next year be divided 64.5 percent for North Carolina ministries and 35.5 percent for national and international ministries related to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Recommendations from the general board of the convention adopted included a proposal to accept the Foreign Mission Board's invitation to enter into partnership with the Sao Paulo, Brazil, convention to help establish 1,000 new churches in the region between 1987 and 1992.

Another recommendation was adopted to rotate the site of the annual meeting. For the past five years the convention has met in the central location at Greensboro. In response to a question, Executive Director Roy Smith said rental on the Greensboro Coliseum facility now exceeded \$20,000. By comparison he reported, fees for the convention center in Fayetteville would cost the convention \$2,437 for three days.

Fayetteville will be the site of the 1988 Baptist State Convention annual session.

Citing drug abuse as one of the major problems facing America, Ted Stone of Durham introduced a motion calling for a study of Baptist response to the drug crisis. The motion calls on the general board to "conduct an extensive study regarding the establishment of drug abuse (alcohol and other drugs) treatment centers as a new service institution" of the convention. The general board was instructed to bring "any resulting recommendations of the study" to the 1988 convention.

Richard Hicks, pastor of Edgewood Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, presented a motion requiring Baptist State Convention computers to be programmed so that no list of pre-registered messengers to the annual session could be printed until two working days prior to the convention meeting.

He said pre-registered messengers from his church and other congregations had received materials in the mail from the "Friends of Missions" organization prior to the convention's opening session, Monday evening, Nov. 9.

Speaking to the motion, Executive Director Smith reported that following an intensive investigation "we satisfied ourselves that our integrity is intact."

Smith said the list of names and addresses of pre-registered messengers was not released by Baptist Building employees. In conversation with leaders of "Friends of Missions," Smith said he was told the group obtained the information through their own efforts and was assured the list was not gained through staff of the Baptist Building.

As a response to Hicks' motion, Smith reported that in the future the list of pre-registered convention messengers will not be printed from Baptist Building computers until after the convention.

John Lewis, retired pastor of First Baptist Church of Raleigh, moved the Hicks motion be postponed indefinitely since it appeared the list did not come from the Baptist Building and that the executive director had taken steps to ensure it could not be released prior to the convention session. The motion to postpone was adopted.

Messages during the 157th annual session of the Baptist State Convention were delivered by William Poe of Charlotte; Don Bouldin, pastor of Carmel church in Charlotte; Leighton Ford, director of Leighton Ford Ministries of Charlotte; Executive Director Roy Smith; Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board; Bill O'Brien, executive vice president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board; and Jim Williams, associate to the president of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

A report from the European Baptist Convention partnership was presented by John Merritt, executive director of the European Baptist Convention. The Togo Partners in Wholeness steering committee also presented its concluding report in the three and one-half year partnership.

As part of the convention's five-year plan of rotating presentations from institutions, agencies and general board divisions, reports from Wingate College, Gardner-Webb College, Baptist Retirement Homes, and the division of business management were made in Greensboro.

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Texas Baptists Elect
Gregory, Affirm BJCPA

N-Texas

Baptist Press
11/12/87

FORT WORTH (BP)--A record 5,172 Baptist General Convention of Texas messengers elected Fort Worth pastor Joel Gregory as convention president, approved a record \$68 million budget and affirmed the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs during their annual meeting Nov. 10-11 in Fort Worth.

The "Laborers Together" theme and the year-long "Celebration of Cooperation" emphasis set the tone for the 102nd annual meeting of the 2.4-million-member convention.

Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, was nominated by Bailey Stone, pastor of First Baptist Church of Odessa, who described him as a man "who owes absolutely nothing to anyone in the convention and one who will be a debtor to all Texas Baptists."

At a press conference following his election by acclamation Gregory characterized himself as a "representative, independent, conservative" pastor capable of building bridges between factions in the convention.

"Ninety percent of Texas Baptists stand on the same ground in both faith and practice. I believe I am representative of those nine out of 10 Texas Baptists," he said. "I did not seek or desire the endorsement of any partisan group in Texas. I don't belong to anyone except to the Lord Jesus Christ."

Dick Maples, pastor of First Baptist Church of Bryan, was elected first vice president. Also nominated was Hal Boone, minister of missions and counseling at Sagemont Baptist Church in Houston. Leobardo C. Estrada, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Primera (First Mexican Baptist Church) of El Paso, was elected by acclamation as second vice president of the convention.

The \$68 million Cooperative Program missions budget approved for 1988 is a \$2.5 million or 3.8 percent increase over the 1987 budget, with more than \$23 million, or 36.6 percent, designated for worldwide Southern Baptist Convention causes through the national Cooperative Program unified budget.

Through the Cooperative Program, Texas Baptists help to support about 7,500 foreign and home missionaries, eight universities and San Marcos Baptist Academy, four child-care homes, seven hospitals, four homes for the aging and numerous state missions causes.

Texas Baptists affirmed the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the religious liberty advocacy agency that represents nine Baptist bodies in Washington.

Lee Berg, pastor of West Oaks Baptist Church in Houston, presented a motion calling for Texas Baptists to continue funding the Baptist Joint Committee if the Southern Baptist Convention cuts off its Cooperative Program support. The Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee voted 8-4 Oct. 6 to suggest the SBC sever ties with the Baptist Joint Committee.

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No one spoke in opposition to Berg's motion. When the voice vote was taken, only a few dissenting votes were heard.

In the annual convention sermon, Roy Fish, professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, called for denominational repentance by Southern Baptists.

"Regardless of how right we think we might have been, regardless of how justified we feel about our actions, as a denomination, we must fall on our faces before God and confess that we have sinned," Fish said.

Messengers also overwhelmingly approved resolutions:

-- Affirming historic Baptist adherence to church-state separation and observing Baptist bodies historically have refrained from endorsing or opposing candidates.

-- Encouraging churches to "be intricately involved in the spiritual, mental and physical well-being" of AIDS patients and their families.

-- Calling for a renewed commitment to world hunger giving and to ministry to the poor and hungry.

The 1988 BGCT meeting will be Oct. 25-26 in Austin.

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Canadian Convention
Dedicates Seminary

By James Teel

Baptist Press
11/12/87

CALGARY, Alberta (BP)--Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary was dedicated during the third annual meeting of the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists Nov. 3-5 in Calgary.

Nearly 160 convention messengers also elected a convention president, adopted a philosophy of student ministry on 14 college campuses and recognized the emergence of ministry to ethnics as a key part of Canadian Southern Baptist work.

The messengers represented 91 churches and numerous ethnic groups, including Chinese, Cambodians, Laotians, Koreans, Filipinos, Hispanics, French, native Americans and Haitians.

The seminary dedication service was held in the nearly completed main academic building on the 149-acre campus near Calgary. The 16,000-square-foot structure houses administrative and faculty offices, classrooms, a chapel, library and lounge.

Classes started Sept. 1 with 20 students. Planned for the future are separate classroom and library buildings, a chapel and a gymnasium.

Canadian churches have raised about half of their \$300,000 "Share the Dream" goal for financing seminary construction, said Allen Schmidt, convention executive director-treasurer. The campaign will continue until the goal is reached, he added.

Southern Baptists in the United States have contributed more than \$575,000 for seminary property and construction through the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and individual gifts. Hundreds of Canadian and American Southern Baptists have donated vacation time to help personally with construction efforts.

Schmidt also reported on Canadian Southern Baptist progress from the west coast to Montreal. Twenty-one churches or mission congregations were begun during the last 15 months, he said, marking the fastest growth period in Canadian Southern Baptist history. New missionaries began work among native Americans, French speakers in Quebec and Hispanics in the fast-growing Toronto area.

Messengers elected Paul Johnson, pastor of First Baptist Church in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, as convention president. He succeeds Philip Yung, national consultant for Chinese ministry with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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Johnson said he hopes all churches in the convention will gain greater awareness of the diverse ethnic and language groups that are now a part of Canadian Southern Baptist work and the many more still to be reached for Christ. The largest congregation in the Canadian convention, he reminded listeners, is Chinese Baptist Church in Vancouver.

"Our arms are open," he said. "We want to reach a world -- and that world is right in our own cities."

Johnson also would like to see Canadian Southern Baptists plant churches where other denominations have failed or not attempted work. "I think our individual churches need to have a vision to say, 'If nobody else is going to do it, we're going to do it,'" he said.

Another highlight of the convention was the presence of Roy Bell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Calgary. The church is affiliated with the Baptist Union of Western Canada, part of the oldest of five Baptist groups in Canada. Convention messengers responded with a standing ovation to Bell's plea that all Baptists work together in harmony to reach Canada for Christ.

The Canadian convention will meet again next May in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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(Teel is Southern Baptist press representative in Canada. Frank Stirk also contributed to this story.)