

## - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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NATIONAL OFFICE \$BC Executive Committee 901 Commerce #750 Nashville, Tennessee 37203 (615) 244-2355 Alvin C. Shackleford, 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, 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. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

June 20, 1988

By Roy Jennings

88-96

SBC roundup

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Messengers to the 131st Southern Baptist Convention elected a conservative standard bearer as president, approved a 1988-89 budget of \$145,600,000 and took positions on 22 topics ranging from the New Age movement to homosexuality to pastoral authority.

Between business sessions at the three-day meeting, the messengers heard progress reports from 20 agencies and institutions, took part in appointing 35 foreign missionaries and applauded major addresses by outgoing president Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

A peace committee appointed three years ago to resolve denominational conflict disbanded after reporting agencies and seminaries were making good progress in efforts to implement peace recommendations.

The convention attracted 32,727 messengers, making it the third largest since the movement was organized in 1845. Only the 1985 convention in Dallas with 45,519 messengers and the 1986 convention in Atlanta with 40,987 messengers were larger.

Jerry Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., was elected president of the 14.7-million-member denomination by less than 700 votes over Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church.

The vote count was Vines, 15,804; Jackson, 15,112; James Craig, a Tulsa layman, 276, and Anniece Shorrosh, a Mobile, Ala., evangelist who nominated himself, 82.

Jackson received the endorsement of the moderate faction in the convention before the election.

Messengers elected Darrell Robinson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., first vice president; Rudy Hernandez, pastor of Metro Park Baptist Church in San Antonio, second vice president, and re-elected Lee Porter of Nashville, registration secretary, and Martin Bradley of Nashville, recording secretary.

The new budget, up \$5.6 million from the current budget, included increases for all agencies except the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs which received a \$48,400 cut.

Efforts to add \$67,457 to the BJCPA allocation failed, culminating a running dispute between Southern Baptist representatives on the BJCPA board and trustees from the other eight sponsoring bodies over positions the agency should take.

Receiving the largest allocations were the Foreign Mission Board, \$68,805,000; Home Mission Board, \$26,895,770; six seminaries, a total of \$27,955,780, and Radio and Television Commission, \$5,504,400.

The new budget includes \$6,899,000 for capital needs.

A resolution on pastoral authority and the priesthood of the believer received most of the attention of the pastor-dominated convention.

Before passing the resolution affirming the role, responsibility and authority of the pastor, the messengers rejected a charge that the resolution sets up a papal system that Martin Luther died to defeat.

The resolution said the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer has been used to justify wrongly the attitude that a Christian may believe whatever he so chooses to and still be considered a loyal Southern Baptist. Herschel H. Hobbs of Oklahoma City, who chaired the committee which wrote the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message, describes the priesthood of believers as granting "to every Christian the right to read and interpret the Scriptures for himself as he is led by the Holy Spirit."

Later, a small group of Southern Baptists led by Randall Lolley, former president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Waker Forest, N.C., protested the action as "non-Baptistic and heretical," and turned in their convention ballots.

The messengers also approved a resolution warning of the dangers of the New Age movement and asked Southern Baptists to warn and educate their consitutiencies about the deception and critical dangers of the movement.

The resolution said the New Age movement gives people false hope by its beliefs in reincarnation, astrology, fortune telling, palm reading, universalism, and secular humanism and was trying to become a one-world religion.

In a resolution on the problem of conflict within churches, the messengers called for prayer for churches in need of spiritual healing, pastors and church staff members who have been fired, and for a denominational work group trying to develop a strategy to educate churches in how to resolve conflicts.

Other resolutions challenged churches to establish ministries of prayer and affirmed the belief that persons without a personal commitment to Jesus Christ would go to a literal hell.

Through the resolution process, the messengers also urged media to refuse advertising promoting homosexuality, deplored homosexuality as a violation of major and natural affection, called upon all Southern Baptists to support the sanctity of human life actively, and asked for stringent laws and swift persecution to deter drunken driving.

Other resolutions opposed governmental support of the exportation of alcohol and tobacco, urged congress to modify the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 to insure the free exercise of religion, advised churches to run childcare programs without government financing, and called on public schools to uphold the standard of sexual abstinance outside marriage as they deal with sensitive areas of sexual behavior.

The messengers also urged voluntary organ donations while not condoning euthanasia, infanticide and abortion; called for the maintenance of biblical standards of honesty, fidelity and integrity by ministry-related leaders; encouraged churches to use more bivocational ministers; and asked for an explanation of a 1985 United States agreement with the Soviet Union to exchange curricula and teaching materials for school children.

President Rogers set the tone for the convention with his opening session address on "Salty Saints in a Sick Society."

Messengers gave Rogers a standing ovation when he lashed out at liberalism in Baptist schools and seminaries financially supported by conservatives.

"I would not for anything in the world try to force my beliefs on someone else, but when someone tells me I must underwrite his liberalism or be branded a non-Baptist, I'm saying he is trying to force his beliefs on me," Rogers said.

Rogers condemned both liberalism and legalism, comparing legalism to biblical Pharisees and liberalism to the Sadducees of the New Testament.

"I'm afraid of legalism as I am of liberalism," Rogers said. "From the crown of my head to the sole of my feet, I am a conservative, an inerrantist; I can't help it, that's who I am. But I pray to God that I'll never be a legalist." Rogers insisted that Baptists have not only a right but a fearful responsibility to see that those who teach in their theology schools represent their cherished, biblical and Baptist beliefs.

Calling for Baptists to respond to the purity of Christ, the integrity of Christ and the vitality of Christ, Rogers said the problem in society is not because of Hollywood, pornography, politicians, conservatives or liberals, but is with Christians whom he described as "saltless saints."

In the annual convention sermon, Gregory warned Southern Baptists about building a wall of orthodoxy around the convention and in the process tearing down the castle they are trying to protect.

"We are at a flashpoint," he said. "Southern Baptists cannot survive many more months of personal animosity in our midst."

Gregory advised Southern Baptists to consecrate their conversations, change their attitudes toward each other, and imitate God's kindness.

"A lifetime of smoldering bitterness will put you on the shelf" as far as service for God is concerned, he said.

"I hold out my hand to you, Brother Adrian (Rogers), Winfred (Moore), Jerry (Vines), Richard (Jackson), "Gregory said. "We can build a wall and keep the castle. Be my brother."

Following the presidential election, both major candidates expressed their denominational views in news conferences.

Vines said neo-orthodoxy, not classical liberalism, is the problem in the Southern Baptist Convention. He defined neo-orthodox as those who "use our vocabulary but not our dictionary."

The new president reaffirmed his intent to appoint to SBC boards and committees those who are sympathetic with the conservative movement.

Denying he was under the control of any individual or group, Vines said he was committed as president to be available and open to all Southern Baptists. Vines said his personal goal as president is to continue to be a soul winner.

Jackson contended a difference in the philosophy of leadership style, not theology, was the issue dividing Southern Baptists.

Manipulation has characterized the political leadership of the denomination in recent years, Jackson said, pointing to a small group trying to work out a plan and strategy to direct the course of the denomination.

Jackson affirmed church-state separation, the priesthood of believers and soul liberty as being at the heart of Baptist identity and added:

"Being a Baptist means you don't have to check your mind at the door."

Messengers approved 19 recommendations of their Executive Committee, including one which set the minimum number of messengers needed to conduct business at 25 percent of the registered messengers at a given convention. In the absence of a quorum, the convention could hear reports, but not transact business.

In an organizational meeting, the SBC Executive Committee re-elected officers, including Charles W. Sullivan, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lenoir City, Tenn., as chairman, and Darrell W. Robinson of Mobile, Ala., newly-elected first vice president of the SBC, vice chairman.

The Executive Committee also voted 31-29 to table a motion that would have given new directives to Baptist Press, the news service of the denomination.

Paul Pressler of Houston, long time critic of the news service, made the motion calling for Baptist Press to recognize their responsibility to be fair to all Southern Baptists, answer their mail along with the Executive Committee questions about reporting, represent the SBC fairly and positively, and recognize the need for admitting error and apologize when they make mistakes.

Frank C. Ingraham of Nashville made the motion to table after this comment:

"I don't know anybody who has had more to say about (the way) Al (Alvin Shackleford) runs Baptist Press (than Pressler)." But he said to adopt another set of principles (for BP) based upon a single letter "is beyond what we want to do and I plead with you that we not pursue this matter further."

Messengers attending the missionary appointment service were reminded that God would throw Southern Baptists on the junk heap and choose someone else to win the world to Christ unless they move beyond their parochial selfishness.

R. Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va., said history is as clear on this point as it is on salvation.

"When people refuse to do what God has called them to do, God casts them on the junk heap and finds someone else to do it."

Turning to the new missionaries, Parks, a former missionary, emphasized that missions is dangerous and that "you are going into the awfullest spiritual war you can imagine" where "it is a dangerous thing to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world." In other action, messengers elected Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, to preach the convention sermon at Las Vegas next year. David Miller, director of missions for the Little Red River Baptist Association in Heber Springs, Ark., is the alternate.

A messenger nominated a woman, Nancy Hastings Schested, pastor of Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., to preach the convention sermon but the messengers chose Chapman.

While messengers were attending luncheon meetings for seminary alumni, the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists heard a wide selection of sermons including that of a former gambler who warned of the evils of Las Vegas, site of the 1989 convention on June 13-15.

Rick Hamil of Louisville, Ky., told the evangelists they face a mockery from the secular press and the gambling industry who "are already planning a satanically-inspired trap.

"One dollar in the slot machine will be shaking the hand of Satan," he warned.

Resolutions Wrap

N-10

Baptist Press 6/20/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Twenty-two resolutions on subjects ranging from the priesthood of the believer to homosexuality to the New Age movement were adopted by messengers to the 131st Southern Baptist Convention which met June 14-16 in San Antonio, Texas.

The total was the largest number of resolutions approved at a Southern Baptist Convention since 1980, when 26 were adopted.

Messengers discussed and approved 13 of the resolutions presented by the Resolutions Committee during convention sessions June 15 and 16 before approving the remaining nine as a group, without debate.

Other topics of resolutions included: the necessity of salvation, pro-life actions of SBC agencies, alcohol, civil rights and religious institutions, institutional child care, school-based clinics, Soviet involvement in American education, ministerial integrity, bivocational ministers and support for foreign missionaries.

The resolution which drew the longest discussion and the most controversial response was on the priesthood of the believer, the Baptist doctrine that affirms all Christians have the right to read and interpret Scripture for themselves.

The resolution was approved by about a 54-45 percent vote after attempts failed to substitute, amend and refer it to th SBC Executive Committee.

6/20/88

The resolution's four principles: (1) affirm belief in the priesthood of the believer; (2) state the doctrine "in no way gives license to misinterpret, explain away, demythologize, or extrapolate out elements of the supernatural from the Bible"; (3) note that the doctrine "in no way contradicts the biblical understanding of the role, responsibility, and authority of the pastor;" and (4) affirm that "elders, or pastors, are called of God to lead the local church."

The resolution also states the doctrine "has been used to justify wrongly the attitude that a Christian may believe whatever he so chooses and still be considered a loyal Southern Baptist."

During about 25 minutes of discussion, Bill Bruster, pastor of First Baptist Church of Abilene, Texas, offered a substitute resolution based on excerpts from the Baptist Faith and Message statement. He charged the resolution as presented sets up "a papal system that Martin Luther died to defeat. This is not Southern Baptist!"

Jerry Sutton, chairman of the Resolutions Committee and pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church of Nashville, said he believed some responses to the resolution were "unfounded hysteria. We affirmed that we support the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. We sought to bring balance. I believe time will prove the effect of this resolution will prove not nearly as severe as some have suggested."

The homosexuality resolution deplores homosexuality as an abnormal lifestyle, notes that homosexuals can be forgiven through faith in Christ and states that while God loves homosexuals, homosexuality "is an abomination in the eyes of God."

Kathleen Armstrong of Fort Worth, Texas, said, "I have the deep concern after reading this resolution that we as Southern Baptists are becoming so obsessed with condemning sins we have forgotten persons."

The resolution was adopted with only scattered opposition.

A second homosexuality-related resolution dealt with the firing of the publisher of the Dayton (Ohio) Daily News, Dennis Shere, for refusing to accept advertising by gay and lesbian groups.

Shere is a member of Far Hills Baptist Church in Dayton, and the resolution was submitted to the Resolutions Committee by Far Hills Pastor Kenneth Mahanes.

The resolution asked messengers to express "outrage over the firing of a competent, highly professional Christian solely on the basis of the employee's commitment to defend traditional moral and family values" and calls on media to refuse advertising "that promotes homosexuality or any other lifestyle that is destructive to the family."

A resolution warning against false beliefs of the New Age movement passed overwhelmingly without discussion and asks messengers to acknowledge it "is diametrically contrary to both New Testament Christianity and our American heritage."

Messengers also adopted a resolution on the necessity of salvation after adopting by a narrow margin an amendment stating that "all people" rather than "all men" are saved.

During discussion, Tom Connally of Atlanta, said he was concerned the resolution might be used as a "plumbline" to set apart people with differing beliefs.

Sutton responded, "It will not be used for anything except what a majority of the messengers to this convention believe."

The resolution on the 1988 Civil Rights Restoration Act warns that Baptist institutions not directly "controlled by" religious organizations, including Baptist colleges, may be required to file for exemptions to the act.

The resolution urges Baptist agencies and institutions to refuse direct federal funding and asks for efforts to amend the act to ensure that the "constitutional guarantees of the free-exercise of religion are not infringed."

The resolution on institutional child care, adopted with little opposition, opposes tax subsidy proposals pending in the U.S. Congress which would "discriminate against families who choose home child care by taxing all families to subsidize government-approved daycare facilities." It also warns of a church-state conflict.

The one resolution which appeared to draw unanimous support of messengers called for communication to Southern Baptist foreign missionaries "that we are solidly united in our appreciation for them and our commitment to their support."

Another resolution commended three SBC agencies -- the Home Mission Board, the Christian Life Commission and the Sunday School Board -- for pro-life actions taken in the last year.

Other resolutions urged consideration of human organ donation "in the spirit of stewardship," called on Baptists to step up prayer efforts, emphasized the importance of ministerial integrity, commended bivocational ministers, urged the U.S. government to cease pursuing export markets for domestic alcohol and tobacco and called for efforts to restore trust in local churches.

The 1988 Reosolutions Committee considered 54 resolutions, the same number proposed by messengers in 1987.

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Messengers introduce variety of motions

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Baptist Press 6/20/88

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas, June 14-16 introduced motions on subjects ranging from the SBC presidency to the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee to the 1989 convention program.

Once introduced, the motions went to the Committee on Order of Business, which brought back recommendations on whether to refer, dismiss or take action on them.

Two messengers introduced motions that would affect the SBC presidency. A motion introduced by Harry Sparks, a messenger from Killeen, Texas, would extend the current one-year presidential term to a two-year term. Mark Beck, a messenger from Lynchburg, Va., moved to amend the SBC Constitution so that any person having served two terms as SBC president would be ineligible from serving in that position again. Both motions were referred to the SBC Executive Committee.

In a related action, C. Jack Varnado, messenger from First Baptist Church of Lake Arthur, La., moved to disqualify any person announcing his or her candidacy for an SBC office or whose name is mentioned as a possible candidate in a public meeting or in print. The motion was ruled out of order.

Three motions concerned the Public Affairs Committee, an 18-member panel that provides Southern Baptist representation on the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. One motion, introduced by Ken Massey, messenger from First Baptist Church of Marks, Miss., sought replacement of the eight PAC members who last October voted to dissolve SBC ties with the Baptist Joint Committee. The motion was ruled out of order.

Lamar Wadsworth, messenger from Unity Baptist Church in Dalton, Ga., introduced a motion to change SBC Bylaws so as to limit the PAC from endorsing any candidate for a public elected or appointed office. Bob M. Patterson, messenger from First Baptist Church of Warm Springs, Ga., moved to stop funding of the PAC since he said it has no program assignment and the convention has not authorized expenditures for program activites. Both motions were referred to the SBC Executive Committee.

The 1989 SBC annual meeting, scheduled to be held in Las Vegas, Nev., was the subject of several motions.

Two of those motions were referred to next year's Committee on Order of Business. The first, introduced by Darrell Orman, messenger from Gardens Baptist Church in Hollywood, Fla., called for designation of an official time on the meeting's agenda for SBC messengers "to move as a mighty army for Jesus into the streets of downtown Las Vegas lead by our convention leaders and our own president to win people to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," adding that such a practice should then continue during each future convention.

The other, introduced by Terry McDaniel, messenger from Southwest Baptist Church in Jacksboro, Texas, to move the 1989 meeting to a more suitable location was ruled out of order.

Other motions included two that would change the level of giving required of churches for certain participation in the SBC. Both were referred to the SBC Executive Committee.

David Savell, messenger from Highland Baptist Church in Meridian, Miss., introduced a motion to change the definition of a cooperating church contained in SBC Bylaws to require a congregation to have given at least 5 percent of its undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program for the previous year and to require any nominee to SBC boards or committee to have been a member of such a congregation for at least one year.

Loyal Prior, messenger from Tabernacle Baptist Church in Newport News, Va., moved to alter the \$250 annual church contribution now used in determining the number of messengers to which a church is entitled to \$2,500.

Direct messenger action was taken on only two motions. Messengers approved a motion requesting prayer for rain, but rejected the second part of a motion concerning the sale of the ACTS network by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. Approval of that part of the motion would have allowed messengers to vote on the actual sale rather than referring the matter to the RTVC trustees.

A number of motions were referred to various SBC agencies, institutions and committees. Those included:

- -- Motions calling for study of restructuring Cooperative Program giving and setting up regional convention centers, referred to the SBC Executive Committee.
- -- A motion asking for aggressive anti-abortion leadership and another concerning various print and tape materials, referred to the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.
- -- A motion concerning a decision against appointing divorced people as foreign missionaries, referred to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.
- -- Motions requesting study of the feasibility of assisting missionaries who -- because of changes in assignments -- have responsibility for two house payments and development of a resort missions program, referred to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.
- -- A motion calling for all Southern Baptists seminaries to have the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message as their articles of faith, referred to the seminaries.
- -- A motion asking for a conference week for deaf youth, referred to the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.
- -- A motion on using the title "doctor" in SBC listings and introductions, referred to the Resolutions Committee.
- -- A motion on selection of convention preachers for 1990 and 1991, referred to next year's Committee on Order of Business.

The Committee on Order of Business dismissed or provided information on motions dealing with the purchase of flags for display at future conventions, a report on a decision by the Home Mission Board pertaining to ordained women and provision of areas for the handicapped during the SBC.

A motion seeking the dissolution of the SBC Peace Committee was ruled moot following convention approval of a similar recommendation that came from the Peace Committee itself.

Forum, Pastors' Conference take divergent viewpoints

6/20/88

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SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Speakers who addressed two gatherings prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting offered divergent views on the controversy within their denomination June 12-13 in San Antonio, Texas.

About 3,600 people attended the moderate-backed Southern Baptist Forum, while 16,000 participated in the Pastors' Conference, generally identified with conservatives.

A fiery indictment of "the curse of liberalism" by W.A. Criswell, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, highlighted the closing session of the Pastors' Conference at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center.

"Building the Greatest Churches Since Pentecost" was the theme of the meeting.

"The curse of liberalism" has led to the downward spiral of mainline denominations and to the declining number of baptisms within the Southern Baptist Convention, said Criswell, pastor of the 20,000-member First Baptist Church of Dallas.

Criswell grouped "liberals" with "moderates" in the SBC, saying, "A skunk by any other name still stinks."

Pointing to the "inroads" made by liberalism and secularism, Criswell said, "We have taken the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer and made it to cover every damnable heresy you can imagine."

Criswell called for a "resurgence, a recommitment, a regeneration" among Southern Baptists. "To my great sorrow, we are losing our message of salvation to the liberals, the secularists, and the humanists, and finally to the atheists and the infidels," he said.

Evangelist Bailey Smith of Atlanta, another former SBC president, challenged preachers to stand against formalism, secularism and liberalism. "You cannot marry high-church music and a burden for souls," he said, observing that liturgy leads to lethargy.

He also warned against the crisis of liberalism, comparing the choice between theological conservatism and liberalism to a choice between health and cancer.

Numerous speakers explored possible reasons for the declining number of baptisms in Southern Baptist churches.

Freddie Gage, evangelist from Euless, Texas, rejected the motion that the declining number of baptisms are due to controversy. "That is absurd. That is a scapegoat," he said, noting the solution to the problem of a drop in baptisms is for "Southern Baptist seminaries to crank out soul winners."

Richard Lee, pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church in Tucker, Ga., cited a survey conducted by Western Reserve University in which 57 percent of the Baptist clergymen interviewed said they did not believe the Bible is the inspired word of God: "No wonder our baptisms are down. Let's put the blame where it belongs. It's not politics or programs. It's puny preaching from powerless pulpits by men who don't believe the word of God."

Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta and former SBC president, said pastors wanting to build great churches need a strong awareness of their accountability to God; a preaching ministry based on the unquestioned authority of the Bible; personal self-discipline; ability to endure hardship; and willingness to fulfill their calling to do the work of an evangelist.

Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, called for a Christ-like spirit in maintaining convictions about the word of God.

Paige Patterson, president of Criswell College in Dallas, addressed the importance of preaching the atonement of Christ. "If we want peace in the denomination, we will have it not through compromise, but in the peace that is found at the foot of the cross," he said.

Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., likewise challenged Southern Baptist preachers to "stand flat-footed and broad-shouldered" preaching the blood of Jesus.

In the closing address of the Pastors' Conference, conservative standard-bearer Jerry Vines asked Southern Baptist preachers to stand against the pressures of modern society.

"Sometimes it's hard to stand when others are stooping," said Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla. He added the fiery trial of life make Christians "fit and prepared for his use."

Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, was elected president of the Pastors' Conference. Smith defeated fellow Texan Paul Powell, pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church of Tyler.

Rob Zinn, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in San Bernardino, Calif., was elected vice president. Rick Ferguson, pastor of First Baptist Church of DeSoto, Mo., was elected secretary-treasurer.

Participants at the Forum were told "disenfranchised" Southern Baptists must admit the denomination they love has changed and find ways to serve God within the remaining structure.

"We have learned nobody wins a fight with belligerent, hostile fundamentalists," said Alan Neely, who recently resigned as professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. "The only way to deal with militant fundamentalists is to leave them to fight among themselves. The most devastating blow that we could inflict upon them is to cease to be their identified enemy.

"We cannot engage in internecine struggle and at the same time address the real problems of our world," Neely said, referring to the 10-year theological/political struggle.

Although Neely has announced plans to teach at Princeton Theological Seminary, he urged those at the Forum not to withdraw from the convention: "I have never been anything but a Southern Baptist. It never occurred to me the time would come when I would be disinherited, disenfranchised by my own family."

Neely echoed the statements of such other Forum speakers as Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas; Anthony Campolo, an American Baptist and professor of sociology at Eastern College, St. Davids, Pa.; Libby Bellinger, assistant director of Inner City Ministries, Waco, Texas; Mildred McWhorter, home missionary in Houston, and Bill Leonard, church history professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Moore also admitted times have changed in the denomination. But he said those who are now left out still can make positive contributions: "We're not dead, and I've got news for all of you -- I'm not leaving. I'm not going away. No good cause will take care of itself if we leave it to itself."

Moore urged the audience to actively pursue their ideals within the convention, but not at the expense of their integrity. He also said Baptists must take sides in the controversy: "There isn't anything in the middle of the road but a yellow line and dead possums. Know which side of the road you're on. I intend to continue to contend for the faith and for the right of my brethren to differ with me so long as they continue to contend for the faith."

Campolo issued a strong challenge to Southern Baptists to get back to ministry: "I don't know what you're arguing about in Dixieland, but the real issue is are you going to love people that everyone else hates? You're creating a church that no one is going to want to join."

Bellinger encouraged moderates to remain active. She compared the controversy to a cancer "slowly spreading out its ugly fingers."

Executive Committee re-elects 3 officers

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By Bob Stanley

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention reelected its officers by acclamation June 15. Later in the meeting, the committee voted 31-29 to table a motion that would have given new directives to Baptist Press, the SBC news service.

Charles W. Sullivan, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lenoir City, Tenn., was re-elected chairman. Darrell W. Robinson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., and the newly elected first vice president of the SBC, was re-elected the committee's vice chairman. Sam W. Pace, director-treasurer of the Comanche-Cotton Baptist Association in Lawton, Okla., was re-elected recording secretary.

The motion concerning Baptist Press was introduced by Paul Pressler, a Houston judge. Pressler said he had received no response from either Harold C. Bennett, the committee's president and treasurer, or Alvin C. Shackleford, director of Baptist Press, to a lengthy letter he wrote to Executive Committee members April 8 expressing concerns about the reporting of Baptist Press, headquartered at the Nashville offices of the Executive Committee. Pressler said he sent a copy to Shackleford but received no reply.

Bennett said the reason he and Shackleford did not respond was that the letter had been written to members of the Executive Committee. In a phone conversation with Pressler he said he explained that since the letter was not addressed to him or Shackleford, and they were not shown on the letter as receiving copies of it, he felt it inappropriate to respond.

Bennett said he told Pressler that if the Executive Committee, or any group of the committee, "would like me to respond, I would be happy to do so."

In his statement to the committee during the meeting, Pressler said he felt communication is "essential to understanding and to avoid hard feelings."

He said he more recently had sent copies of the letter expressing concerns about BP to the people being nominated as new members of the committee. In that letter, he said he had received "no response from those employed by the Executive Committee," Bennett and Shackleford.

It was then, he said, that he received the phone call from Bennett and "a nice response" from Bennett saying he would communicate a response (to the Executive Committee) if instructed to do so by the committee.

At this point in the meeting, Pressler made a four-point motion asking that Baptist Press be directed:

- -- To recognize their responsibility to be fair to all Southern Baptists.
- -- To respond in writing to correspondence and questions asked concerning their reporting by members of the Executive Committee.
- -- To represent the Southern Baptist Convention positively and fairly to the secular media as well as to Baptist publications.
  - -- To recognize the need for admitting error and apologizing when mistakes are made.

After Bennett had responded and two members of the committee spoke briefly against and for the motion, Frank C. Ingraham, committee member from Nashville, said good, solid criticism of any press is valid, but he thought "criticism to the point of looking for problems is a very difficult thing to respond to."

He said he had received both Pressler's latest 39-page "release" as he described it, and an earlier lengthy communication.

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Pressler, he said, constantly and legitimately stays in touch with Baptist Press. "I don't know anybody who has more to say about (the way) Al (Shackleford) runs Baptist Press (than Pressler)," Ingraham said. But he said to adopt another set of principles (for BP) based upon a single letter "is beyond what we want to do and I plead with you that we not pursue the matter further." He then made the motion to table, which was approved 31-29.

In February, a subcommittee of the Executive Committee, in response to a motion at the 1987 Southern Baptist annual meeting, declined to investigate the news agency's reporting. The public relations workgroup at that time generally affirmed the news service but urged greater restraint in reporting controversial issues in an effort to promote peace and harmony.

Since 1985, Baptist Press has been operating under guidelines established with the approval of the Executive Committee.

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Missionary Bertha Smith dies

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Baptist Press 6/20/88

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (BP)--Olive Bertha Smith, 99, one of the most beloved Southern Baptist missionaries, died June 12 in Spartanburg, S.C., barely five months before her 100th birthday.

"Miss Bertha" worked 42 years in China and Taiwan before beginning a career of nearly 30 years in the United States as a speaker and conference leader. After retirement, she also began the Peniel Prayer Center near her home in Cowpens, S.C.

She went to China in 1917 as a missionary teacher and endured wars, revolution, imprisonment by the Japanese, poverty and isolation. She was at the center of the Shandong Revival in China in the 1920s and 30s.

She left China in 1948 and worked in Taipei until reluctantly retiring from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board at age 70 in 1958. Mandatory retirement went against her nature and friends said she had no time for pleasure. "She was single-eyed to God and to the truth of the Word," said one.

The recent theological feud in the Southern Baptist Convention grieved and angered Miss Smith. She told a reporter she believed it was distorted by newsmen "looking for bad news."

She was born in Cowpens, S.C., and received the bachelor of arts degree from Winthrop College in Rock Hill, S.C. She also received a bachelor of missionary training degree from the Woman's Missionary Union Training School (now part of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) in Louisville, Ky. Prior to her appointment as a missionary in 1917, she taught and was principal of several schools in South Carolina.

Miss Smith is survived by several nieces and nephews.

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(NOTE TO EDITORS: A longer version of Bertha Smith's obituary has been mailed from the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.)

NATIONAL OFFICE SBC Executive Committee 901 Commerce #750 Nashville, Tennessee 37203 (615) 244-2355 Alvin C. Shackleford Director Dan Martin, News Editor Mary Knox, Feature Editor

RURFALIS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 973-4041 DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550 NASHVILLE (Beptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave. N., Nashville, Tem. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300 RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Vz. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151 WASHINGTON Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

June 20, 1988

88-96

SBC roundup

By Roy Jennings

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP) -- Messengers to the 131st Southern Baptist Convention elected a conservative standard bearer as president, approved a 1988-89 budget of \$145,600,000 and took positions on 22 topics ranging from the New Age movement to homosexuality to pastoral authority.

Between business sessions at the three-day meeting, the messengers heard progress reports from 20 agencies and institutions, took part in appointing 35 foreign missionaries and applauded major addresses by outgoing president Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

A peace committee appointed three years ago to resolve denominational conflict disbanded after reporting agencies and seminaries were making good progress in efforts to implement peace recommendations.

The convention attracted 32,727 messengers, making it the third largest since the movement was organized in 1845. Only the 1985 convention in Dallas with 45,519 messengers and the 1986 convention in Atlanta with 40,987 messengers were larger.

Jerry Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., was elected president of the 14.7-million-member denomination by less than 700 votes over Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church.

The vote count was Vines, 15,804; Jackson, 15,112; James Craig, a Tulsa layman, 276, and Anniece Shorrosh, a Mobile, Ala., evangelist who nominated himself, 82.

Jackson received the endorsement of the moderate faction in the convention before the election.

Messengers elected Darrell Robinson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., first vice president; Rudy Hernandez, pastor of Metro Park Baptist Church in San Antonio, second vice president, and re-elected Lee Porter of Nashville, registration secretary, and Martin Bradley of Nashville, recording secretary.

The new budget, up \$5.6 million from the current budget, included increases for all agencies except the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs which received a \$48,400 cut.

Efforts to add \$67,457 to the BJCPA allocation failed, culminating a running dispute between Southern Baptist representatives on the BJCPA board and trustees from the other eight sponsoring bodies over positions the agency should take.

Receiving the largest allocations were the Foreign Mission Board, \$68,805,000; Home Mission Board, \$26,895,770; six seminaries, a total of \$27,955,780, and Radio and Television Commission, \$5,504,400.

The new budget includes \$6,899,000 for capital needs.

Historical Commission. SBC A resolution on pastoral authority and the priesthood of the believe lecchanterest of the attention of the pastor-dominated convention.

Before passing the resolution affirming the role, responsibility and authority of the pastor, the messengers rejected a charge that the resolution sets up a papal system that Martin Luther died to defeat.

The resolution said the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer has been used to justify wrongly the attitude that a Christian may believe whatever he so chooses to and still be considered a loyal Southern Baptist. Herschel H. Hobbs of Oklahoma City, who chaired the committee which wrote the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message, describes the priesthood of believers as granting "to every Christian the right to read and interpret the Scriptures for himself as he is led by the Holy Spirit."

Later, a small group of Southern Baptists led by Randall Lolley, former president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Waker Forest, N.C., protested the action as "non-Baptistic and heretical," and turned in their convention ballots.

The messengers also approved a resolution warning of the dangers of the New Age movement and asked Southern Baptists to warn and educate their consitutiencies about the deception and critical dangers of the movement.

The resolution said the New Age movement gives people false hope by its beliefs in reincarnation, astrology, fortune telling, palm reading, universalism, and secular humanism and was trying to become a one-world religion.

In a resolution on the problem of conflict within churches, the messengers called for prayer for churches in need of spiritual healing, pastors and church staff members who have been fired, and for a denominational work group trying to develop a strategy to educate churches in how to resolve conflicts.

Other resolutions challenged churches to establish ministries of prayer and affirmed the belief that persons without a personal commitment to Jesus Christ would go to a literal hell.

Through the resolution process, the messengers also urged media to refuse advertising promoting homosexuality, deplored homosexuality as a violation of major and natural affection, called upon all Southern Baptists to support the sanctity of human life actively, and asked for stringent laws and swift persecution to deter drunken driving.

Other resolutions opposed governmental support of the exportation of alcohol and tobacco, urged congress to modify the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988 to insure the free exercise of religion, advised churches to run childcare programs without government financing, and called on public schools to uphold the standard of sexual abstinance outside marriage as they deal with sensitive areas of sexual behavior.

The messengers also urged voluntary organ donations while not condoning euthanasia, infanticide and abortion; called for the maintenance of biblical standards of honesty, fidelity and integrity by ministry-related leaders; encouraged churches to use more bivocational ministers; and asked for an explanation of a 1985 United States agreement with the Soviet Union to exchange curricula and teaching materials for school children.

President Rogers set the tone for the convention with his opening session address on "Salty Saints in a Sick Society."

Messengers gave Rogers a standing ovation when he lashed out at liberalism in Baptist schools and seminaries financially supported by conservatives.

"I would not for anything in the world try to force my beliefs on someone else, but when someone tells me I must underwrite his liberalism or be branded a non-Baptist, I'm saying he is trying to force his beliefs on me," Rogers said.

Rogers condemned both liberalism and legalism, comparing legalism to biblical Pharisees and liberalism to the Sadducees of the New Testament.

"I'm afraid of legalism as I am of liberalism," R gers said. "From the crown of my head to the sole of my feet, I am a conservative, an inerrantist; I can't help it, that's who I am. But I pray to God that I'll never be a legalist." Rogers insisted that Baptists have not only a right but a fearful responsibility to see that those who teach in their theology schools represent their cherished, biblical and Baptist beliefs.

Calling for Baptists to respond to the purity of Christ, the integrity of Christ and the vitality of Christ, Rogers said the problem in society is n t because f Hollywood, pornography, politicians, conservatives or liberals, but is with Christians whom he described as "saltless saints."

In the annual convention sermon, Gregory warned Southern Baptists about building a wall of orthodoxy around the convention and in the process tearing down the castle they are trying to protect.

"We are at a flashpoint," he said. "Southern Baptists cannot survive many more months of personal animosity in our midst."

Gregory advised Southern Baptists to consecrate their conversations, change their attitudes toward each other, and imitate God's kindness.

"A lifetime of smoldering bitterness will put you on the shelf" as far as service for God is concerned, he said.

"I hold out my hand to you, Brother Adrian (Rogers), Winfred (Moore), Jerry (Vines), Richard (Jackson), "Gregory said. "We can build a wall and keep the castle. Be my brother."

Following the presidential election, both major candidates expressed their denominational views in news conferences.

Vines said neo-orthodoxy, not classical liberalism, is the problem in the Southern Baptist Convention. He defined neo-orthodox as those who "use our vocabulary but not our dictionary."

The new president reaffirmed his intent to appoint to SBC boards and committees those who are sympathetic with the conservative movement.

Denying he was under the control of any individual or group, Vines said he was committed as president to be available and open to all Southern Baptists. Vines said his personal goal as president is to continue to be a soul winner.

Jackson contended a difference in the philosophy of leadership style, not theology, was the issue dividing Southern Baptists.

Manipulation has characterized the political leadership of the denomination in recent years, Jackson said, pointing to a small group trying to work out a plan and strategy to direct the course of the denomination.

Jackson affirmed church-state separation, the priesthood of believers and soul liberty as being at the heart of Baptist identity and added:

"Being a Baptist means you don't have to check your mind at the door."

Messengers approved 19 recommendations of their Executive Committee, including one which set the minimum number of messengers needed to conduct business at 25 percent of the registered messengers at a given convention. In the absence of a quorum, the convention could hear reports, but not transact business.

In an organizational meeting, the SBC Executive Committee re-elected officers, including Charles W. Sullivan, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lenoir City, Tenn., as chairman, and Darrell W. Robinson of Mobile, Ala., newly-elected first vice president of the SBC, vice chairman.

The Executive Committee also voted 31-29 to table a motion that would have given new directives to Baptist Press, the news service of the denomination.

Paul Pressler of Houston, long time critic of the news service, made the motion calling for Baptist Press to recognize their responsibility to be fair to all Southern Baptists, answer their mail along with the Executive Committee questions about reporting, represent the SBC fairly and positively, and recognize the need for admitting error and apologize when they make mistakes.

Frank C. Ingraham of Nashville made the motion to table after this comment:

"I don't know anybody who has had more to say about (the way) Al (Alvin Shackleford) runs Baptist Press (than Pressler)." But he said to adopt another set of principles (for BP) based upon a single letter "is beyond what we want to do and I plead with you that we not pursue this matter further."

Messengers attending the missionary appointment service were reminded that God would throw Southern Baptists on the junk heap and choose someone else to win the world to Christ unless they move beyond their parochial selfishness.

R. Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va., said history is as clear on this point as it is on salvation.

"When people refuse to do what God has called them to do, God casts them on the junk heap and finds someone else to do it."

Turning to the new missionaries, Parks, a former missionary, emphasized that missions is dangerous and that "you are going into the awfullest spiritual war you can imagine" where "it is a dangerous thing to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world." In other action, messengers elected Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, to preach the convention sermon at Las Vegas next year. David Miller, director of missions for the Little Red River Baptist Association in Heber Springs, Ark., is the alternate.

A messenger nominated a woman, Nancy Hastings Sehested, pastor of Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., to preach the convention sermon but the messengers chose Chapman.

While messengers were attending luncheon meetings for seminary alumni, the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists heard a wide selection of sermons including that of a former gambler who warned of the evils of Las Vegas, site of the 1989 convention on June 13-15.

Rick Hamil of Louisville, Ky., told the evangelists they face a mockery from the secular press and the gambling industry who "are already planning a satanically-inspired trap.

"One dollar in the slot machine will be shaking the hand of Satan," he warned.
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Resolutions Wrap

Baptist Press 6/20/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Twenty-two resolutions on subjects ranging from the priesthood of the believer to homosexuality to the New Age movement were adopted by messengers to the 131st Southern Baptist Convention which met June 14-16 in San Antonio, Texas.

The total was the largest number of resolutions approved at a Southern Baptist Convention since 1980, when 26 were adopted.

Messengers discussed and approved 13 of the resolutions presented by the Resolutions Committee during convention sessions June 15 and 16 before approving the remaining nine as a group, without debate.

Other topics of resolutions included: the necessity of salvation, pro-life actions of SBC agencies, alcohol, civil rights and religious institutions, institutional child care, school-based clinics, Soviet involvement in American education, ministerial integrity, bivocational ministers and support for foreign missionaries.

The resolution which drew the longest discussion and the most controversial response was on the priesthood of the believer, the Baptist doctrine that affirms all Christians have the right to read and interpret Scripture for themselves.

The resolution was approved by about a 54-45 percent vote after attempts failed to substitute, amend and refer it to the SBC Executiv Committee.

The resolution's four principles: (1) affirm belief in the priesthood of the believer; (2) state the doctrine "in no way gives license to misinterpret, explain away, demythologize, or extrapolate out elements of the supernatural from the Bible"; (3) note that the doctrine "in no way contradicts the biblical understanding of the role, responsibility, and authority of the pastor;" and (4) affirm that "elders, or pastors, are called of God to lead the local church."

The resolution also states the doctrine "has been used to justify wrongly the attitude that a Christian may believe whatever he so chooses and still be considered a loyal Southern Baptist."

During about 25 minutes of discussion, Bill Bruster, pastor of First Baptist Church of Abilene, Texas, offered a substitute resolution based on excerpts from the Baptist Faith and Message statement. He charged the resolution as presented sets up "a papal system that Martin Luther died to defeat. This is not Southern Baptist!"

Jerry Sutton, chairman of the Resolutions Committee and pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church of Nashville, said he believed some responses to the resolution were "unfounded hysteria. We affirmed that we support the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. We sought to bring balance. I believe time will prove the effect of this resolution will prove not nearly as severe as some have suggested."

The homosexuality resolution deplores homosexuality as an abnormal lifestyle, notes that homosexuals can be forgiven through faith in Christ and states that while God loves homosexuals, homosexuality "is an abomination in the eyes of God."

Kathleen Armstrong of Fort Worth, Texas, said, "I have the deep concern after reading this resolution that we as Southern Baptists are becoming so obsessed with condemning sins we have forgotten persons."

The resolution was adopted with only scattered opposition.

A second homosexuality-related resolution dealt with the firing of the publisher of the Dayton (Ohio) Daily News, Dennis Shere, for refusing to accept advertising by gay and lesbian groups.

Shere is a member of Far Hills Baptist Church in Dayton, and the resolution was submitted to the Resolutions Committee by Far Hills Pastor Kenneth Mahanes.

The resolution asked messengers to express "outrage over the firing of a competent, highly professional Christian solely on the basis of the employee's commitment to defend traditional moral and family values" and calls on media to refuse advertising "that promotes homosexuality or any other lifestyle that is destructive to the family."

A resolution warning against false beliefs of the New Age movement passed overwhelmingly without discussion and asks messengers to acknowledge it "is diametrically contrary to both New Testament Christianity and our American heritage."

Messengers also adopted a resolution on the necessity of salvation after adopting by a narrow margin an amendment stating that "all people" rather than "all men" are saved.

During discussion, Tom Connally of Atlanta, said he was concerned the resolution might be used as a "plumbline" to set apart people with differing beliefs.

Sutton responded, "It will not be used for anything except what a majority of the messengers to this convention believe."

The resolution on the 1988 Civil Rights Restoration Act warns that Baptist institutions not directly "controlled by" religious organizations, including Baptist colleges, may be required to file for exemptions to the act.

The resolution urges Baptist agencies and institutions to refuse direct f deral funding and asks for efforts to amend the act to ensure that the "constitutional guarantees of the free-exercise of religion are not infringed."

The resolution on institutional child care, adopted with little opposition, opposes tax subsidy proposals pending in the U.S. Congress which would "discriminate against families who choose home child care by taxing all families to subsidize government-approved daycare facilities." It also warns of a church-state conflict.

The one resolution which appeared to draw unanimous support of messengers called for communication to Southern Baptist foreign missionaries "that we are solidly united in our appreciation for them and our commitment to their support."

Another resolution commended three SBC agencies -- the Home Mission Board, the Christian Life Commission and the Sunday School Board -- for pro-life actions taken in the last year.

Other resolutions urged consideration of human organ donation "in the spirit of stewardship," called on Baptists to step up prayer efforts, emphasized the importance of ministerial integrity, commended bivocational ministers, urged the U.S. government to cease pursuing export markets for domestic alcohol and tobacco and called for efforts to restore trust in local churches.

The 1988 Reosolutions Committee considered 54 resolutions, the same number proposed by messengers in 1987.

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Messengers introduce variety of motions

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press 6/20/88

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas, June 14-16 introduced motions on subjects ranging from the SBC presidency to the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee to the 1989 convention program.

Once introduced, the motions went to the Committee on Order of Business, which brought back recommendations on whether to refer, dismiss or take action on them.

Two messengers introduced motions that would affect the SBC presidency. A motion introduced by Harry Sparks, a messenger from Killeen, Texas, would extend the current one-year presidential term to a two-year term. Mark Beck, a messenger from Lynchburg, Va., moved to amend the SBC Constitution so that any person having served two terms as SBC president would be ineligible from serving in that position again. Both motions were referred to the SBC Executive Committee.

In a related action, C. Jack Varnado, messenger from First Baptist Church of Lake Arthur, La., moved to disqualify any person announcing his or her candidacy for an SBC office or whose name is mentioned as a possible candidate in a public meeting or in print. The motion was ruled out of order.

Three motions concerned the Public Affairs Committee, an 18-member panel that provides Southern Baptist representation on the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. One motion, introduced by Ken Massey, messenger from First Baptist Church of Marks, Miss., sought replacement of the eight PAC members who last October voted to dissolve SBC ties with the Baptist Joint Committee. The motion was ruled out of order.

Lamar Wadsworth, messenger from Unity Baptist Church in Dalton, Ga., introduced a motion to change SBC Bylaws so as to limit the PAC from endorsing any candidate for a public elected or appointed office. Bob M. Patterson, messenger from First Baptist Church of Warm Springs, Ga., moved to stop funding of the PAC since he said it has no program assignment and the convention has not authorized expenditures for program activites. Both motions were referred to the SBC Executive Committee.

The 1989 SBC annual meeting, scheduled to be held in Las Vegas, Nev., was the subject of several motions.

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Two of those motions were referred to next year's Committee on Order of Business. The first, introduced by Darrell Orman, messenger from Gardens Baptist Church in Hollywood, Fla., called for designation of an official time on the meeting's agenda for SBC messengers "to move as a mighty army for Jesus into the streets of downtown Las Vegas lead by our convention leaders and our own president to win people to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," adding that such a practice should then continue during each future convention.

The other, introduced by Terry McDaniel, messenger from Southwest Baptist Church in Jacksboro, Texas, to move the 1989 meeting to a more suitable location was ruled out of order.

Other motions included two that would change the level of giving required of churches for certain participation in the SBC. Both were referred to the SBC Executive Committee.

David Savell, messenger from Highland Baptist Church in Meridian, Miss., introduced a motion to change the definition of a cooperating church contained in SBC Bylaws to require a congregation to have given at least 5 percent of its undesignated receipts to the Cooperative Program for the previous year and to require any nominee to SBC boards or committee to have been a member of such a congregation for at least one year.

Loyal Prior, messenger from Tabernacle Baptist Church in Newport News, Va., moved to alter the \$250 annual church contribution now used in determining the number of messengers to which a church is entitled to \$2,500.

Direct messenger action was taken on only two motions. Messengers approved a motion requesting prayer for rain, but rejected the second part of a motion concerning the sale of the ACTS network by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. Approval of that part of the motion would have allowed messengers to vote on the actual sale rather than referring the matter to the RTVC trustees.

A number of motions were referred to various SBC agencies, institutions and committees. Those included:

- -- Motions calling for study of restructuring Cooperative Program giving and setting up regional convention centers, referred to the SBC Executive Committee.
- -- A motion asking for aggressive anti-abortion leadership and another concerning various print and tape materials, referred to the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.
- -- A motion concerning a decision against appointing divorced people as foreign missionaries, referred to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.
- -- Motions requesting study of the feasibility of assisting missionaries who -- because of changes in assignments -- have responsibility for two house payments and development of a resort missions program, referred to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.
- -- A motion calling for all Southern Baptists seminaries to have the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message as their articles of faith, referred to the seminaries.
- -- A motion asking for a conference week for deaf youth, referred to the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.
- -- A motion on using the title "doctor" in SBC listings and introductions, referred to the Resolutions Committee.
- -- A motion on selection of convention preachers for 1990 and 1991, referred to next year's Committee on Order of Business.

The Committee on Order of Business dismissed or provided information on motions dealing with the purchase of flags for display at future conventions, a report on a decision by the Home Mission Board pertaining to ordained women and provision of areas for the handicapped during the SBC.

A motion seeking the dissolution of the SBC Peace Committee was ruled moot following convention approval of a similar r commendation that came from the Peace Committee itself.

Forum, Pastors' Conference take divergent viewpoints

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP) -- Speakers who addressed two gatherings prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting offered divergent views on the controversy within their denomination June 12-13 in San Antonio, Texas.

About 3,600 people attended the moderate-backed Southern Baptist Forum, while 16,000 participated in the Pastors' Conference, generally identified with conservatives.

A fiery indictment of "the curse of liberalism" by W.A. Criswell, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, highlighted the closing session of the Pastors' Conference at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center.

"Building the Greatest Churches Since Pentecost" was the theme of the meeting.

"The curse of liberalism" has led to the downward spiral of mainline denominations and to the declining number of baptisms within the Southern Baptist Convention, said Criswell, pastor of the 20,000-member First Baptist Church of Dallas.

Criswell grouped "liberals" with "moderates" in the SBC, saying, "A skunk by any other name still stinks."

Pointing to the "inroads" made by liberalism and secularism, Criswell said, "We have taken the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer and made it to cover every damnable heresy you can imagine."

Criswell called for a "resurgence, a recommitment, a regeneration" among Southern Baptists.
"To my great sorrow, we are losing our message of salvation to the liberals, the secularists, and the humanists, and finally to the atheists and the infidels," he said.

Evangelist Bailey Smith of Atlanta, another former SBC president, challenged preachers to stand against formalism, secularism and liberalism. "You cannot marry high-church music and a burden for souls," he said, observing that liturgy leads to lethargy.

He also warned against the crisis of liberalism, comparing the choice between theological conservatism and liberalism to a choice between health and cancer.

Numerous speakers explored possible reasons for the declining number of baptisms in Southern Baptist churches.

Freddie Gage, evangelist from Euless, Texas, rejected the motion that the declining number of baptisms are due to controversy. "That is absurd. That is a scapegoat," he said, noting the solution to the problem of a drop in baptisms is for "Southern Baptist seminaries to crank out soul winners."

Richard Lee, pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church in Tucker, Ga., cited a survey conducted by Western Reserve University in which 57 percent of the Baptist clergymen interviewed said they did not believe the Bible is the inspired word of God: "No wonder our baptisms are down. Let's put the blame where it belongs. It's not politics or programs. It's puny preaching from powerless pulpits by men who don't believe the word of God."

Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta and former SBC president, said pastors wanting to build great churches need a strong awareness of their accountability to God; a preaching ministry based on the unquestioned authority of the Bible; personal self-discipline; ability to endure hardship; and willingness to fulfill their calling to do the work of an evangelist.

Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, called for a Christ-like spirit in maintaining convictions about the word of God.

Paige Patterson, president of Crisw 11 College in Dallas, addressed the importance of preaching the atonement of Christ. "If we want peace in the denomination, we will have it not through compromise, but in the peace that is found at the foot of the cross," he said.

Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., likewise challenged Southern Baptist preachers to "stand flat-footed and broad-shouldered" preaching the blood of Jesus.

In the closing address of the Pastors' Conference, conservative standard-bearer Jerry Vines asked Southern Baptist preachers to stand against the pressures of modern society.

"Sometimes it's hard to stand when others are stooping," said Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla. He added the fiery trial of life make Christians "fit and prepared for his use."

Ralph Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, was elected president of the Pastors' Conference. Smith defeated fellow Texan Paul Powell, pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church of Tyler.

Rob Zinn, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in San Bernardino, Calif., was elected vice president. Rick Ferguson, pastor of First Baptist Church of DeSoto, Mo., was elected secretary-treasurer.

Participants at the Forum were told "disenfranchised" Southern Baptists must admit the denomination they love has changed and find ways to serve God within the remaining structure.

"We have learned nobody wins a fight with belligerent, hostile fundamentalists," said Alan Neely, who recently resigned as professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. "The only way to deal with militant fundamentalists is to leave them to fight among themselves. The most devastating blow that we could inflict upon them is to cease to be their identified enemy.

"We cannot engage in internecine struggle and at the same time address the real problems of our world," Neely said, referring to the 10-year theological/political struggle.

Although Neely has announced plans to teach at Princeton Theological Seminary, he urged those at the Forum not to withdraw from the convention: "I have never been anything but a Southern Baptist. It never occurred to me the time would come when I would be disinherited, disenfranchised by my own family."

Neely echoed the statements of such other Forum speakers as Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas; Anthony Campolo, an American Baptist and professor of sociology at Eastern College, St. Davids, Pa.; Libby Bellinger, assistant director of Inner City Ministries, Waco, Texas; Mildred McWhorter, home missionary in Houston, and Bill Leonard, church history professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Moore also admitted times have changed in the denomination. But he said those who are now left out still can make positive contributions: "We're not dead, and I've got news for all of you -- I'm not leaving. I'm not going away. No good cause will take care of itself if we leave it to itself."

Moore urged the audience to actively pursue their ideals within the convention, but not at the expense of their integrity. He also said Baptists must take sides in the controversy: "There isn't anything in the middle of the road but a yellow line and dead possums. Know which side of the road you're on. I intend to continue to contend for the faith and for the right of my brethren to differ with me so long as they continue to contend for the faith."

Campolo issued a strong challenge to Southern Baptists to get back to ministry: "I don't know what you're arguing about in Dixieland, but the real issue is are you going to love people that everyone else hates? You're creating a church that no one is going to want to join."

Bellinger encouraged moderates to remain active. She compared the controversy to a cancer "slowly spreading out its ugly fingers."

Executive Committee re-elects 3 officers

## By Bob Stanley

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention reelected its officers by acclamation June 15. Later in the meeting, the committee voted 31-29 to table a motion that would have given new directives to Baptist Press, the SBC news service.

Charles W. Sullivan, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lenoir City, Tenn., was re-elected chairman. Darrell W. Robinson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., and the newly elected first vice president of the SBC, was re-elected the committee's vice chairman. Sam W. Pace, director-treasurer of the Comanche-Cotton Baptist Association in Lawton, Okla., was re-elected recording secretary.

The motion concerning Baptist Press was introduced by Paul Pressler, a Houston judge. Pressler said he had received no response from either Harold C. Bennett, the committee's president and treasurer, or Alvin C. Shackleford, director of Baptist Press, to a lengthy letter he wrote to Executive Committee members April 8 expressing concerns about the reporting of Baptist Press, headquartered at the Nashville offices of the Executive Committee. Pressler said he sent a copy to Shackleford but received no reply.

Bennett said the reason he and Shackleford did not respond was that the letter had been written to members of the Executive Committee. In a phone conversation with Pressler he said he explained that since the letter was not addressed to him or Shackleford, and they were not shown on the letter as receiving copies of it, he felt it inappropriate to respond.

Bennett said he told Pressler that if the Executive Committee, or any group of the committee, "would like me to respond, I would be happy to do so."

In his statement to the committee during the meeting, Pressler said he felt communication is "essential to understanding and to avoid hard feelings."

He said he more recently had sent copies of the letter expressing concerns about BP to the people being nominated as new members of the committee. In that letter, he said he had received "no response from those employed by the Executive Committee," Bennett and Shackleford.

It was then, he said, that he received the phone call from Bennett and "a nice response" from Bennett saying he would communicate a response (to the Executive Committee) if instructed to do so by the committee.

At this point in the meeting, Pressler made a four-point motion asking that Baptist Press be directed:

- -- To recognize their responsibility to be fair to all Southern Baptists.
- -- To respond in writing to correspondence and questions asked concerning their reporting by members of the Executive Committee.
- -- To represent the Southern Baptist Convention positively and fairly to the secular media as well as to Baptist publications.
  - -- To recognize the need for admitting error and apologizing when mistakes are made.

After Bennett had responded and two members of the committee spoke briefly against and for the motion, Frank C. Ingraham, committee member from Nashville, said good, solid criticism of any press is valid, but he thought "criticism to the point of looking for problems is a very difficult thing to respond to."

He said he had received both Pressler's latest 39-page "release" as he described it, and an earlier lengthy communication.

Pressler, he said, constantly and legit mately stays in touch with Baptist Press. "I don't know anybody who has more to say about (the way) Al (Shackleford) runs Baptist Press (than Pressler)," Ingraham said. But he said to adopt another set of principles (for BP) based upon a single letter "is beyond what we want to do and I plead with you that we not pursue the matter further." He then made the motion to table, which was approved 31-29.

In February, a subcommittee of the Executive Committee, in response to a motion at the 1987 Southern Baptist annual meeting, declined to investigate the news agency's reporting. The public relations workgroup at that time generally affirmed the news service but urged greater restraint in reporting controversial issues in an effort to promote peace and harmony.

Since 1985, Baptist Press has been operating under guidelines established with the approval of the Executive Committee.

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Missionary Bertha Smith dies Baptist Press 6/20/88

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (BP)--Olive Bertha Smith, 99, one of the most beloved Southern Baptist missionaries, died June 12 in Spartanburg, S.C., barely five months before her 100th birthday.

"Miss Bertha" worked 42 years in China and Taiwan before beginning a career of nearly 30 years in the United States as a speaker and conference leader. After retirement, she also began the Peniel Prayer Center near her home in Cowpens, S.C.

She went to China in 1917 as a missionary teacher and endured wars, revolution, imprisonment by the Japanese, poverty and isolation. She was at the center of the Shandong Revival in China in the 1920s and 30s.

She left China in 1948 and worked in Taipei until reluctantly retiring from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board at age 70 in 1958. Mandatory retirement went against her nature and friends said she had no time for pleasure. "She was single-eyed to God and to the truth of the Word," said one.

The recent theological feud in the Southern Baptist Convention grieved and angered Miss Smith. She told a reporter she believed it was distorted by newsmen "looking for bad news."

She was born in Cowpens, S.C., and received the bachelor of arts degree from Winthrop College in Rock Hill, S.C. She also received a bachelor of missionary training degree from the Woman's Missionary Union Training School (now part of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) in Louisville, Ky. Prior to her appointment as a missionary in 1917, she taught and was principal of several schools in South Carolina.

Miss Smith is survived by several nieces and nephews.

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(NOTE TO EDITORS: A longer version of Bertha Smith's obituary has been mailed from the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.)

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