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Special RTVC meeting
called for December 13

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The executive committee of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission has set a special meeting of the commission for Dec. 13, 1988 to complete transfer of the ACTS network to a for-profit corporation, commission President Jimmy R. Allen announced.

Members of the executive committee have conducted a telephone conference call and voted unanimously to schedule the meeting to approve signing final sale documents and conduct other business related to the network transfer, Allen said.

Friends of ACTS, a San Antonio, Texas, corporation, contracted to assume operation of ACTS in an agreement signed June 9, Allen said. The contract calls for Friends of ACTS to continue the programming policies currently in effect for the network and provide up to 35 hours per week of time for commission-produced programs for 30 years.

In addition, the commission is to be paid \$11 million at closing, Allen noted. The network is to purchase programming from the commission to be used on the network at the rate of \$2 million per year for 11 and one-half years, and pay a 3 percent override on advertising income for 30 years, he added.

Friends of ACTS is to continue to bear the cost of a satellite transponder for use by ACTS in return for rescheduling the closing, he said. Oct. 31 had been set for closing because of a requirement of the former transponder owners, but the present owners have eliminated that restriction.

The change of date was voted at the request of Friends of ACTS, Allen reported.

In asking for the change, Friends of ACTS Chairman Center (Chip) Atkins said: "We are continuing to make progress in raising capital to purchase the ACTS Network. To enable us to complete this effort, we are requesting your approval to close the transaction on Dec. 13, 1988."
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Nigerians rebuilding
burned churches

By Marie Johnston

Baptist Press
10/31/88

ZARIA, Nigeria (BP)--Last year's destruction of Baptist churches by Nigerian Muslims has caused congregations to plan not only for new buildings but bigger ones.

Attendance at worship services in Nigeria also has increased, even though congregations are meeting in temporary and borrowed buildings, observers reported.

Muslims burned 10 Baptist churches and several parsonages in Zaria, Nigeria, during religious rioting in March 1987 that also claimed churches of other Christian denominations in that area. Six Baptist churches in nearby Kaduna also were burned. But the Christians' refusal to retaliate has inspired some Muslims to look closely at Christianity and in some cases to accept Christ as their savior.

Southern Baptist missionaries Payton and Helen Myers of West Point, Miss., have moved to Zaria to help with reconstruction and the starting of new churches.
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Kwanglia Baptist Church in Zaria already has replaced its burned building with a larger one, but plans and finances for a new structure were in the works before the burnings. Southern Baptist missionary Jim Johnston of Anchorage, Ky., is interim pastor there.

Other congregations are awaiting approval of building plans before starting construction. They have received construction funds from church members and the Nigerian government. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board provided \$100,000 for reconstruction.

The Christian congregations believe God is working through this tragedy, members said.

"It might have been many years before we would have stepped out in faith to build a needed larger church building," a church member said. "Now we are forced to do it, and we will grow because we have the room to grow."

Missionaries said the congregations need prayer as they rebuild while living and spreading the gospel in a strongly Muslim city.

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Marie Johnston is a Southern Baptist missionary in Nigeria.

Northern Plains Baptists
dissolve their convention

Baptist Press
10/31/88

RAPID CITY, S.D. (BP)-- More than 300 Northern Plains Baptists, staff and former staff, agency personnel and friends joined together Oct. 19-20 to celebrate the end of the Northern Plains Baptist Convention -- which died giving birth to two new fellowships.

The celebration was held at Calvary Baptist Church in Rapid City., S.D., where the convention was organized in November 1967. The convention began operation Jan. 1, 1968, and will cease Dec. 31, 1988.

The convention started with 75 churches in Wyoming, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota. The same area today holds 253 Southern Baptist churches.

The Wyoming Southern Baptist Fellowship, which had existed for 20 years and was meeting annually, separated into a convention in January 1984, reducing the Northern Plains Convention to a three-state area.

That same year the convention's executive board adopted a plan for development of fellowship offices in Montana and in the Dakotas and the phasing out of the Northern Plains Convention.

Montana Southern Baptist Fellowship, with offices in Billings, and the Dakota Southern Baptist Fellowship, with offices in Bismarck, will relate to the Home Mission Board as a state convention.

John P. Baker, retiring executive director of Northern Plains Convention, said: "The celebration was held so that we might say 'goodbye' with joy, not with sadness. There were opportunities to reminisce, to hear panel discussions on how the work began and how it developed, and to shed a tear, but the gathering will be remembered as a time of rejoicing and praising God for where he has brought us.

"Northern Plains will be remembered for its spirit of unity and for the sound and solid foundation it gave the work in this area, but it is time to move forward." The reasons for developing the two new fellowships are the size of the area and distance of travel, he said.

"They can now take this history and begin their own, reaching more new areas, establishing growing churches, and uniting together to create strong fellowships which will one day be state conventions," he added.

During the celebration, appreciation was expressed to the Home Mission Board, to the Mississippi Baptist Convention, which had a partnership relationship with the Northern Plains Convention, and to the Florida Baptist Convention, which has a partnership relationship with the two new fellowships.

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The occasion was also used to honor Baker, who was the first and last convention executive director. He assumed that post Jan. 1, 1968, and retired Dec. 31, 1976. The convention's executive board turned to Baker again in 1984 when Roy Owen resigned, and Baker returned to phase out that convention and assist in the establishing of the two fellowships.

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Missouri Baptists affirm
priesthood of believer, BJCPA

By Philip Poole

Baptist Press
10/31/88

OSAGE BEACH, Mo. (BP)--Missouri Baptists affirmed the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs during their annual meeting Oct. 24-26 at Tan-Tar-A resort in Osage Beach.

In a resolution which passed with little opposition, messengers "reaffirmed Baptists' emphasis on the priesthood of the believer and the principle of congregational government."

The resolution, submitted by D. Leslie Hollon, pastor of Wornall Road Baptist Church in Kansas City, "assured the dedicated laypersons who undergird this convention's work ... that our convention respects, honors and intends to preserve these principles."

The resolution responded to action taken by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting last June. A resolution passed at the national convention had been interpreted by some Southern Baptists to undermine the traditional Baptist doctrine that each person is equal and can interpret Scripture for the individual self. The national resolution also had been interpreted to give this authority to pastors.

In his resolution, Hollon urged pastors and other ordained ministers to encourage church members "to exercise the privileges and rights of believers as priests and to participate fully in deciding matters of concern to one's congregation."

The only discussion on the Missouri resolution centered on an attempt to delete, then amend, a statement of regret to laypersons.

Bill Johnson, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Versailles, made a motion to delete the statement, but the motion failed overwhelmingly on a voice vote. Bob Curtis, pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church in High Ridge, presented a amendment that called on the convention to "express our sincere regret over any unintentional offense or affront to our lay members which may have been caused by SBC resolution number 5 of 1988." The amendment passed after receiving support from Hollon and the resolutions committee.

Messengers also affirmed the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the Washington-based religious liberty watchdog organization comprised of nine Baptist denominations.

The resolution, presented by Rudy Pulido, pastor of Southwest Baptist Church in St. Louis, also appeared to be in contrast to action taken on the national level.

In passing the resolution with no discussion and limited opposition, messengers resolved to "oppose any and all efforts to weaken the work and witness of the Baptist Joint Committee through the withdrawal of funds."

Baptist Joint Committee allocations from the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget recently were reduced by the SBC Executive Committee. At the same time, the denomination's Public Affairs Committee requested additional funds for its work.

Missourians also encouraged the SBC Executive Committee to "look with disfavor on any and all efforts by the Public Affairs Committee to draw from Cooperative Program funds" money which would "duplicate or usurp" the work of the Baptist Joint Committee.

In other business, messengers adopted a record \$15 million budget for 1989. The budget is only slightly higher than the 1988 budget of \$14.75 million.

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The budget includes a \$5.275 million contribution to the Cooperative Program. Although a higher dollar total than 1988, the Cooperative Program percentage contribution will be down from 35.3 percent in 1988 to 35.16 percent in 1989.

Convention officials attributed the decrease in direct contributions to the Cooperative Program to the cost of covering increased benefits in the denomination's retirement and insurance programs for ministers.

An attempt to delete a \$3,000 allocation to Americans United for Separation of Church and State from the state missions offering budget was defeated on a voice vote. The motion was made by Larry Groom, pastor of First Baptist Church of Memphis, Mo.

Several opponents to the allocation argued that the non-denominational organization did not represent the opinions of a majority of Southern Baptists.

Pulido, who is active in the St. Louis chapter of the organization, reminded messengers that the allocation "stays in Missouri" and had been used in the past to combat local and state government issues that violated traditional Baptist values.

The convention also voted to change its relationship with Baptist Health Systems, the convention's medical center in Kansas City.

Ascending liability issues caused the medical center's trustees and the convention's executive board to recommend that the relationship become strictly fraternal. The medical center assumes total financial responsibility for its assets and liabilities and now can name its own trustees.

The recommendation did include provisions for the hospital to maintain strong Baptist ties, including the continued use of "Baptist" in its name, a majority of Baptist trustees and adherence to traditional Baptist values.

Messengers also voted to postpone action on a motion instructing the Missouri Baptist executive board to communicate to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board its support of action that resulted in the termination of former missionary Michael Willett of Liberty, Mo.

The motion was offered by David Baker, pastor of First Baptist Church of Belton and pastor/adviser of the Southern Baptist Coalition for Biblical Inerrancy. He said his motion was offered to make certain people understand what Missouri Baptists are saying about the board's action.

Jim Joslin of Springfield, director of missions for Greene County Baptist Association, was elected president by acclamation. He had served the past year as first vice president.

Other officers are Earlene Rogers, layperson from First Baptist Church, Higginsville, first vice president; Tommy Blair, pastor, First Baptist Church, Cameron, second vice president; and Doyle Sager, pastor, First Baptist Church, Sedalia, recording secretary.

Registration for the 154th annual meeting was 2,191, including 1,404 messengers and 787 visitors.

The 1989 meeting is set for Oct. 23-25 in St. Louis.

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Centurymen to be featured
on China TV special

Baptist Press
10/31/88

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The gospel will be heard for the first time over television in the People's Republic of China when the Centurymen, a 100-voice men's chorus representing Southern Baptists, is featured on a nationwide TV broadcast in mainland China during November.

The chorus, made up of choral directors from all over the United States, left for Beijing Oct. 31, where they will produce a TV program on the new Central China Television studios.

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Jointly sponsored by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and Cooperative Services International, the program of gospel, folk and traditional American and Chinese music will be broadcast throughout China Nov. 16. The government-owned television system claims 500 million viewers.

Several songs will be sung phonetically in Mandarin, the language understood by most Chinese. Arrangements written by Centurymen Conductor Buryl Red will feature the chorus and the China Broadcasting Traditional Orchestra. Several American gospel songs and spirituals will be included in the one-hour program. Orchestra director Peng Xiu Wen also has written an original composition.

Executive producer Jimmy R. Allen, president of the Radio/TV Commission, said Central China Television authorities have agreed to carry the taped program without editing.

The Centurymen and their spouses will remain in China for a public concert in Shanghai sponsored by the Christian churches of that area, Allen said. Groups of Centurymen will sing in a number of churches Sunday, Nov. 13.

Bob Thornton, the commission's vice president for production, is director for the program and heads a crew that will produce an hour-long documentary to be aired in the United States during 1989 over ABC television. The documentary will chart the growth of Christianity in China and will feature the stories of both pastors and laypeople in the world's most populace nation, Thornton said.

Lewis Myers and Brit Towery represent Cooperative Services International and have been invaluable in preparation for the project, Allen said. Towery, who has been in China for several weeks laying groundwork for the project, also worked with Allen and Myers in negotiating the agreements with government officials.

Cooperative Services International is the organization through which the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board participates in service projects in China and other nations where missionaries are not appointed.

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Seminarians help
Jamaicans rebuild

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
10/31/88

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Six Southern Baptist Theological Seminary students spent an October weekend hammering out their theology on the roof of a Baptist church in Jamaica.

The roof of Haylse Baptist Church near Maypen had fallen victim to Hurricane Gilbert, which swept across the Caribbean island in late September, killing more than 30 people and leaving houses, churches and schools without roofs just as the rainy season set in.

The students from the Louisville, Ky., seminary comprised one of the first Southern Baptist construction teams to visit the country following the hurricane.

Television news accounts of the devastation prompted Barry Harwell, a theology student from Morrow, Ga., to want to help the Jamaican people.

"I was watching the news, and they said the hurricane left a half-million people without homes and caused some of the worst devastation of the 20th century," said Harwell. "I felt like I had to do something."

His concern deepened when fellow student Learoy Campbell, a native of Jamaica, was unable to contact his family after the storm.

Campbell soon travelled home and found his family safe. In the meantime, Harwell began organizing a construction crew to go to Jamaica.

He recruited Campbell and four other seminarians -- theology students Mark Hoagg of Nashville; Perry McCollum of Ft. Walton Beach, Fla.; and Jeff Wallace of Stillwater, Okla.; and Christian education student John Carter of Chesapeake, Va.

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Within two weeks, the group raised enough funds from friends and churches to finance the journey. Harwell made arrangements through the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board for the group to help Jamaican Baptists with a construction project.

However, the night before the group was to depart, they received word from Jamaica that Baptists in the country were not yet ready to accommodate construction crews.

Still the seminarians knew "there must be something we could do" that weekend in Jamaica, said Harwell, noting they had their bags packed and airline tickets purchased. Campbell called Jamaican pastor Neville Callum, who told the group he would provide lodging and make arrangements for them to rebuild a church roof.

Callum, the pastor of two churches near Haylse, was able to overcome the country's scarcity of building supplies and locate lumber and nails for the roof. In two work days beginning at 5 a.m. and ending at midnight, the seminarians rebuilt the roof's support structure using only the hand tools they brought with them. They re-covered half the church roof with the zinc material that had blown off during the hurricane. They also helped replace the ceiling at the parsonage where Callum and his family live.

Some women from the church -- only four men attend -- had salvaged part of the church roof "while the rain was still falling and the wind was still blowing," Harwell said. The 150-year-old roof showed only the slightest signs of corrosion, he added.

As they left, the students decided to help the Jamaicans finish the roofing job by donating their tools and \$500 in cash.

Members of Haylse Church showed their appreciation to the construction crew by serving hearty Jamaican meals. "For them to give us the best they had in a country that was so devastated was very humbling," said Carter. "They felt like we were doing them a favor, but I felt like we were getting the blessing."

He added the trip has given him a special concern for the Jamaicans. "There's not a day that goes by that I don't pray for them," he said.

Harwell noted the head deacon of Halyse Church prayed with them and thanked God for "the white American Christian brothers." Harwell plans to make another trip to Jamaica in January with one of the teams assembled by the Brotherhood Commission.

Churches and low-income housing, which mostly is uninsured, are among the last buildings to receive attention in his homeland, Campbell said.

"There's a big need for technical skills, and there's a shortage of labor to fix up the smaller houses and the churches," he said.