



BAPTIST PRESS

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November 18, 1988

88-185

Virginia Baptists respond
to 'denominational crisis'

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (BP)--Virginia Baptists approved a six-part response to the Southern Baptist Convention's "denominational crisis" during the Baptist General Association of Virginia annual meeting Nov. 15-16 in Virginia Beach.

The response was the report of the ad hoc President's Task Force on the Denominational Crisis, created by BGAV President Neal T. Jones this summer.

The report notes many Virginia Baptists "feel betrayed and are asking hard questions about the future of our cooperative relationships in the larger Southern Baptist family. ... Virginia Baptists must take action to assure the continuation of both our cherished heritage and our unique way of working together."

The six recommendations involve:

-- Religious liberty and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. The first recommendation asks the SBC to "maintain its historic relationship with the (BJCPA) and to continue to fund its ministries." It also declares Virginia Baptists will continue to support the BJCPA "as a 'shared ministry' until we are assured that full SBC support will be continued."

The BJCPA is a Washington-based religious liberty organization comprised of nine Baptist denominations. It has been criticized by conservative Southern Baptists for taking positions they believe to be too liberal, such as opposing a school prayer amendment. And in the current budget year, it received reduced financial support from the SBC.

-- Mission support and the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget. The Virginia Baptist budget committee was asked to revise the association's 1989 budget "to show how the SBC portion of the BGAV budget is allocated to each of the SBC ministries." This item was designed to facilitate Virginia churches' ability to exercise "negative designation" of contributions away from SBC agencies they feel they cannot conscientiously support.

-- Theological education. Virginians affirmed "sound theological education" that is characterized by "serious academic scholarship, openness of inquiry that encourages independent investigation of the truth, balance in theological approach, responsible freedom within the bounds of historic Baptist confessions of faith."

-- Ex officio membership on the BGAV General Board. The resolution changes the status of Virginia's representatives on the SBC Executive Committee from full membership to ex officio, non-voting membership on the General Board. The change disallows their participation as officers of the board's committees or subcommittees.

-- SBC representation. This action directs the BGAV committee on boards and committees to nominate two people whom Virginians could ask SBC President Jerry Vines to place on the SBC Committee on Committees on behalf of Virginia Baptists. They are J. Harwood Cochrane, a layman from Richmond, and Jones, pastor of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church.

The SBC president appoints the SBC Committee on Committees, which nominates the SBC Committee on Nominations, which in turn nominates trustees for all SBC agencies and institutions. All qualified state conventions are represented by two people each on both the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Nominations.

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-- "A new style of life for Southern Baptists." The final recommendation authorizes the incoming BGAV president to appoint a nine-member committee to study the relationship between the BGAV and the SBC, represent the BGAV in discussions with SBC officials, report developments to the BGAV through its newspaper and report to the 1989 and 1990 BGAV annual meetings with recommendations regarding the relationship.

That recommendation also authorizes a memorial, "a formal communication summarizing the facts," to be presented to the 1989 SBC annual meeting "and respectfully request(s) an intentional return to the principles of mutuality and consultation upon which our cooperative mission partnership was founded and by which it has thrived."

The memorial notes in part: "We desire to continue to carry out our part of the partnership, to cooperate with integrity and to support the work generously. But our ability to do so is diminished by the SBC's abandonment of consultation and consensus leadership. The two-party system of recent days has not worked. It does not work because it leads to division and because bipartisan participation has not been permitted by those controlling the SBC."

The memorial also asks SBC messengers "to consider and respond" to five issues:

-- "That the SBC maintain its historic relationship with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and continue to fund its ministries.

-- "That the SBC develop a plan that permits a church, on conscience grounds, to choose to omit from its Cooperative Program gifts selected SBC budget items through a carefully developed plan similar to the BGAV 'negative designation' procedure.

-- "That the SBC foster theological education that is characterized by" the four principles outlined in the report's statement on theological education.

-- "That the SBC president appoint to membership on the 1989 SBC Committee on Committees those persons proposed by the BGAV (Cochrane and Jones).

-- "That a new style of relating be developed on the partnership principle so that genuine healing may take place and advance be achieved in our cooperative mission enterprise. We affirm the principles of autonomy for each body. ... We request creative and redemptive dialogue with SBC leadership on the issues. We believe that negotiations between the partners are appropriate and urgent."

In other business, Virginia Baptists elected Jean Woodward, a past president of the state's Woman's Missionary Union, as BGAV president. She is a member of River Road Baptist Church in Richmond, where her husband, Robert, is retired pastor.

Other officers are Randall Robinson, pastor of Memorial Baptist Church in Arlington, first vice president, and Robert J. Lewis, pastor of Gordonsville Baptist Church in Gordonsville, second vice president.

Messengers also ratified a 1989 budget of \$16,139,040, an increase of 0.62 percent over the 1988 budget. Virginia Baptists will contribute 38 percent of their budget, or \$6,132,835, to worldwide Southern Baptist causes through the SBC Cooperative Program. That percentage is the same as the SBC's portion of the 1988 budget.

A resolution adopted by the messengers upheld the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, stating that no person or creed stands between an individual believer and God. The resolution was presented as a reaction to a resolution adopted at the SBC annual meeting last summer that was not as strong on the rights of individual believers and elevated the authority of the pastor.

A record 2,652 representatives of Virginia Baptist churches attended the meeting.

The 1989 BGAV annual meeting will be held Nov. 14-15 in Salem.

Record Georgia turnout
unseats incumbent again

MACON, Ga. (BP)--For the second straight year, Georgia Baptists turned out in record numbers and unseated an incumbent president by a razor-thin margin.

Registration for the annual meeting in the Macon Coliseum hit an all time high of 7,064 messengers, surpassing last year's record of 4,863 registrants. The 1988 registration is believed to be the highest registration ever for any state convention affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Dwight "Ike" Reighard, 37, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Fayetteville, unseated incumbent president Jim Pitts, pastor of First Baptist Church of Valdosta, receiving 3,250 votes to 3,190. The 60-vote difference mirrored last year's convention, when Pitts unseated then-incumbent Clark Hutchinson of Marietta by a 51 vote margin.

For the second year, Georgia Baptists ignored their long-standing tradition of granting a president a second one-year term by acclamation.

Both Reighard and Hutchinson are in the conservative faction in the convention while Pitts is regarded as the candidate of the moderate group.

Reighard, the youngest man ever elected president of the GBC, was nominated by Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta and former president of the SBC.

Following his election, Reighard told a news conference he wants to promote unity in the convention and bring together pastors from across the theological spectrum and to emphasize those things that unite Georgia Baptists rather than those things on which they are divided.

The election reflected the continued political division in the state convention, as did votes on some resolutions offered, which were decided by narrow margins.

Messengers elected four vice presidents, two from the conservative camp and two from the moderate faction. Nine persons were nominated and, under convention procedures, the top four vote getters are elected.

Elected were Ted Moody, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Warner Robins, first vice president; Gene Tyre, pastor of Newnan First Baptist Church, second vice president; Jim Ramsay, pastor of Albany First Baptist Church, third vice president; and Hershel Turner, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Riverdale, fourth vice president.

Moody and Turner are considered conservatives; Tyre and Ramsay, moderates.

Two other issues drew divided votes: a motion on an anonymous pre-convention publication, The Georgia Baptist Report, and a resolution on the priesthood of the believer.

The newsletter was circulated among some Georgia Baptists prior to the convention, urging the defeat of Pitts and election of conservatives. The issue surfaced at the end of the report of the convention's executive committee.

Tyre, chairman, commented on the newsletter and said, "enough is enough."

Ches Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church of Tifton, later presented a motion that "the convention go on record as deploring the Georgia Baptist Report and any other such publication that slanders and demeans the character of any other Christian, and that this kind of action on the part of any Georgia Baptist cease immediately, and that every means be used to rebuild trust among our Georgia Baptist people."

The motion eventually passed, but not until messengers voted by ballot on whether to amend the motion to include the names of other specific publications such as SBC Today, the Southern Baptist Advocate, the Southern Baptist Cause and Baptist Laity Journal. The motion failed, but convention officials did not announce the count.

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The issue of the priesthood of the believer, which caused controversy during the 1988 annual meeting of the SBC, arose during the report of the resolutions committee.

In bringing the report from the committee, chairman William Harrell, pastor of Abilene Baptist Church in Martinez, reminded messengers resolutions are not binding on churches, even though they often become divisive.

In order to avoid controversy, he said, the committee decided not to bring any resolutions concerning issues that could not be resolved on the state convention level or were divisive.

The resolution reaffirming the priesthood of the believer was offered as an amendment to the report by Blair Trehitt, a layman from Northside Drive Baptist Church in Atlanta. He said his intent was to clarify Resolution 5 (of the SBC) because "it has caused much discussion about pastoral authority and its relationship to the priesthood of the believer."

Trehitt added laypersons need to be reassured "our convention respects, honors and defends their (laypersons') right to congregational government."

The SBC resolution affirms belief in the traditional Baptist doctrine, but emphasizes pastoral authority.

Harrell and other speakers urged messengers not to amend the report by including Trehitt's resolution, saying the question might be divisive. A standing vote was so close a ballot vote was taken. The amendment passed by a small margin, although the exact count was not announced.

In other matters, messengers approved resolutions against pornography, abortion and attempts to bring a state lottery to Georgia. In addition to the resolution on the priesthood of believers, messengers also reaffirmed the principles of religious freedom and the significance of their religious heritage.

Questions concerning Mercer University did not arise in 1988. In 1987, controversy was stirred when a Marietta layman, Lee Roberts, accused Mercer President Kirby Godsey with theological heresy and with permitting "drunkenness, immorality and debauchery" on the school's Macon campus.

Messengers also adopted the largest Cooperative Program budget in Georgia history, approving on voice vote a budget of \$30.7 million, a five percent increase over 1987. The convention will continue to divide undesignated contributions 50-50 with SBC causes. Georgia is the only state convention to maintain the 50-50 division. Two other conventions -- Florida and Oklahoma -- had adopted 50-50 splits, but reduced SBC contributions after economic downturns.

Also approved was a new partnership effort between Georgia and Panama, which will begin Jan. 1, 1989.

Next year's convention will be Nov. 13-15 in the Albany Convention Center.

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Mississippians aide Clarke,
avoid fight over Carey

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press
11/18/88

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Mississippi Baptists gave their junior college a financial reprieve during their annual meeting Nov. 14-16 in Jackson. But a floor fight over another Mississippi Baptist school was averted the day before the convention began.

Messengers also approved resolutions condemning racism and denouncing statements made by a Mississippi member of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission who had called the late Martin Luther King Jr. a fraud.

A record 1,921 messengers voted 871-413 to give Clarke College at Newton a special allocation of \$200,000. Mississippi College, which operates Clarke as a division but with separate financing, had threatened to return Clarke to the convention should the extra money not be forthcoming.

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Mississippi College President Lewis Nobles, acting on a request from Mississippi College trustees, told messengers Mississippi College needed an additional line item of \$200,000 per year. The trustee motion added, "Without this kind of funding, it would not be feasible to continue the operation of Clarke College."

The convention gave Clarke to Mississippi College in 1980 when Clarke's trustees said they could no longer operate the school. A declining enrollment -- 111 full-time-equivalent students -- and declining revenue have hurt the school's financial base.

The convention's budget committee had suggested a special line item of \$55,095 for the second consecutive year. The convention approved an additional \$144,905.

The increase to Clarke College necessitated a change in the overall Mississippi Baptist Convention budget, convention board President Donald O'Quin said. The budget had to be adjusted upward further to keep funding to Southern Baptist convention causes outside the state at 37.5 percent of the budget, the convention-approved level and a 0.5 percent increase over the previous budget, he explained.

The total increase to the budget after the Clarke vote was \$231,848, setting the new budget at \$20,103,541.

Another budget matter involved allocation of Cooperative Program unified budget funds. Presently, the expanded church annuity plan, which helps match church staff participation in the Southern Baptist Annuity Board program, is separated from the budget before receipts are divided between in-state and SBC causes.

The annuity portion for 1989 will be \$750,000. Rather than increasing the total budget by 37.5 percent of the additional \$750,000 -- the SBC's share of the overall budget -- that amount is exempted from the budget division. Consequently, the SBC's share of the balance of the budget is to be \$7,257,578.

The floor fight that was averted would have been over allegations of financial and administrative mismanagement at William Carey College in Hattiesburg.

In his report to the convention, William Stewart, chairman of the Mississippi Baptist Christian Education Commission, noted the Carey trustees had been polled and voted unanimously to approve a recommendation "that the Education Commission make a study of the financial status, organizational structure, administrative practices and use of college endowment funds and report its findings and recommendation to the William Carey College board of trustees."

The previous morning, Carey trustees met with the Education Commission at the invitation of the commission to consider ways to reconcile the divided trustees. The commission offered to help, contingent upon the board's invitation.

The commission's initiative offered a channel for critics of the college and its administration to air their grievances through a neutral deliberative body and precluded such a debate on the floor of the convention, observers said.

In recent months, trustees voted not to renew the contract of Carey President J. Ralph Noonkester and later reversed that decision. Carey is operating under a \$1.2 million deficit.

The resolution on race condemned the "resurgence of extremist groups which promote un-Christian attitudes and beliefs regarding people of various races and ethnic groups" and called for promotion of laws that ensure "justice for all."

A debated but approved resolution concerned refutation of remarks made by Christian Life Commission member Curtis W. Caine Sr., a Jackson physician and member of the convention's host church, First Baptist.

During a recent commission meeting, Caine said the late Martin Luther King Jr. as a fraud, that the first U.S. communist cell was the Department of Agriculture and concerning poverty: "Sometimes Christians who are soft-hearted steal from those who have and give to those who have not. That is not Christian."

During debate, messenger Ray Lloyd, pastor of First Baptist Church of Starkville, said he does not wish "for Mississippi Baptists to be embarrassed, humiliated and identified with the statements" made by Caine. Caine's remarks were "greatly contrary to that which generally Mississippi Baptists believe," Lloyd said.

The resolution said, "Mississippi Baptists desire to make it known that we in no way endorse these positions espoused by the trustee from Mississippi on the Christian Life Commission."

A resolution on priesthood of the believer noted a Baptist stands for the freedom "to relate to God as his or her conscience dictates, without the interference of government or organized religion." Absent from the resolution was mention of the "authority of the pastor," which was a part of a similar resolution passed during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting this summer in San Antonio, Texas.

Other resolutions opposed gambling, alcohol consumption, pornography and child abuse.

In other business, the convention re-elected its president, Jim Futral, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Jackson, to a second one-year term. Also elected were Jon Doler, pastor of First Baptist Church of Leland, first vice president, and Ronny Robinson, bivocational pastor of Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Lincoln County, second vice president.

The 1989 convention will be Nov. 13-15 at First Baptist Church of Jackson.

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Moderate wins vote
in South Carolina

Baptist Press
11/18/88

SPARTANBURG, S.C. (BP)--South Carolina Baptists elected a moderate president, approved a record \$23.1 million budget and launched a three-year missions partnership with Baptists in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during their annual meeting Nov. 15-16 in Spartanburg.

Douglas Baker, pastor of Berea First Baptist Church in Greenville, won a run-off ballot 1,350 to 1,028 over conservative candidate Michael Hamlet, pastor of First Baptist Church of North Spartanburg.

A third presidential candidate, Mary Rome Foster, incumbent first vice president and minister of music at First Baptist Church of Camden, was eliminated on the first ballot.

Also elected were Troy Gregg, pastor of First Baptist Church of Chesnee, first vice president; and Robert Cuttino, pastor of The Baptist Church of Beaufort, second vice president.

The budget contains a basic section of \$21.1 million for operations and capital needs coupled with a "Bold Mission Challenge" of \$2 million.

In the basic budget, \$12.8 million, or 61 percent, goes to state causes and \$8.2 million, or 39 percent, is earmarked for Southern Baptist Convention ministries.

The challenge portion will be divided equally between state and SBC causes.

A near-record 3,116 messengers also adopted resolutions opposing abortion, legalized gambling and use of alcoholic beverages, and affirming the principle of the priesthood of the believer.

The resolution on the priesthood of the believer did not make reference to a resolution adopted during the 1988 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, which drew controversy over its assertions of pastoral authority.

The resolution did note the Baptist belief guarantees "equal access to God's grace for all, equal standing before God and equal responsibility to God." It added the principle "should not be interpreted to mean that there is an absence of certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish and with which they have been and are now closely identified."

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In an unprecedented move, the messengers amended the report of the nominating committee concerning eight vacancies on the general board, which acts for the convention between annual sessions.

The convention's nominating committee had nominated replacements for eight members -- including the General Board president -- who were filling unexpired terms. Traditionally, people filling unexpired terms are have been nominated to full terms.

Messengers returned the eight people -- two pastors and six laymen -- to the General Board.

Immediately following the convention, the general board held an organizational meeting and unanimously re-elected its president, Robert L. Deneen, a retired pastor living in Columbia, to a second term.

Messengers also voted to budget funds in 1990 for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, which represents Southern Baptists in matters related to separation of church and state. The move to directly fund the embattled organization passed on a narrow vote and did not specifically set an amount to be budgeted.

The move originated in the South Carolina Christian Life and Public Affairs Committee. It was presented by Nancy Shows, a messenger from Summerville, who referred to the BJCPA as "one of the best Christian voices we have in the nation's capitol."

Next year's annual session is scheduled Nov. 14-15 in Columbia.

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North Carolina Baptists
'stay the course'

Baptist Press
11/18/88

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. (BP)--North Carolina Baptists passed a bylaw change that limits the appointive powers of the president and re-elected all convention officers during their 158th annual session Nov. 14-16 in Fayetteville.

They also adopted a 1989 budget of \$29 million and passed resolutions that rejected abortion on demand, reaffirmed the doctrine of the priesthood of believers and the right of all people to respond to God's call to service.

They did not have to vote on a motion that would prevent people from serving on boards of the convention's agencies and institutions if they are members of churches that accept members who have not been immersed. The motion was ruled out of order.

The annual meeting attracted 4,702 registered messengers, which convention officials believe to be the second-largest annual session in the convention's history. The 1987 meeting in Greensboro drew 5,645 messengers, at the time the largest state convention meeting in Southern Baptist history.

Convention President E. Leon Smith proposed the motion limiting the appointive powers of the president. Historically, the president has appointed people to serve on the convention's committee on committees and committee on enrollment.

His motion dictates that the president and two vice presidents comprise a committee to nominate members of the committee on committees and the committee on enrollment and that those nominations go before the convention's general board, which could ratify or substitute the nominations before presenting them to the convention for election.

The motion passed 2,054 to 2,050 on a ballot vote.

The re-elected officers are Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church of Goldsboro, president; Gene Watterson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Shelby, first vice president; and Helen Cashwell, a layperson from Raleigh, second vice president.

Smith was challenged by Joe Brown, pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. Smith received 2,535 votes to Brown's 1,626.--more--

Smith and the two incumbent vice presidents were supported by the moderate group Friends of Missions which had supported them in their initial contests last year. Brown was supported by a group organized this year, known as Conservative Carolina Baptists, which publishes a monthly newsletter by the same name.

Watterson was challenged by Alfred Wright, pastor of Adamsville Baptist Church near Goldsboro and won a second term on a standing vote that convention observers described as three-to-one or better. Cashwell was unopposed in her bid for re-election.

The proposal to limit membership on the boards of the agencies and institutions to people who are members of churches that accept members by immersion only was announced prior to the convention in the state Baptist newspaper by M.O. Owens Jr., a retired pastor from Gastonia, trustees of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and leader of Conservative Carolina Baptists.

After consulting with five Baptist attorneys in the state, including William Poe of Charlotte, the convention's immediate past president and a member of the Southern Baptist Peace Committee, Smith ruled the proposal out of order because it was a bylaw change that would alter the constitution's definition of a cooperating church.

Owens tried unsuccessfully in the early 1970s to have a similar proposal determine the qualification for messengers to the annual meeting. Constitutional changes require a two-thirds majority, while the bylaw changes require only a simple majority.

Messengers approved the record budget of \$29 million for 1989. Of that, 35.5 percent will go to support the worldwide causes of the Southern Baptist Convention after a priority item of \$1 million is exempted to cover the increased costs of the expanded annuity program for pastors and church staff members. After the \$1 million is exempted, the 35.5 percent share for the SBC will be \$9,940,000. The 1988 budget also gave 35.5 percent to SBC causes.

The total budget includes a challenge goal of \$1 million that also will be divided 64.5/35.5 percent between the state convention and the SBC, if it is met.

Only three resolutions were passed, including one opposing abortion on demand. From the floor, the resolution was amended to justify abortions in the case of rape or incest.

A resolution on local churches and Christian ministry affirmed the priesthood of the believer in response to a resolution passed at the SBC meeting in San Antonio that described the limits of the doctrine and emphasized the authority of the pastor.

The North Carolina resolution called upon messengers to "affirm the equal worth and dignity of all persons in Christ (Gal. 3:28) ... and ... that we re-affirm the autonomy of the local church with regard to its right to ordain or call to service any person it deems called and gifted for ministry."

Another resolution, submitted by John Hewett, pastor of Asheville's First Baptist Church and preacher of the 1988 convention sermon, called for harmony within the state Baptist convention in contrast to the Southern Baptist Convention, which is "embroiled in doctrinal and political controversy" that "has resulted in painful divisions within SBC life and tragic declines in its evangelistic and missionary efforts."

The 1989 convention will be in Greensboro, Nov. 13-15.

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Kansas-Nebraska Baptists
conduct 'stormy' meeting

Baptist Press
11/18/88

SALINA, Kan. (BP)--Southern Baptists from Kansas and Nebraska conducted their stormiest annual meeting on record Nov. 14-16 in Salina, Kan.

Tornadoes ravaged the area during the meeting's afternoon session Nov. 15. Power went out at First Southern Baptist Church about 30 minutes into the session; sirens blared. Three hundred-plus conventioners evacuated to the basement.

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They re-emerged about 30 minutes later and finished the session by flashlight, hearing messages from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Wayne Ward and Wichita pastor Gordon Dorian.

That night, the meeting convened across town at Covenant Baptist Church, but lights were restored at First Southern Baptist for the final session the next morning.

The tornadoes did not result in any deaths, and no convention participants were injured.

Messengers to the meeting approved a \$3.2 million 1989 budget, of which \$1.7 million is expected to come from Kansas and Nebraska Southern Baptist churches. They will contribute 31 percent of their receipts to worldwide Southern Baptist causes, a 1 percent gain over the current budget.

The two-state convention's officers all were re-elected: President Harold Finch, a businessman from Overland Park, Kan.; Vice President David Sellers, pastor of Northern Heights Baptist Church in Norfolk, Neb.; Recording Secretary Mary Jo Robertson of Kansas City, Kan.; and Assistant Recording Secretary Marie Clark of Shawnee Mission, Kan.

Messengers approved six resolutions: expressing appreciation to convention staff and officers, stating concern for people affected by the tornadoes, pledging prayer support for elected state and national officials, noting the challenge of the Bold Mission Thrust global ministry/evangelism campaign, promising recommitment to the priority of evangelism and vowing to take a positive, biblical approach in dealing with moral issues that impact the family.

The 1989 Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists' annual meeting will be Nov. 13-15 in Omaha, Neb.

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Utah-Idaho executive
announces retirement

Baptist Press
11/18/88

SALT LAKE CITY (BP)--Darwin Welch, executive director of the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist convention for nearly two decades, announced his retirement during the annual meeting Nov. 15-16 in Southeast Baptist Church in Salt Lake City.

Immediately preceding the final convention sermon, Welch told messengers the 1988 annual meeting would be his last as executive director. His voice broke during his announcement, and he added: "I don't know why I'm crying; you should be the ones crying because I stayed so long."

After he made the announcement, messengers and visitors gave the 65-year old denominational leader a standing ovation.

Welch, a native of Iowa who grew up near Denton, Texas, came to Salt Lake City as pastor of First Southern Baptist Church March 1, 1965. He was a member of the committee which organized the Utah-Idaho convention in 1964, and became associate executive director and missions and stewardship director in 1965.

In 1969, following the resignation of Charles Ashcraft, Welch became executive director.

He is a graduate of Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, and attended North Texas State University in Denton, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He was pastor of churches in Texas and Colorado before moving to Utah.

At a meeting of the executive board following the convention, Welch asked that a successor be on the field by Sept. 1, 1989.

In other business at the convention, messengers elected George Slaughter, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Mountain Home, Idaho, as president. Slaughter, who had been elected first vice president last year, became president in May when John Embery moved to New Mexico.

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Also elected was Mike Gray, pastor of Southeast Baptist Church, Salt Lake City, first vice president; Herb Stoneman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Vernal, Utah, second vice president; and Dan Walker, pastor of Morning Wind Baptist Church, Boise, Idaho, secretary.

Messengers approved a 1989 budget of \$1,504,090, of which \$386,078 is expected to come from the 94 congregations of the convention. Of the contributions, the convention will send \$81,076, or 21 percent, to support worldwide ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention, the same percentage as last year.

Participants were told the 1989 budget is a challenge because contributions at the end of September 1988 were running \$36,000 below budget. Leaders unveiled a stewardship campaign -- A Round TUIT -- to help narrow the deficit.

The name -- which stands for Touching Utah-Idaho Together -- comes from a statement that people often talk about the budget problem but don't often get around to doing anything about it. Members were asked to give \$1 per week above their tithes and offerings for Utah-Idaho missions.

The 1989 annual meeting will be Nov. 14-15 at Calvary Baptist Church in Idaho Falls, Idaho.