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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC 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 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

June 12, 1989

89-92

Southern Baptists in Las Vegas
see 350+ professions of faith

By Joe Westbury

N- CO

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--As temperatures hovered in the mid-90s, about 1,800 Southern Baptists knocked on doors throughout Las Vegas, Nev., registering more than 350 professions of faith in Christ during the denomination's largest one-day witnessing effort.

Preliminary reports revealed team members also recorded a like number of other spiritual decisions, reported Howard Ramsey, director of personal evangelism for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The event followed on the heels of a week of statewide revivals that saw the premiere of materials that will be used in next year's "Here's Hope" national simultaneous revivals sponsored by the board.

Results from the Nevada revivals are slow in being reported and will be released as soon as they are compiled, said Richard Harris, HMB director of mass evangelism.

Names of new converts, as well as people looking for a local church, will be given to local Southern Baptist congregations. Many of the individuals are expected to become the nucleus of some of the 25 new churches to be started this year by the Nevada Baptist Convention, Harris said.

The new church starts, being coordinated by the state convention and the mission board, dovetail with the denomination's goal of having 50,000 churches and church-type missions by the year 2000 -- an increase from 37,600 in 1989.

During this year's convention sessions, HMB and Nevada Baptist officials are expected to announce the launch of 15 of those new congregations.

Individuals from 38 states and the District of Columbia participated in the door-to-door evangelistic thrust, Ramsey said.

Texas fielded the most participants, with 178. Hawaii, the most distant state, registered 32 individuals with the board, which coordinated the efforts.

In ethnic participation, a group from several states representing the Hispanic Baptist Pastors' Conference made visits in the largely Hispanic section of Las Vegas.

Stan Clark, Mission Service Corps volunteer from Toledo, Ohio, said nearly 100,000 of the city's 160,000 households were contacted during the visitation effort. Clark and his wife, Beverly, have spearheaded the event locally since January.

The saturation visitation was limited to Las Vegas-area neighborhoods and avoided tourist areas on the "Strip" known for its elaborate casinos. Though local ordinances restrict any solicitation inside the establishments, Ramsey said the evangelistic effort purposefully avoided the sidewalks to concentrate on the neighborhoods.

Revivals in 90 of Nevada's 120 Southern Baptist churches and missions, preceded the visitation effort, Harris said. The partially sponsored 32 full-time evangelists to help conduct the revivals, while pastors and lay people from around the country filled the remaining pulpits.

Follow destiny, faith,
Allen exhorts women

By Brenda J. Sanders

N- CO

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptist women should be people of destiny and faith, more than 100 participants in the Southern Baptist Women in Ministry annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., were told.

"If you can help bring the joys of Jesus Christ to all the people of the world, starting right here in this city, among this people and this convention, you will have performed a great service," said Catherine Allen, associate executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. "And then going forth from this meeting, if your strength can help untie the ropes of a limited gospel that will bind women to the pews, then you will have performed your mission."

History shows that the cause and methods of missions have been advanced through the determined efforts of women, said Allen: "Women do shape Baptist history. Our handprints are indelibly impressed on the best and most beautiful features of Southern Baptist life today."

She also noted: "Southern Baptists cannot afford to keep exporting our leadership of women into other denominations and into secularism. And to contemporary women such as yourselves whom might be contemplating such a shift, I will say you cannot afford to be exported, because God called you in this denomination, and I seriously doubt that it would be in God's plan and wisdom for you to leave such a desperately needy field."

Officers, elected prior to the meeting by the group's steering committee, will serve through the coming year. They are Betty Winstead McGary, minister to adults, South Main Baptist Church, Houston, president; Nancy Furgerson Cole, minister of music, Hanley Road Baptist Church, St. Louis, vice president; Donna Charlton-Starkes, associate pastor, Tropicana Christian Fellowship, Las Vegas, treasurer; Carol Causey, training designer, WMU, Birmingham, Ala., recorder; Carolyn Cole Bucy, minister of youth, Lake Shore Baptist Church, Waco, Texas, program chairman; and Sheila Black, director of church and community ministries, Mecklenburg Baptist Association, Charlotte, N.C., membership chairman.

The women adopted a motion instructing their steering committee to appoint a "project committee" which would explore ways to promote the inclusion of women in seminary curriculum.

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WMU approves budget,
sets offering goals

By Susan Todd

N- CO
(WMU)

Baptist Press
6/12/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--The executive board of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union in its June 10 meeting approved a record budget and set upcoming home and foreign mission offering goals during its June 10 meeting.

But one action that was absent was the election of a national WMU executive director to succeed Carolyn Weatherford, who will retire Sept. 1 and marry Cincinnati pastor Joe Crumpler.

Even though the search committee had hoped to make an announcement by this meeting, National WMU President Marjorie McCullough said the committee did not want to be rushed as it makes the decision. The committee has no projected announcement date, she said.

The board adopted a record budget of \$11,450,568 for 1989-90. The new budget represents a 3.7 percent increase from the current budget of \$11.1 million.

Board members also voted to increase the goal of the 1989 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions from \$76.5 million to \$81 million. The decision to increase the goal stemmed from the recent announcement that \$78.7 million had been received for the 1988 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Although the 1988 offering receipts fell short of the \$84 million goal, the figure does represent a 12.7 percent increase more than the offering taken in 1987.

The board also set offering goals for 1990. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal is \$86 million, and the goal for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions is \$41 million.

A new publication was introduced during the meeting. "Magazette" will be published by WMU for the Southern Baptist minister's wives organization.

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HMB directors lament 'inequitable'
CP budget, ask change next year

By Mark Wingfield

N - HMB

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptist Home Mission Board directors have called the convention's proposed 1989-90 unified budget "inequitable" but declined to recommend changes that might be divisive.

A report on the Cooperative Program budget was approved by the board's executive committee during its June meeting. It was presented by Brad Allen of Duncan, Okla., chairman of an ad hoc committee appointed to draft a response to the 1989-90 budget proposed by the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

The denominational budget must be approved by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., June 13-15. The proposed 1989-90 budget, which jointly funds two mission boards, six seminaries and 11 other national agencies, would channel nearly \$1 million less to the Atlanta-based HMB next year than this year.

"The proposed SBC Cooperative Program budget is inequitable to the Home Mission Board," the report said. "However, the subcommittee feels that the approach of bringing a substitute motion at the convention in Las Vegas to correct this inequity would be counterproductive to the Home Mission Board and its work."

Allen said directors will abide by the SBC Executive Committee's decision but will draft a letter "pleading with them to correct this inequity" in the next budget year.

The Executive Committee, during its February meeting, proposed a new approach to the Cooperative Program basic operating budget, moving from a goal-oriented budget to one based on performance.

The 1989-90 budget calls for a goal of \$134,787,543 -- the amount of actual receipts in the last year of record, 1987-88. It represents a 2.05 percent decrease from the 1988-89 basic operating budget of \$137,610,000.

In other action, board members elected Danny Moore of Atlanta as director of the business services, division replacing Charles Stewart, who was elected director of mission property. Stewart replaces Charles Elder, who will take early retirement. Moore is a native of Dothan, Ala., and worked 21 years as a manager for IBM.

President Larry Lewis reported on progress toward reducing the current HMB budget by \$3.2 million. The reductions are due primarily to a shortfall of income from last year's Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions, the anticipated decrease in next year's Cooperative Program funding and absence of excess reserve funds that have supplemented its budget in recent years.

Lewis said \$5.9 million has been cut from the Atlanta budget. Another \$700,000 was cut by negotiating with state conventions to delete positions that have been vacant for several years, he said.

Because the budget must still be reduced by \$1.6 million, Lewis said, "we'll be taking a hard look at our work here in Atlanta and in the states."

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Pressler-Hastey debate
problems of Baptist Press

By Mark Wingfield

N - CO

Baptist Press
6/12/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--In a debate before the Religion Newswriters Association June 10, two Southern Baptists agreed problems exist with Baptist Press but disagreed over the direction the denominational news service is headed.

Paul Pressler, a Houston appeals court judge and member of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee that oversees Baptist Press, debated with Stan Hastey, executive director of the Southern Baptist Alliance and former chief of the news service's Washington bureau.

Pressler cited a litany of examples of what he classified as Baptist Press wrongdoings but concluded that the news service is improving. Hastey listed examples of ways he felt Baptist Press showed restraint in 10 years of denominational conflict while contending the news service is headed toward becoming a "public relations machine."

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The format of the debate allowed each man to speak for 20 minutes, followed by a question-and-answer time. The most intense exchange occurred during questioning, when Pressler reiterated his opinion that Baptist Press articles in the past have been tainted by the personal convictions of writers.

Pressler distributed 87 pages of documentation of what he called factual errors and biases that have colored past Baptist Press stories and other articles by news service writers.

Among those examples was an editorial column titled "SBC Fundamentalists on the March" which Hastey wrote for The Christian Century in 1986 while still a denominational employee. Although the article was not distributed by Baptist Press, Pressler said it illustrated the underlying presuppositions Hastey had brought to his denominational job.

Hastey said Pressler failed to distinguish between news writing and editorial writing in making that accusation.

"That's not the point I was making," Pressler replied. "The point was that the presuppositions and the frame of reference and the attitude of the person writing will frequently color his writing."

Hastey said: "Would you grant me the right to be prejudiced now that I'm off the denominational payroll?"

"Yes," Pressler said. "But I think the fact that you are now head of the Southern Baptist Alliance shows the frame of reference from which you were operating when you were writing for Baptist Press."

"I was entitled as a BP writer -- as a Baptist -- to have an opinion too," Hastey said. "Denominational employees do not forfeit the priesthood of the believer. They do not forfeit their individuality simply because they're on the payroll."

Pressler responded: "I agree with you. But some people wonder why sometimes the Baptist Press reflects more in favor of one side than the other. I think the predilections of those writing is frequently the explanation."

Pressler said that as a judge he excuses himself from hearing cases where he might be biased by a personal interest.

Likewise, the press ought to be free of bias, he added, stating that the purpose of the press is to "deliver facts in an unbiased way so people can make up their minds about what the truth is."

Both Hastey and Pressler agreed the BP system faces potential bias because denominational employees write about the actions of their own agencies.

As an example, Pressler cited a late-1970s controversy over Southern Baptist Sunday School Board employee Don Burnett. In that situation, the Nashville bureau of Baptist Press at the Sunday School Board failed to tell all the facts about a lawsuit involving Burnett, he said.

Hastey countered that Baptist Press generally maintained credibility using agency-paid writers until those agencies began to be controlled by more conservative trustees and presidents. He said Baptist Press determined from its beginning to "tell the Southern Baptist story and tell it straight, good news and bad."

"Until a few years ago, Baptist Press always could rely on the Executive Committee itself for the necessary protection any news organization must enjoy to preserve journalistic integrity," Hastey said. "Over the course of the last decade, this protective insulation has been subjected to higher and higher temperatures, both by denominational executives and the Executive Committee itself."

"The scorching Baptist Press writers and editors have been taking, particularly over the past half-dozen years, some day will yield inevitably what its severest critics want: a public relations machine rather than a legitimate news service."

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Hastey said the Executive Committee's own meetings have become the most difficult to cover. Only the body's plenary sessions are "on the record." He said the most substantive debate occurs in subcommittee meetings that are covered on "background only" rules, meaning reporters cannot attribute quotes.

"It is in these meetings that Judge Pressler has worked the system to his full advantage, leveling a variety of largely unfounded charges against his favorite targets, including Baptist Press, all under the cover of a rule that prevents reporters from quoting or even identifying him."

Hastey said state Baptist editors and the RNA should have challenged this procedure long ago.

"Judge Pressler's game is quite simply intimidation," he said, adding that Pressler has issued "constant threats" to Baptist Press reporters and editors, including firing. "Despite this constant harassment, Baptist Press personnel have maintained remarkable professionalism in continuing to tell the story of the SBC conflict."

"Baptist Press has gone out of its way not to exacerbate the growing rift between the two sides in the conflict," he said, citing four examples, including:

-- That Baptist Press has never reported on "ties to extremist political organizations" by Pressler and Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas.

-- That Baptist Press has "repeatedly given ground" in debate over what labels to use for the two sides in the conflict and finally "gave in to Judge Pressler."

"Outright control of Baptist Press has been and remains one of Judge Pressler's highest priorities," Hastey said. "He knows, as do all those who work for Baptist Press, that such control very well might be the most valuable spoils in the war over the Southern Baptist Convention."

Hastey spoke from a six-page manuscript. Pressler came to the podium with a three-inch thick file folder of information. Throughout Pressler's presentation, his assistants handed out documentation of his charges against Baptist Press.

Pressler cited at least 14 incidents, including:

-- Written statements by former Baptist Press director Wilmer C. Fields calling Pressler and others "a dissident group of fundamentalists."

-- Recent coverage of giving to the Cooperative Program, the denomination's unified budget. Pressler read several headlines and noted, "All of these are bad headlines."

He asserted that the Cooperative Program has done better in recent months than Baptist Press reports would lead readers to believe. "When you have a big increase, it's played down," he said.

Pressler charged that Cooperative Program reports were downplayed to undermine the leadership of current SBC President Jerry Vines of Jacksonville, Fla.

-- That Baptist Press reported extensive details about the personal finances of layman Lee Roberts, who has been a critic of Georgia's Mercer University, but waited three months to report on financial troubles at Mercer.

Pressler called on Baptist Press to admit errors, apologize when mistakes are discovered and to represent all Southern Baptists "positively and fairly."

When asked if he wanted to purge current leadership in Baptist Press, Pressler replied: "I don't want to see (Baptist Press director) Al Shackleford fired. I want Al Shackleford to be fair and to listen to the other side."

NOTE TO EDITORS: Photos relating to this story and others about the situation in China and Hong Kong will be mailed as they are received by Baptist Press' foreign bureau in Richmond. Call bureau chief Bob Stanley or news editor Erich Bridges at (804) 353-0151 for information.

'Emotionally drained' students
leave Beijing; hope to return

By Michael Chute

N - EMB

HONG KONG (BP)--Not wanting to leave Beijing but not wanting to be stranded either, two Southern Baptist students boarded a plane at the crowded Beijing International Airport June 8 and arrived safely in Hong Kong.

Frustration and grief over events inside China lined the faces of the two students -- Jay Templeton and Jana Clayton -- as they met family and friends in Hong Kong.

Both expressed mixed emotions about leaving Beijing and said they want to return to China as soon as the situation there stabilizes.

"I never felt like we should leave in the first place," said Templeton, of Kingsland, Texas, who hopes to return to China this fall. Clayton added that the decision to evacuate all Americans from China was "bizarre" and called reports of danger to foreigners "a little exaggerated."

But both admitted mainland news reports of the violence were understated by the Chinese media.

"Inside China we didn't get all the facts. We only got Chinese news," said Clayton, who is from Longmont, Colo. "China needs to know the truth. The world knows but the Chinese people themselves don't."

Templeton has another year on his two-year contract to study Chinese at the Second Foreign Language Institute in Beijing under sponsorship of Cooperative Services International, a Southern Baptist organization. Clayton, also sponsored by CSI, had almost finished her two-year stint at the institute.

The decision to leave Beijing was "painful but we felt that most of those we were a help to" had already left the language institute, said Clayton. The two Americans also worried that they "might be in the way" of their Chinese friends and acquaintances. "By protecting us they might be endangering their own lives," Clayton explained.

"Staying there to help the people would be useless," concluded Templeton.

Templeton and Clayton gave eyewitness accounts of events in China. Although many Chinese students were not involved in the pro-democracy demonstrations, the two said, most students made trips to Tiananmen Square in the days prior to the bloody army attack on student demonstrators there.

"But we didn't go down there again after the Statue of Liberty ('Goddess of Democracy' built by Chinese students) was erected or the violence started," explained Templeton.

As pro-democracy Chinese demonstrations successfully halted the progress of one convoy of trucks on the boulevard in front of the language institute, fellow Chinese students and teachers asked Templeton to talk to the soldiers.

"They literally pushed me to the back of one of the trucks and there I was looking at a truckload of soldiers pointing guns at me," he recalled. Not sure what to say, Templeton said he merely stated, "The soldiers love the Chinese students," which evoked laughter from the crowd.

"I told them that working though peaceful ends was a much better solution. When I finished someone said, 'See, even the foreigner understands.' One soldier close to me smiled. He was the only one that I saw show any emotion."

Clayton added that she "knew we shouldn't get involved but we wanted to see what was going on. We decided to leave that area because it was getting very tense."

They told of vivid scenes on Beijing streets as soldiers beat students and students threw rocks at convoys of army trucks and marching soldiers.

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Clayton witnessed a verbal confrontation between a large group of student demonstrators and a smaller group of soldiers. Beside the street, a peasant woman was "digging on her rows of onions in the midst of all this. There were students and soldiers all around her but she was totally ignoring it. She acted like there wasn't another person anywhere around."

Paranoia gripped the Chinese students after martial law was declared May 20, the two Americans said. Until that time, Tiananmen Square was "a big party," said Templeton. "It was a very festive mood there."

After the declaration of martial law, "They were not wanting to talk to foreigners then," Clayton said. "A lot of people, especially older people, remember the Cultural Revolution, so I don't blame them."

Both said the Chinese student demonstrators' idea of democracy and what Americans think of democracy are different.

"People weren't wanting to overthrow the government," Templeton explained. "When they talked about democracy, they were talking about reform within the Communist Party. They wanted to be loyal to the government, loyal to the party, and therefore loyal to China."

"But now after the violence. ... It's a really crazy time now. Nobody understands what the government is doing and why."

Language institute officials took the two Southern Baptist students to the Holiday Inn Lido hotel on the outskirts of Beijing to await a flight out. Lodging was arranged by a Christian businessman residing in the hotel complex.

Clayton said a "lot of good 'guanxi' (relationships) and miracles, and a lot of prayer going up helped us get out." The two had confirmed flight reservations on June 10 but were able to get on an earlier Dragon Air flight.

Now safe in Hong Kong, they are just begining to deal with the pent-up emotions of the past few weeks. The overriding emotion is helplessness.

"All our friendships, particularly with the Chinese, ended in an abrupt way," Clayton said. "There just wasn't any more time. I'm not there now to do anything else."

"Many of these people I'll never see again. There wasn't even time to exchange addresses and phone numbers. But they're all in God's hands. By faith they're going to be taken care of."

Both young people said they are not emotionally ready to return to the United States. They will stay in Hong Kong to see what options might be available.

"I called my parents and told them I'm not ready to come home right now," Clayton said. "I want to see if there is still something I can do for China or the Chinese."

Templeton, whose parents are Southern Baptist missionaries in Hong Kong, is concerned for those he left behind. "We have no idea what is going to happen to the Chinese friends we left in Beijing," he lamented. "China has no certainty right now."

"Even during the student strikes, we said we'll be here (in Beijing). Now we're gone and our friends are scattered. Once the violence started, their world was shattered. For many their future is gone."

"All they're talking about now is a way to get out of the country. A lot of people are suffering, in despair, and looking for hope. I feel we needed to be there longer to tell people where our hope is coming from."