



- - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

June 14, 1989

89-94

Southern Baptists re-elect
Jerry Vines to presidency

By Orville Scott

N-CO

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., was re-elected to a second one-year term as president of the 14.8-million-member Southern Baptist convention June 13.

Vines defeated Daniel Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist church in suburban Atlanta, by a vote of 10,754 to 8,248.

The margin of victory in this year's presidential election was greater than last year in San Antonio, Texas, when Vines won by 692 votes over Richard Jackson, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist church Phoenix, Ariz.

Alabama evangelist Junior Hill and Nevada Baptist Convention executive Ernest Myers captured the other two top SBC offices.

Hill, from Hartselle, garnered 6,989 votes, or 54.2 percent of the votes cast, to defeat three other nominees for first vice president.

Other nominees were Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, Birmingham, Ala., 4,207 votes, or 32.62 percent; Bill Poe, an attorney from Charlotte, N.C., 1,005 votes or 7.79 percent; and Brian Harbour, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., 683 votes, or 5.3 percent.

Myers of Reno, defeated Lewis Adkison, pastor of Circle Drive Baptist Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., in a runoff, 3,540 to 2,748. Gene Bowman, a director of associational missions from Griffin, Ga., lost on the first ballot.

Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., said in nominating Vines, "Jerry Vines has been a model to us as preacher, pastor and certainly as president."

Elliff, newly elected president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, said Vines has called Southern Baptists to be soul winners and said he had seen Vines lead people to faith in Christ in the homes in Las Vegas. Missions giving at First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., has increased 250 percent since Vines has been pastor there, he said.

"He (Vines) has also called us to reaffirm our position on the authority and integrity of the Bible," Elliff said.

David Sapp, pastor of First Baptist Church of Chamblee, Ga., nominated Vestal, saying, "He has called us to come out from our trenches and be brothers and sisters again. ... He seeks to share presidential appointments with all Southern Baptists committed to the healing process.

Sapp said First Baptist Church of Midland, Texas, where Vestal was pastor for many years before moving to Georgia last year, has led Southern Baptist churches in SBC Cooperative Program budget giving many times.

"We are all tired of the divisiveness, and our mission boards have had to cut their budgets while a lost world awaits," Sapp said.

Messenger's also approved several hundred nominees to the convention's boards of trustees for its institutions and agencies.

(Also contributing to this story were Terry Barone and Mary Knox.)

SBC settled Bible issue,
Vines tells newspeople

By Mark Wingfield & Kathy Palen

N-10

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptists have settled "the issue of the Bible," but that does not mean the denomination's 11-year-old controversy is over, Jerry Vines said in a news conference June 12, shortly after his re-election as president of the 14.8-million-member convention.

However, Vines reiterated a pledge made during the annual President's Address to "restore the joy" to the denomination through an emphasis on personal evangelism.

Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., defeated Daniel Vestal of Dunwoody, Ga., in balloting earlier that day by a margin of 12 percent.

"I believe the issue of the Bible is settled in Southern Baptist life," he said. "What I mean by that statement is that Southern Baptists, every time they have had an opportunity to do so, have overwhelmingly affirmed we believe the Bible is without error.

"Those who say that there are errors in the Bible are in pronounced minority in Southern Baptist life. That has been settled."

This agreement, however, does not mean that the controversy is over or that all the denomination's problems are solved, he said: "I do think it means that the administrators of our institutions, that the trustees of our institutions clearly understand the direction which Southern Baptists want to go. I believe the process of theological renewal is under way. I am confident that in a loving and Christlike manner, theological problems in God's good time will be resolved."

When asked to estimate how many professors in Southern Baptist seminaries do not believe in the virgin birth of Christ, Vines declined to answer.

"Are there any?" the reporter asked.

"We'll let the trustees and the administrations decide that for us," Vines responded.

"You don't want to answer that?"

"No, ma'am," Vines said.

When he was referred to as part of a "fundamentalist faction," Vines said: "I have always asked that I not be referred to as a fundamentalist. If you mean by fundamentalist that I'm one of those who believes in the fundamentals of the faith, yes. But if you mean that I would fall in the category of a legalist, an unloving person, an Ayatollah Khomeini or a Jim Jones, then the answer is no. I would like to be known as a Bible-believing Christian."

Vines said he intends to be the same person in his second term as he was in his first. However, he said he will extend his emphasis on personal evangelism to promote "building great soul-winning churches."

One reporter asked Vines about a statement reportedly made by conservative leader Paige Patterson of Dallas that a "memorial" from the Baptist General Association of Virginia that has been referred to the Southern Baptist Executive Committee would "never see the light of day" at next year's convention meeting.

"I have been very close to the Virginia memorial since the beginning," Vines recalled, expressing appreciation to Virginia Baptist leaders for that involvement. He said he recommended that the Executive Committee organize a committee to receive the memorial and the concerns of Virginia Baptists.

"I am most desirous that this be done because I personally take the position that we should be responsive to any concerns expressed from anywhere in our Southern Baptist constituency," he said.

Vines addressed a variety of other topics during the news conference:

--more--

-- Appointments. "My criteria for last year will be my criteria for this year. I will appoint the best Baptists I can find. I will not knowingly appoint anyone who believes there are errors in the Bible."

-- Ordination of women. "I believe the ordination of women is a local-church matter. I would not ordain a woman as a pastor or as a deaconess. This is my interpretation. What other churches choose to do is certainly their prerogative. The difficulty comes when those who may have a different view on that issue are perhaps required or forced to fund something that is against them."

-- Cooperative Program unified budget and mission offering giving. "I'm an optimist. I believe we're going to be moving back up."

-- The denominational press. Gene Puckett, editor of the Biblical Recorder of North Carolina, asked Vines if he would support a free press among Baptists, alluding to alleged attempts by some conservative leaders to control Baptist Press, the denominational news service. Vines replied, "Yes."

-- The possibility of repeating this year's door-to-door witnessing effort when the convention meets in New Orleans next year. "I am very positive toward doing a similar witnessing effort in New Orleans. I think it would be marvelous if we did this everywhere we go."

-- The possibility of deferring any motion on creating a new Religious Liberty Commission next year in the interest of avoiding controversy, as was done this year. "In terms of what I might or might not do concerning that recommendation, it's a little early." Vines urged the Executive Committee to recommend deferring the Religious Liberty Commission vote until the 1990 annual meeting.

Vines declined to comment on a pending motion to remove funds from the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

--30--

Vestal admits disappointment,
declines commitment for 1990

By Kathy Palen

N-CO

Baptist Press
6/14/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Hours after his defeat, Southern Baptist Convention presidential candidate Daniel Vestal admitted he is disappointed but told reporters he cannot yet commit to be a candidate for the SBC presidency next year.

During a news conference, Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta, said he would need to talk with his congregation and family before making his decision. He lost this year's election to incumbent Jerry Vines, pastor of Jacksonville, Fla.

But Vestal added: "I believe deeply about those principles and truths that I have tried to speak about and stand for. I believe those principles will prevail, and I believe they will prevail in New Orleans," the site of next year's convention.

The question within the denomination is not about belief in the Bible, but about freedom, he said.

For the past 10 years, he said, a "forced conformity" has been placed upon the SBC that has disfranchised and excluded a great number of Southern Baptists. Such an approach polarizes and divides, he insisted.

Although admitting grief and disappointment over his defeat, Vestal said he thinks he did well against an incumbent by receiving 43.7 percent of the vote.

Despite his defeat, Vestal said his church will continue supporting its local association, the Georgia Baptist Convention and the SBC. He added he hopes the congregation will be able to increase the 12 percent it now gives to the Cooperative Program.

But in regard to other congregations and state conventions, Vestal said he doesn't think the SBC can continue "disfranchising people year after year for 10 years and expect them to continue giving."

--more--

In responding to questions about women in ministry, Vestal argued against charging that people do not believe in the Bible simply because they interpret Scripture differently.

Vestal appealed to Southern Baptists to reject "militant partisanship" and instead work toward a "legitimate unity" by including people from various perspectives within the denomination.

He said he applauds June 13's election of Richard Jackson of Phoenix, Ariz., who opposed Vines in last year's SBC presidential election, to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as a trustee.

"I see it as an introduction to a greater inclusiveness," he said, adding he would encourage Vines to continue that pattern of broader inclusion.

--30--

Baptist church musicians
'sound word, share love'

By Eddy Oliver

N-CO

Baptist Press
6/14/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptist musicians focused their attention on the theme of "Sound His Word and Share God's Love" at a two-day conference preceding the 132nd annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Las Vegas, Nev.

The musicians honored Dan C. Hall with the W. Hines Sims award posthumously. He was state music secretary for the Mississippi Baptist Convention from 1967 to 1987.

Panelists presented discussions on how to revitalize praise and worship in churches, planning creatively for worship, and creative approaches to hymn singing.

More than 240 participants also heard numerous concerts and two sermons by Paul Duke, pastor of Kirkwood, (Mo.) Baptist Church.

Duke told musicians worship services should leave out that which entertains but does not transform lives.

"We should not worship to help anyone feel good or make it through another week," he said. "Instead we should bear witness to the holy character of God."

Musicians elected Mark Edwards, minister of music at First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., as president and Robert Hatfield, minister of music at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., president-elect.

Executive council members are Bill Roper, minister of music at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala., and Emerson Porter, minister of music at First Baptist Church, Allen, Texas, local church division; Bobby Jones, associate state music director for the Missouri Baptist Convention, Jefferson City, denominational division; and Loyd Mims, assistant professor of church music at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., educational divisions.

--30--

SBC honors
Weatherford

By Jim Newton

N-CO

Baptist Press
6/14/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention honored Carolyn Weatherford, the retiring executive director of its Woman's Missionary Union auxiliary for "15 years of outstanding leadership."

Messengers to the convention adopted a resolution of appreciation on the recommendation of the SBC Executive Committee. The resolution praised her for leading the 1.2-million-member women's organization.

During the 15 years she was executive director, contributions to foreign missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering tripled from \$23.2 million to almost \$70 million. During the same period, gifts to home missions through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering almost quadrupled from \$8.1 million to \$30.8 million. Woman's Missionary Union co-sponsors the two missions offerings with the SBC Brotherhood Commission.

--more--

In adopting the resolution, messengers expressed "gratitude to God for the life and ministry of Carolyn Weatherford ... (and) for her long and faithful service to Southern Baptists."

SBC Executive Committee President Harold Bennett presented a framed copy of the resolution to Weatherford, and introduced to the convention her fiance, Joe Crumpler of Cincinnati. Weatherford and Crumpler will be married on August 19.

--30--

Clower entertains
ministers' wives

By Brenda Sanders

N-CO

Baptist Press
6/14/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--With a characteristic shout of "Whoooooeeee," comedian Jerry Clower brought his brand of country humor to the 34th annual Conference of Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives luncheon June 13 in Las Vegas, Nev.

Clower, a recording artist, author and member of the Grand Ole Opry, told the audience: "I love y'all. I don't know of any group in the world that's more important than the pastors' wives."

Clower, clad in a bright red suit and white boots, told the group: "Christianity works; it really does! Whatever happens in your life, whatever hardship you got, Christianity works, and I can't fathom Christian folks not lettin' it work."

The ministers' wives elected their 1991 officers during the luncheon meeting. They are Carol Hughes, Independence, Mo., president; Margaret Carter, Jonesboro, Ga., vice president; Margaret Murchison, Augusta, Ga., recording secretary-treasurer; and June Baggett, Birmingham, Ala., corresponding secretary.

In addition, the organization's outgoing president, Joy Yates, Yazoo City, Miss., passed the gavel to 1990 president Lynda Estep, Columbia, S.C. Other 1990 officers include Rhonda Kelley, New Orleans, vice president; Janet Wicker, Lubbock, Texas, recording secretary-treasurer; and Darlene Herring, Memphis, Tenn., corresponding secretary.

--30--

SBC needs blacks,
Lewis tells group

By Brenda Sanders

N-CO

Baptist Press
6/14/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention needs the help of black Southern Baptists to reach non-Christians for Christ, Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, said June 12.

In an address to the Southern Baptist Black Church Extension Fellowship, Lewis added: "If we are going to fulfill our Lord's command to share the gospel with every creature, ... we need you.

"God is no respecter of persons. Every man, woman, boy and girl born into this world is born in the image of our God, and thus, every nation, every ethnic of people needs to hear about Jesus.

"There is nobody outside the bounds of God's love; Jesus died for the world."

The board's black church extension division is committed to make the major thrust of its effort the winning of souls and the planting of churches, Lewis said.

"We need you -- not for what we can give you, but for what you can give us," he added. "The Southern Baptist Convention needs your spirit. You can teach us how to praise. You can teach us how to have an exciting worship.

"We can tip the balance in Southern Baptist life by our evangelistic zeal, said Emmanuel McCall, director of the HMB black church extension division. "We have not yet begun to realize our potential."

Also during the meeting, the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's black church development section presented two awards for initiative in black church development work. They went to George McCalep, pastor of Greenforest Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga.; and the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

--30--

China unrest forces
new look at Baptist work

By Michael Chute

N - FMB

HONG KONG (BP)--More than half of the 35 Southern Baptist teachers and students sponsored by Cooperative Services International have left China to regroup in Hong Kong and discuss future efforts in the Asian giant.

"It's time for re-evaluation," said Britt Towery of CSI's Hong Kong office. "We can't take a traumatic time like this and move on as usual. We have to determine how we can best be effective in China. We need some time to look at what we do best and how to go about it."

CSI, a Southern Baptist organization, provides personnel and assistance to nations where missionaries do not work. Its efforts in China have focused on education, particularly the teaching of English, as the nation strives to modernize and increase contacts with other countries.

Twelve more Southern Baptist teachers and one student were scheduled to leave China by June 23. The organization still had not learned the status of Stan Huesing, a teacher in nearby Guangzhou (Canton). Although efforts to contact him had failed, CSI officials believed he was safe in Guangdong province's capital city.

"Communication is difficult in China," Towery explained. "It's not easy to get a telephone call through in normal times, much less times like this."

Two of the teachers -- John Hippe of Pleasant Valley, Calif., and Joy Hilbun of Baton Rouge, La. -- obtained re-entry visas for China and hoped to return there by June 16. They planned to finish the school term at Jia Ying University in Meixian, Guangdong province, before leaving again in early July.

CSI canceled the summer language institutes scheduled in various universities throughout China but will go ahead with plans for the fall. The organization still plans to place teachers in China as they are invited by various schools.

Even as China's unstable political situation caused CSI personnel to leave, the Hong Kong CSI office received an invitation from Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering to place a teacher there this fall. Another invitation came from Dali Medical College in Yunnan province.

In addition to Hilbun, CSI personnel who plan to return to their teaching assignments include: Ronnie and Ina Winstead of St. Peters, Mo., at Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering; Ken and Lou Ann Locke of Arkadelphia, Ark., at Guangxi University in Nanning; Charles and Thannis Phillips of Arkadelphia, transferring from Zhengzhou to the Coal and Mine Management College in Beijing; Sue Todd of Windsor, N.C., at Nanjing University; and Glen and Rose Davis of Frankfort, Ky., at Nanjing Pharmaceutical College.

"Two concepts have guided our involvement in China from the beginning: to carry out programs identified by the Chinese as valuable and to do it with integrity," said CSI Director Lewis Myers. "The future involvement of CSI will be guided by these principles."

CSI "is still very committed to China," Towery said. "It's now an even poorer country than it was and can't afford this kind of turmoil. When a friend is hurting, you want to be there. We feel an even greater need and urgency because of the amount of pain and suffering."

The teachers had different reactions to leaving China. Some did not want to leave, saying the U.S. State Department failed to pass along enough detailed information to allow them to make an accurate appraisal of their situation.

Those already scheduled to complete their work with CSI moved up their departure date by a week or two. Several were not teaching at the time they left China because students on some university campuses boycotted classes as part of their protest.

Towery called CSI's recommendation to withdraw "responsible" and doesn't believe the departure will harm the teachers' chances of returning or the plans for new teachers being placed. The decision to leave or stay was left to each teacher.

--more--

However, three language students placed in China by CSI -- Jay Templeton of Kingsland, Texas, and Jana Clayton of Longmont, Colo., in Beijing and Rhonda Winstead of Liberty, Mo., in Nanjing -- were requested by CSI to leave immediately.

"When the U.S. government said it would be best to come out, we felt it was best in some areas," Towery said. Every Chinese region is different and had to be dealt with individually, he explained.

"The teachers have left with a good attitude with the schools," he said. "They (school officials) understand our position. Coming out hasn't broken any relationships. It has made no problems for us" with the Chinese.

"We have to regroup and the Chinese have to do the same thing," he added, saying that university "professors and officials will have to see what the reaction will be on each campus."

Many Chinese teachers and school officials reportedly marched with the students during the weeks of pro-democracy demonstrations in China. Some have since renounced what they did. Others who have not renounced their actions are said to fear they will be targeted by the government for disciplinary action.

As the drama in China erupted into violence, many new volunteers sponsored by numerous Christian service organizations reportedly backed out of plans to enter China. But Towery stressed that China has not asked any service-related foreigners to leave. Many are staying in China, and many who have left are planning to return when the political climate stabilizes.

Towery emphasized that new teachers and other professionals "don't have to worry about coming. If an institution (in China) invited them, they'll take care of them."

--30--

(Based in Hong Kong, Chute is Baptist Press overseas correspondent for Asia and the Pacific.)

REMINDER TO EDITORS: Photos relating to this story and others about the situation in China will be released as they are received by the foreign bureau of Baptist Press. Call Bureau Chief Bob Stanley or News Editor Erich Bridges at 804-353-0151 for information.

Southern Baptists say Vegas
not as bad as they expected

By Anita Bowden

F-10

Baptist Press
6/14/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptists think Las Vegas, Nev., is beautiful at night and not nearly as bad as they expected, a survey taken during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting there indicated.

"It's a whole lot different than I thought," said Helen Flannery from Danville, Ky. "I thought it was going to be wicked."

Patsy Connerley from Greenville, Miss., was nervous about bringing her four children with her to Las Vegas. "But it's not as bad as I thought it might be," she said. "We're enjoying it."

Jesse and Edith Head from Morganton, N.C., who have been coming to the Southern Baptist Convention since 1947, had nothing but good things to say about the city.

"We've been treated fine," Head said. "Everyone has gone overboard to be nice to us."

"It's not near as bad as I thought it'd be," said Mrs. Head. "I wouldn't mind coming back sometime."

For Rodney Johnson of Dike, Texas, attending the SBC in Las Vegas has brought back some wonderful memories. He was there once before -- 19 years ago on his honeymoon.

He was surprised at how the city had grown up since his last trip, but many other characteristics are the same, he said. Even 19 years ago the casinos were right inside the hotel doors.

--more--

"That doesn't bother me," he said. "If Southern Baptists can go to New Orleans, they can go to Las Vegas. Southern Baptists need to be in Las Vegas; someone has to plant the seeds (of Christianity)."

As far as Ben Lokteff of El Centro, Calif., is concerned, the witnessing effort related to the annual meeting is the only redeeming factor in holding the convention in Las Vegas: "We should not be here. We're putting a lot of money into their business, and it's not the kind of business I'd want us to put our money into."

"It's like any other city," said Sterling Kim of Maui, Hawaii. "There are souls to be won."

Susan Nichols of Troy, Ala., has not been tempted to put any of her coins into the slot machines. "People were so worried we'd (Southern Baptists) be tempted to gamble, but I haven't been," she said.

Stacey Lightfoot, 8, of Kennett, Mo., has never been in a city this big before and would like to come back. But she's not so fond of the casinos. "I don't like all those people; it's so crowded."

Although he originally was opposed to holding the convention in Las Vegas, just 24 hours in the city has changed the mind of Monte Hodges from Mayfield, Ky. "I've had three opportunities to witness since Sunday afternoon," he said. "People are very open."