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89-95

Chinese students fear
reprisals, teachers say

By Michael Chute

N-FMB

HONG KONG (BP)--The front page of a newspaper showed a picture of a young man handcuffed to a tree in China.

That image "simply devastated" Bucky and Ann Qualls of Corpus Christi, Texas, who left China June 11 after teaching English at Yantai University for 18 months. Their sponsor, Cooperative Services International, is a Southern Baptist organization. They planned to return to the United States June 17.

Seeing pictures like that arouses fear in the two Texans that some of their Chinese friends soon may be targets of a government crackdown.

One friend in particular, they believe, is "going to be one of those (criticized) because he was a leader." This young man's mistake, in his own words, was "speaking my heart. I'm going to have to pay for this," he told Mrs. Qualls after being warned that he had said too much to the wrong people.

"It tears you up," said Mrs. Qualls, tears welling up in her eyes. "It's their homeland but they can't speak their mind. ... They're not wanting to leave China and come to America. They love China and their heritage. They're just trying to improve it."

The Quallses left China three weeks earlier than scheduled because students at the university in Yantai, in northeastern Shandong province, boycotted classes in support of the pro-democracy movement.

"We've not had classes in four or five weeks," said Qualls. "The students said, 'We are going to make a vacant campus.' They wanted to go home to spread the word; to tell the people what was happening.

"The teachers are still there. They've had to go every day even though they haven't had students to teach." Up until the day they left, the Quallses also went to their classes each day because "we wanted to set an example. If there was anyone to teach, we'd teach."

The government reportedly ordered students back to their campuses. But when the two American teachers left, the students had not yet returned.

Following the military massacre of students in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, Qualls said, the mood at his university was "like a morgue."

He told of one young student whose attitude normally reflected the Chinese expression of "leaping eyebrows and dancing face." But after the massacre, Qualls said he "never saw a kid change so fast. She was so downfallen. I've never seen such a change."

Qualls taught Western civilization and American literature at the Chinese school. Mrs. Qualls taught business English to a handpicked group of students preparing for doing business, particularly import-export, in the Western world. Also, both taught a special class for Chinese English-language teachers who came to the university from all over China.

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Before going to China, Qualls directed teacher training for 14 years at Corpus Christi State University. Mrs. Qualls was principal of the school at First Baptist Church in that city for 10 years.

Yantai students often flocked to the Qualls home. "The students became like our children," related Qualls.

After the Beijing massacre "our home was where they came," added Mrs. Qualls. "Some kids had been friends to us" but when the violence began they "started coming to the apartment regularly. We played the role of comforter more during these last three weeks."

Students at Yantai University held three demonstrations in support of the student protest at Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Many of the teachers, especially the younger ones, marched with the students thinking they could protect them.

The Quallses had planned to stay four years in China before returning to the United States. Their original plans to help establish a graduate program at Ba Nong University in Urumqi (Xinjiang province) were altered because the university there was not yet ready to begin such a program.

Poor health of an elderly family member has forced them to take leave from active service with CSI. Their future involvement with the organization is uncertain.

They related that Yantai was relatively calm, although authorities closed the airport because it also serves as a military base. Since the Quallses couldn't leave from Yantai, university officials took them by car to Qingdao, four hours away, where they boarded a flight to Guangzhou and then on to Hong Kong.

If their area in China was calm, family and friends in the United States were not. Mrs. Qualls related that their daughter in Fort Worth, Texas, "called to say that CSI says to leave, your congressman says to leave, the U.S. government says to leave, so get out, Mother."

That was the word they were waiting for, so they packed their bags and left within four hours.

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Hong Kong Christians
mourn for China

By Lounette Templeton

N-FMB

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HONG KONG (BP)--Chinese Christians in Hong Kong are in shock following China's military crackdown on the student pro-democracy movement.

Christians looked in horror at pictures of the "Bloody Sunday" massacre in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. Many church members are wearing black armbands to symbolize their mourning. Hastily written messages have appeared on car windows, bulletin boards and shop windows.

"Thy Kingdom come in China," declared one banner. Another read: "God have mercy on China and Chinese people."

Amy Chau, a 24-year-old Baptist, said she "can't talk about it or I will cry" when asked about situation in China. But she returned later and talked about how Christians must hold together now as they never have before. And she cried.

"Before, we felt we were Hong Kong people and they were mainland people. But now we are all the same -- Chinese," said Baptist layman Tony Lee, repeating a common sentiment.

China will regain sovereignty over Hong Kong from Great Britain in 1997. The upheaval in China has increased worries in Hong Kong about how the colony will be governed.

Baptists joined a huge but peaceful rally at a race track June 4. News transmissions of the tragedy taking place in China flashed on giant television screens. It was the third consecutive Sunday afternoon Hong Kong citizens demonstrated support for the student movement. One meeting drew more than 1 million people.

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Baptists also took part in a Christian prayer vigil June 7 at a park in the center of Hong Kong's business district as the city observed a day of mourning. More than 3,000 people attended the meeting as many Christian service organizations closed offices during the afternoon to allow people to participate.

More than a dozen Baptist churches held special prayer services for China June 9. The simultaneous services began at 5 p.m. and many lasted until the next morning.

Christians need guidance at this critical time, according to Timothy Lau, pastor of Hong Kong Baptist Church.

"Instead of just reacting on an emotional level, we must be prepared to meet the changes that are occurring around us," he said.

Lau said Christians were initially elated and hopeful as the pro-democracy movement gained momentum. "But now the students have fallen and our people don't know what to do. They are angry. As pastor, I must help them find the proper way to respond."

Christians condemned the actions of a mob that disrupted a small area of the British colony on June 7, the day designated for mourning.

Baptist churches, schools, and Hong Kong Baptist College observed the day with memorial services and prayer meetings.

Lau said he is seeking ways to lead his church members to a deeper level of faith. He hopes it will enable them to play a greater role in the future of China and Hong Kong.

Jachin Chan, president of the Hong Kong Baptist Convention, said the convention also is grappling with its role after the events in Beijing.

"We have discussed separation of church and state thoroughly," Chan said. "I personally feel, although the church should not be involved in politics, individual Christians should. History is full of Christian activists and martyrs. Each has to follow God's leading."

The Baptist convention published a declaration in local newspapers supporting democracy and freedom. Pledging Baptists would offer prayers for the future of China, the declaration also extended condolences to the families of the dead in Beijing.

Chan said China's political uncertainty has pushed many church members to decide that emigrating to another country was their only choice. He reported many Baptists have definitely decided to emigrate.

"They don't hold much hope for Hong Kong," he said.

Chu Wood Ping is one of Hong Kong Baptists' most active supporters of the democracy movement. The pastor of Tai Po Baptist Church deliberately chose to return to Hong Kong after completing graduate study at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.

"I felt I could make a greater contribution in Hong Kong than in the United States," he said. "I did not feel the call of God to stay in the U.S." But he also didn't want his church publicly involved in the pro-democracy debates because of the church-state issue.

"At first I just prayed for wisdom," he said. "Then I began asking the church to pray, too. After the Tiananmen incident, we realized this was not just about politics. What happened in Tiananmen is completely opposed to what the Bible teaches."

Chu plans to lead a study on the history of the Christian church in China. He said he wants to prepare his church members to help preserve the Christian church in Hong Kong, regardless of the cost.

Kowloon City Baptist Church also is counseling and educating its 8,000 members to deal with the aftermath of the China violence. Pastor James Cheung scheduled a one-hour meeting to consider the biblical directives for meeting the crisis. The meeting lasted nearly three hours.

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Lounette Templeton is press representative for Southern Baptist missionaries in Hong Kong.

'Move on to evangelism,'
Vines tells Southern Baptists

By Mark Wingfield

N-10

* LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptists have settled their disagreement over the Bible and must now emphasize personal evangelism, Jerry Vines said June 13 in the annual president's address at the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Southern Baptists have settled the issue of the Bible. Southern Baptists believe the Bible is the incorruptible word of God," he said. "Some may doubt the word of God; Southern Baptists will sow the precious seed. The Bible teaches that the child of God is to take the precious seed of the word of God and go forth and scatter it.

"It is in the very warp and woof of Holy Scripture that those who have the saving seed have an assignment from the great sower himself to spread that seed. If there is anything that Southern Baptist pastors and people agree on, it is our mandate to let every person know about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"This is the only book I know that can change a human life," Vines said, waving a leather-bound Bible in his left hand.

An emphasis on personal evangelism will "put the joy back in the Southern Baptist Convention," he added. "I believe that with all my heart."

After his election as SBC president last year, "God laid it upon my heart to lead people to Jesus," he said. "Something wonderful has happened to me this year. It's been the sweetest, most joy-filled year in all my life."

Vines held up a small red book in which he had written the name of every person he led to Christ this year. He flipped through the pages, citing examples.

"I'm not going to tell you how many names are in that book, because to be perfectly honest, I'm ashamed," he said. But he added that the evangelistic thrust of his presidency will bring joy to heaven and earth.

"The greatness of the Southern Baptist Convention is found every day when Southern Baptist people go as Jesus has commanded us to go," Vines said. "It's time for our denomination to get on the go.

"How are we going to respond to the poignant statement of Jesus when he said, 'The harvest is truly great but the laborers are few'? How are we going to respond to billions of our generation when they say to God, 'I never knew you had a son'?"

"It's time for all of us to sow the seed. If you want to see the joy put back in your church, get involved with sowing and reaping.

"No longer can we sit in our air-conditioned churches, tack a sign on the door which says, 'Come on in you lucky sinners and get saved.'

"The kind of world in which we live demands that we take seriously the going assignment which the Lord has given us. Let the president run the nation, let Congress pass the laws, let Wall Street handle the finances, let Vegas put on the shows, but let's you and I be winners of souls, going as the Lord has commanded us to go."

Southern Baptists must learn to weep for those without Christ, he said: "We've just about lost our capacity to weep," he said. "Have we come to the point where we are so professional, so businesslike, that we are no longer able to weep over lost people who need Jesus?"

"We're weeping about the wrong things. We're weeping about sexy soap operas and silly songs and about sentimental movies. But who weeps today over the souls of men without God? There will never be a genuine soul-winning revival in our convention until we get concerned about lost souls.

Vines thanked the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union, Home and Foreign mission boards and the six SBC seminaries for their emphasis on evangelism.

"Keep it up. Give us every assistance you can," he said. "Scholarship and soul winning fervor are not mutually exclusive. They are handmaidens. They go together."

Professors should profess,
Chapman tells Vegas messengers

By Jim Newton

N-10

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Texas pastor Morris Chseminaries Wednesday to live up to their titles by classroom.

Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas, said Baptist schools need professors "who believe in the inspired, infallible word of God."

Chapman delivered the annual sermon at the 132nd meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention June 14.

"A professor is one who professes," said Chapman, "and every Baptist college professor ought to be a born-again Christian who professes his faith in the classroom."

Chapman said Baptist schools need professors who believe in the virgin birth of Christ; in the Bible as the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God; in the sacrificial, atoning blood of Christ shed on the cross for the salvation of the world; in the resurrection of Jesus from the grave; and in the glorious second coming of Jesus.

The Bible needs no defense "but we do need to defend how the Bible is represented to people," he said.

"The Bible is the inspired word of God, the infallible word of God, the inerrant word of God. Since God is its author, and God cannot lie, the Bible never misleads or deceives. It is without error."

The Bible is "our chart and our compass, our lamp and our light. The word of God is pure and precious, the full and final authority for our faith," he said.

Southern Baptists have been using labels such as "liberal" and "fundamentalists," "moderates" and "conservatives," "right" and "left" to describe various positions of people concerning the Bible, he said, adding, "But it is not a matter of a left turn or a right turn, it is a matter of a right turn or a wrong turn."

He called for members of the 14.8-million-member denomination to build a cooperative spirit. "We must not have friend against friend, brother against brother," he said.

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Evangelists recount
experiences of faith

By Art Toalston

N-10

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LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Who, they asked among themselves, would be the loneliest man in New York City on Thanksgiving?

Graham Ferguson Lacey of London told the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists that question ultimately resulted in a face-to-face encounter with Libyan leader Col. Moammar Gadhafi.

The evangelists' meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., June 14 ended with a New Testament-distributing march onto Las Vegas' famous casino-laden Strip led by cross-bearing evangelist Arthur Blessitt. Evangelists and several hundred messengers on hand for the second of three days of Southern Baptist Convention sessions followed Blessitt, his wife, Sherry, and their six children.

Lacey, a businessman who maintains his church membership at First Baptist of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said he and several Baptist friends in New York City decided the loneliest man in the metropolis on Thanksgiving Day 1986 would be the Libyan ambassador to the United Nations.

So, they invited him over for dinner. Surprisingly, he came, Lacey said. "If people knew who I am, they would spit in my face. Your country has just bombed mine. Your people don't like Col. Moammar Gadhafi, my leader," Lacey quoted the ambassador as saying.

The Libyan accepted a second invitation for fellowship, Lacey said, and several weeks of interaction with the ambassador resulted in an invitation from Gadhafi for a visit to Libya in August 1987.

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After six days of meetings with officials in the Islamic country, Lacey said, he was taken to meet Gadhafi in his Bedouin-style tent.

"It was a combative discussion," Lacey said. "At first, he accused me of believing a Zionist lie. But I insisted, 'Sir, I know Jesus Christ personally. I've experienced him in my life. And until you've known him personally, you cannot deny his very existence.'"

After a discussion that stretched beyond an hour, Lacey said, he asked to pray with the Libyan leader. "There was a lot of discussion in Arabic with his advisers. He looked at me straight in the face and he said, 'Sir, you may pray.'"

"I prayed in the name of our Lord and Savior for (Gadhafi's) salvation, for his wife's and his family's and for revival, for an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power in Libya."

Lacey said Gadhafi embraced him and again spoke with his advisers in Arabic. Lacey said one of them told him, "The distinguished leader would like you to pray again."

Lacey said he hesitated, then Gadhafi said: "Nobody has ever told me before about Jesus. Nobody but a Muslim has ever prayed with me. I would like you to get down on your knees and pray again. This time, Libyan television will televise it."

Libyan television continues to air the prayer at either the beginning or end of each day, Lacey said. The Englishman also said he remains in contact with Gadhafi.

Asked in an interview for his personal impressions of Gadhafi, Lacey said the Libyan leader is "very well informed. He's an Arab, a Bedouin. We misunderstand the cultural differences (between Libyans and Americans). He is fanatical, politically shrewd and impressive physically."

"Too many of us," Lacey told the evangelists' meeting, "decide who's beyond redemption, so we don't pray for a (Soviet leader Mikhail) Gorbachev or a Gadhafi ... or a (Palestinian leader) Yassir Arafat."

"We seem somehow to forget that the Apostle Paul was once a terrorist, no less so than Moammar Gadhafi or any of his allies. But God reached (Paul) on the road to Damascus."

Blessitt, of Hollywood, Calif., said he was glad to return to his Southern Baptist "roots."

"I was saved in a Southern Baptist church" in Louisiana, "went to a Southern Baptist college (Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss.) and seminary (Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.), worked with the Home Mission Board" in 1964 and 1965 while starting several churches in Elko, Nev.

"I believed what I heard back there as a child," Blessitt said. "'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'"

Blessitt has carried his wooden cross across 25,000 miles in 110 countries since Christmas Day 1969. He has trekked through 21 wars and has been jailed 20 times.

Commenting that "the leader of the Southern Baptist Convention is not (current president) Jerry Vines ... not (Vines' opponent) Daniel Vestal," Blessitt said, "The leader of the Southern Baptist Convention ... is Jesus. He is our Lord."

Blessitt said he had worked on a sermon for the evangelists for six months, but, in coming to the pulpit 10 minutes before the scheduled time of adjournment, he said: "I want to get out on the streets. Maybe at a better time I'll preach this message that's burning in my heart."

Other speakers at the evangelists' meeting included black pastor E.V. Hill of the Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles and a vice president of the National Baptist Convention; Robert McGee, of Houston, Texas, founder and president of Rapha Christian treatment centers for drug and alcohol abuse and other disorders; and Rick Stanley, one of Elvis Presley's three stepbrothers and now an evangelist from Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

Hill told the evangelists his church has a committee specializing on outreach "for every way you can be lost, for the purpose of telling everybody, 'Come and be saved.'"

"I've got a gang committee ... an alcoholics committee ... a homosexual committee ... an up-and-out committee ... a homeless committee," Hill said.

McGee told the evangelists of being "addicted" for 36 years to the need for approval: "We're looking for acceptance in all the wrong places. We're primarily made for God. He has placed in us a part only he can fill."

Stanley credited the seven-year persistence of a high school friend -- now his wife, Robin -- for bringing him to faith after several years of heroin addiction and life in the fast lane as an aide to his famous stepbrother.

Stanley recounted that he was turned off to Christianity because "I was brought up in a church that did not accept people. I never heard anything about the love of God."

And, in the entertainment industry, "I'd seen too many quartets walk on stage and say how much they loved Jesus and walk off and get two hookers."

He recounted once telling Presley of Robin's ongoing concern, and the singer replied, "That kid who told you about Jesus was exactly right." Eight hours later, Stanley said, Presley was dead.

Stanley later attended a church service with Robin. He recounted: "I don't remember so much what the man said. I know what he didn't say. He didn't talk to me about the way I looked. He didn't talk to me about what (music) I listened to. He talked a lot about Jesus" and got ahold of "an old doper's heart."

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Falwell affirms SBC,
but won't become member

By Mark Wingfield

N-CO

Baptist Press
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LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Independent Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell affirmed the course of the Southern Baptist Convention but said he has no intention of joining the 14.8-million-member denomination.

Falwell walked among Southern Baptists for five days during their annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., in mid-June. He did not appear on the convention program but addressed the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists, which met in conjunction with the SBC.

Falwell also used an appearance before the Religion Newswriters Association to announce that he will dissolve the Moral Majority, a political lobby he founded 10 years ago with the help of former SBC President Charles Stanley. The religion writers held their annual meeting in Las Vegas immediately prior to the SBC.

"I am here because I believe the cloud of God is today over those Bible-believing Southern Baptist churches that without a doubt are the shining lights of our nation," Falwell told the evangelists. "In the last 10 years, I have watched something happen in your organization I thought could not happen. I thought the only cure for apostasy was judgment. The last 10 years, history will report, have been miraculous years in which Bible-believing Christians have made an impact."

Southern Baptist churches represent "some of the greatest churches since Pentecost," Falwell said.

Earlier, while addressing the religion newswriters, Falwell dispelled rumors that he and his Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., might join the SBC. "I have no intention of joining the Southern Baptist Convention," he said. "We have our own school to support, our own mission board to support. I would just be one more pastor among thousands of pastors."

"The Southern Baptist Convention would be of no value to our ministry. There's nothing in the Southern Baptist Convention or in our ministry that we cannot mutually enjoy."

Falwell later told the evangelists he wants to work alongside Southern Baptists toward world evangelization. "I am not a loner," he said. "I don't believe any of us can do it alone."

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Southern Baptist evangelist Jay Strack called Falwell "the man God used to enlarge my vision of growing an evangelistic church" and "a great defender of the faith."

Falwell told the evangelists church-starting is God's plan for evangelizing the world. He said 110,000 evangelical churches are in North America and asked, "Have you ever stopped to think what could happen if every church started just one other?"

He recounted how he started his church from scratch by knocking on every door in his community. Thomas Road Baptist Church has started 47 other congregations, he said.

Falwell also urged laypeople not to stay in churches that are "dead religious morgues."

"You don't need to stay in a church where people are not being saved, where the word of God is not preached as the inerrant revelation of a loving God. You don't need to be in a church where altar calls are not given," he said.

In announcing the dissolution of Moral Majority, Falwell said, "I believe we've accomplished everything we set out to do."

Because of the influence of Moral Majority, Southern Baptist pastors like (Charles) Stanley (pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta) have gained credibility as spokesmen on moral and political concerns, he said.

Moral Majority "marshalled thousands of voters" to address concerns that have become known as the agenda of the Religious Right, Falwell explained. Conservative evangelicals are no longer "on the outside screaming to get in" as they were 10 years ago, he added.

Despite ending the formal organization, the work of Moral Majority will "go on forever," he said. "The pastors who are motivated will go on. I will continue to speak on moral issues."

In reviewing the history of the organization, Falwell claimed credit for sending Ronald Reagan and George Bush to the White House by coalescing conservative evangelicals into a "strong political force."

"Thousands" of Southern Baptists have been involved with Moral Majority and the causes it defended, he said. However, he denied any direct link between the rise of the Moral Majority and the rise of the conservative group that has changed the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Both movements began in 1979. With Falwell's announcement of "mission accomplished," leaders of both movements have now said their task is done. In a recent interview with Baptist Press, SBC President Jerry Vines said he believes the theological conflict in the denomination also is resolved.

Falwell acknowledged he has heard rumors that "Adrian Rogers, W.A. Criswell, Charles Stanley, Jimmy Draper, Jerry Vines and Jerry Falwell all sat down and said, 'Let's take over the Southern Baptist Convention.'"

"There's never been such a meeting," he insisted. "There's never been such phone calls. There's never been such correspondence."

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Las Vegas agree:
SBCers 'nice folks'

By Anita Bowden

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Baptist Press
6/16/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Las Vegas agree: most Southern Baptists are nice, friendly and generally eager to talk about Jesus.

"They're more considerate than other convention groups," said Jack Smith, supervisor of security for the Las Vegas Convention Center. "They've been more cooperative. Maybe it's because of their religion."

The convention held its annual meeting in Las Vegas June 13-15.

Robert McMaster, a security guard for the convention center, said nearly everyone has tried to witness to tell him about Christ. "But I just tell them I'm Catholic," he said. "All that witnessing doesn't bother him, he said. "Nothing offends me."

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"They all been really nice," said Christy Franciosi, a cashier with the convention center's food service. "And I love the way they dress. It's like a fashion show."

One of the shuttle bus drivers who gave her name as Sam also noticed the difference in the way Southern Baptists dress. She stopped several times to pick up people walking to the convention center who were dressed in suits.

"There's another Southern Baptist," she said as she pulled to the curb and offered them a ride. "It's so good to have people on my bus who are not drunk or cussing."

A roulette dealer for a local casino who didn't want her name used said she had not had any direct contact with the Southern Baptist messengers, but she had been "finding a lot of (witnessing) pamphlets around."

She hasn't noticed any drop in the amount of gambling this week, "because of the fight (between Thomas Hearns and Sugar Ray Leonard)," she said. More people have been in town to attend the boxing match, and they have made up for any slack in gamblers Southern Baptists might have caused, she said.

"I haven't seen one get mad," said Bob Shattuck, supervisor of services for a local hotel. "They're much more patient than other conventioners."

Shattuck, who supervises bell boys and valet parking attendants, said Southern Baptists are about average in their tipping.

"Doctors and dentists are the worst," he said. "No matter how many bags they have, 50 cents is the most you can expect from them."

He's also noticed that Southern Baptists seem to be methodical or perhaps preoccupied in their convention activities. "When it's time to go to a meeting, they all get up and go. They stand in line forever, without complaining," he said.

But he said he was disappointed in one thing. As a Christian, he's surprised no one has tried to witness to him.

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Baptist marchers
take on Vegas Strip

By Susan Todd

N-10

Baptist Press
6/16/89

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Chris Martin jumped from a city bus one block short of his Las Vegas hotel June 14 and ended up taking a leap of faith.

Martin, a 35-year-old tourist from Park Forest, Ill., saw a crowd gathered around the temple-like entrance of Caesars Palace and wanted to know what they were doing.

"I actually got off the bus one block before my hotel because the crowd attracted me," Martin said.

What he found was a remnant crowd of Southern Baptist evangelists and pastors who marched almost three miles from the Las Vegas Convention Center to the Las Vegas Strip witnessing to any and everyone who would stop long enough to listen. They didn't seem to mind the 110-degree heat.

As the crowd of about 500 knelt on the steps of the hotel entrance, two men were left standing in the shadow of a 12-foot-tall wooden cross. Martin held the tract as the other man read it to him.

When the prayer ended, march leader Arthur Blessitt of Hollywood, Calif., asked if anyone had become a Christian as a result of the march. Martin raised his hand.

"That's worth everything," Blessitt said as he asked Martin to join him under the cross.

Shouts of "Praise Jesus" and "Hallelujah" went up from the crowd.

But every response to the crowd wasn't a new convert.

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As the crowd left the lawn of the convention center singing "Jesus Loves Me This I Know," "Amazing Grace How Sweet the Sound" and "I've Got Joy, Joy, Joy Down in my Heart," they encountered people who didn't care to hear what they had to say.

Crowds gathered on hotel balconies to watch the singing group. Cars screeched to a halt in the middle of the streets as drivers took a second look.

One young man walked quickly from the sidewalk as the Baptists approached him. He took shelter in the entrance of a nearby casino.

The group had "a renegade attitude," he said. "And I don't believe it's appropriate."

People on the Las Vegas strip are intelligent, and witnessing to them en masse is insulting to them, he said.

He had been witnessed to earlier in the week in a one-on-one encounter. This individual interest left a positive impact on him. He even knew of the witnessing done earlier in the week in neighborhoods and applauded Southern Baptists for such an approach.

"I've taken their books and even read some, but this pushing and shoving is a little too much," he said, motioning to the crowded sidewalk.

Many of the Baptists handed out bright orange stickers with religious messages on them. He had one rolled up in his hand.

"This woman walked up to me and, bingo, she stuck this thing on me," he said. "I think that is very rude."

A middle-aged woman called it "an invasion of privacy."

"I certainly wouldn't pay to go and see this group," she said.

A shopkeeper who said she believed in God took a Bible from one of the Baptists. For herself, she didn't mind the confrontation. For her security guard, she resented the incident because it upset him.

One couple was representative of the many who turned their backs to any approach from the group.

Others responded more positively to the march.

"I'm Catholic," said a man from Champaign, Ill. "I'm Catholic, and I think they're doing a great job," as he shaded his eyes with the Bible he had taken from one Baptist.

Another man said he thought it was "really nice. The more here the better."

A young man in a truck stopped at a red light said he didn't mind that someone had come up to his vehicle to hand him a Bible and say, "Jesus loves you."

"I'll take anything I don't already have," he said.

Evangelist Blessitt led the march with a 12-foot-tall 6-foot-wide wooden cross supported across his shoulder. A self-described pilgrim, Blessitt has walked across 103 countries carrying his cross. To him, Las Vegas was just another city in which to share Jesus.

Blessitt, 48, was invited by the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists to speak and lead the march. His 9-year-old son, Jerusalem, walked along beside him carrying a shorter cross.

Executive Committee
picks Pace as leader

By Jim Newton

N- (0)

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Executive Committee elected Sam Pace of Lawton, Okla., as chairman and Paul Pressler of Houston as vice chairman during their organizational meeting June 14.

Pace, director of missions for Commanche-Cotton Baptist Association in Lawton, succeeded Charles Sullivan of Lenoir City, Tenn., as chairman of the 76-member committee.

Pressler, an appellate court judge who has been active in denominational affairs for the last 10 years, succeeded Darrell Robinson, recently elected vice president for evangelism at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

Both Pace and Pressler defeated James E. Jones, pastor of Campbellsville Baptist Church, Campbellsville, Ky. Jones was nominated as chairman, and later for vice chairman.

Elected recording secretary by acclamation was Fred Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala.

Pace was nominated by Wolfe and Pressler by Gayden Jones of Baton Rouge, La.

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Hispanic Baptists
affirmed by Parks

By Eduardo DoCampo

N- (0)

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LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks affirmed the growing participation of language churches in the life of the denomination and foreign mission service June 12 during a meeting of the Hispanic Baptist Ministers Conference.

Parks made the comments during an ethnic commissioning service of two couples at Westoakey Baptist Church in Las Vegas, Nev.

The agency commissioned native Cubans Alcides and Mariam Nunez of Kissimmee, Fla., to serve in Chile and Jacob and Toong-Ja Shin to serve in Japan.

During the ceremony, Parks encouraged ethnic Southern Baptists to increase their participation in short-term volunteer foreign mission projects, become involved in a prayer network for specific missionaries and countries of the world and increase communication between language congregations.

Parks praised the group for becoming more involved in denominational life and credited the inroads they have made into the denomination to that involvement.

The board honored three people who have made "outstanding contributions" to foreign missions among blacks and language ethnic congregations: Oscar Romo, director of the language church extension division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, and Foreign Mission Board employees Victor Davis, director of black church relations, and Geriel De Oliveira, director of ethnic relations.

Conference members also elected officers during the meeting.

Daniel Sotelo, pastor of Templo Bautista in Fresno, Calif., was re-elected to a third term as president. Also elected were Manuel Galindo of Harlingen, Texas, first vice president; Luis Razco, pastor of West Hialeah Baptist Church, Hialeah, Fla., second vice president; Heriberto Becerra, pastor of First Hispanic Baptist Church, New York City, treasurer; Yamil Fernandez, pastor of Centro Cristiano Buenas Nuevas, Santa Ana, Calif., secretary; Josue Grijalva, national ethnic home missionary from San Antonio, Texas, historian; Bob Sena, pastor of First Hispanic Baptist Church of Atlanta, liaison to Southern Baptist agencies.

Sonny Rios, an evangelistic singer from Dallas, Texas, was elected music director for the next annual meeting, which will be held in New Orleans prior to the 1990 annual session of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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SBC waits for quorum,
adopts 10 resolutions

By Linda Lawson

N-CO

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--After a 40-minute delay of a Thursday morning business session on resolutions due to lack of a quorum, messengers to the 132nd session of the Southern Baptist Convention adopted with almost no changes 10 resolutions proposed by the Resolutions Committee.

The lack of a quorum was a first for an SBC meeting since a 25 percent quorum rule was established, effective with the 1988 convention meeting.

Resolutions on racism and encouraging laws regulating abortion generated the most debate before messengers adopted a motion by Rudy Yakym of Mishawauka, Ind., to limit discussion to five minutes per resolution.

After the adoption of three resolutions, a motion by Gerald Harris of Jackson, Miss., to adopt the remaining seven resolutions as a body failed by 13 votes. The vote was 2,648 to 2,635.

Other resolutions topics included support for Chinese Christians, drunk driving, drugs and violence, personal ministry of the people of God and integrity.

Rounding out the resolutions were those on "Here's Hope, Jesus Cares for You," Southern Baptists' evangelistic emphasis for 1989-90, supporting 1990 as the International Year of Bible reading and a resolution of appreciation for Nevada Baptist hosts.

The resolution encouraging laws regulating abortion urges state legislatures and the U.S. Congress to enact legislation regulating and restricting abortion and asks the SBC Christian Life Commission and state conventions to promote the passage of such legislation.

Chairman Mark Coppenger of Indianapolis, Ind., said the committee proposed the resolution on abortion, the subject of numerous resolutions in recent years, because a ruling is expected within a few weeks on a case recently heard by the U.S. Supreme Court, Webster v. Reproductive Health Services. That ruling, some observers believe, may result in restrictions or revocation of Roe v. Wade, a 1973 Supreme Court ruling which, by invalidating existing state laws, established abortion on demand in the United States.

The resolution also reaffirms opposition to abortion except to save the life of the mother.

Two messengers opposed the resolution on the basis of allowing only one exception and not speaking to women who are victims of rape or incest. "This resolution is insensitive to the complexities of the issue," one messenger said.

The abortion resolution generated the largest opposition with about 20 percent of messengers voting against it in a show-of-hands vote.

The racism resolution, adapted from statements adopted earlier in the year by the executive committee of the Christian Life Commission, notes that "Southern Baptists have not always clearly stood for racial justice and equality" and affirms the intention of convention messengers to "stand publicly and privately for racial justice and equality."

The resolution also states that messengers "repent of past bigotry" and calls on Southern Baptist people and churches "to reach across racial boundaries, establishing fraternal rather than paternal friendships."

Jim Holladay of Louisville, Ky., unsuccessfully offered a substitute resolution with stronger language against racism and urging Southern Baptists to join with the Baptist World Alliance in condemning apartheid in South Africa.

Support for Chinese Christians was offered in a resolution which noted that "Christians in China have repeatedly affirmed their support for the basic aspirations for peace, justice, progress and full free expression."

The resolution calls on Southern Baptists to pray for a peaceful solution to the current crisis in China, for Christians dealing with change in their country and for the spread of the gospel in China.

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Opposition to drunk driving and to drugs and violence were expressed in resolutions.

The drunk driving resolution urges Southern Baptists to contact their U.S. Representatives and Senators in support of recommendations to the Congress from the U.S. Surgeon General.

Recommendations include increased excise tax on alcoholic beverages, reduction in the legal blood-alcohol limits, elimination of "happy hours," halt to the use of celebrities in alcohol advertising and formation of a national coalition to conduct a campaign against drunk driving.

The resolution on drugs and violence asks messengers to call for action in six areas: establishment of local, state and federal task forces; drug education in schools and enforcement of restrictions against drug use; call on President George Bush not to invite to the White House celebrities whose lifestyles would promote acceptance of drug use; encourage pharmaceutical companies to restrict the sale of materials used to produce illicit drugs; encourage the entertainment industry not to produce videos that promote or condone drug use; and encourage families to educate their children to deal with the issue.

The personal ministry of the people of God was the subject of a resolution affirming the role of laypersons in churches, noting that 1988-89 is the Year of the Laity in Evangelism and Discipleship in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The resolution calls on all Christians "to exercise their gifts in the personal ministries to which God has called them."

Bill Johnson of Ardmore, Okla., proposed an amendment accepted by the Resolutions Committee to add a statement from Article 6 of the Baptist Faith and Message statement on the church. The statement describes the characteristics of a church, noting that "in such a congregation members are equally responsible."

Concerning integrity, messengers adopted without discussion a resolution affirming "our own unswerving commitment to absolute personal integrity so that we might be an example to the world and not bring reproach on the name of Christ."

The traditional resolution of appreciation also adopted without debate referenced only Nevada Baptist hosts. In other years, such resolutions have expressed gratitude to local government and business officials

In the resolution on the "Here's Hope" evangelistic emphasis, churches are urged to pray for spiritual awakening, conduct a soul-winning training event and challenge members to win one person to Christ.

Support also was urged for the 1990 International Year of Bible Reading in which people are encouraged to read through the Bible in one year.

After the adoption of the resolutions, Coppenger said he felt the committee succeeded in its goal of bring resolutions on which messengers could agree.

Messengers proposed 51 resolutions which were considered by the committee along with three motions submitted to the Order of Business Committee and later ruled resolutions, for a total of 54.

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SBC re-elects Vines,
OKs \$137.2 million budget

By Roy Jennings

N-CO

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LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Messengers to the 132nd Southern Baptist Convention re-elected president Jerry Vines, approved a \$137.2 million budget, received program reports from 18 agencies and an auxiliary, and took positions on issues ranging from racism to support of Chinese Christians.

The convention theme, "Going, Weeping; Sowing, Reaping," was developed through three inspirational addresses and opportunities for witnessing in the Las Vegas area.

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The three-day meeting attracted 20,423 messengers, making it the xth largest in the history of the denomination and the largest west of San Antonio, Texas.

President Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., won a second one-year term by defeating Daniel Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta. The vote was 10,754 - 8,248.

Messengers chose Junior Hill, a Hartselle, Ala., evangelist, as first vice president, and Ernest B. Myers, executive director of Nevada Baptist Convention, Reno, as second vice president.

Given new one-year terms were Martin Bradley, recording secretary, and Lee Porter, registration secretary. Both live in Nashville, Tenn.

Vestal, who campaigned on a theme of freedom, left open the possibility of running for the presidency in 1990 at New Orleans. He said he would talk with his congregation and family before making his decision.

During the presidential address and in a news conference following re-election, Vines pledged to restore joy to the 14.8-million-member denomination through an emphasis on personal evangelism.

President Vines actively participated in a giant Southern Baptist witnessing effort in the Las Vegas area before and during the convention.

The 2,025 volunteers visited 120,000 homes, discovered 5,000 prospects for Southern Baptist churches and led 470 persons to faith in Christ.

On the issue of controversy in the denomination, Vines said, "Administrators and trustees of our institutions clearly understand the direction which Southern Baptists want to go.

"I believe the process of theological renewal is underway. I am confident that in a loving and Christlike manner, the theological problems in God's good time will be resolved."

For the first time in recent years, the basic operation portion of the new budget is almost \$3 million below the current budget and reflects an effort to budget on the basis of current giving levels.

The \$2,500,000 in the capital needs section of the budget was designated for paying off the indebtedness of the new Southern Baptist Convention building in Nashville.

Funding of a major capital needs program of almost \$23 million for eight agencies was deferred for one year.

After approving the budget without debate, messengers sought unsuccessfully by a vote of 5,198 to 6,034 to rescind the action and reassign \$200,000 of the \$391,796 allocation of the Baptist Joint Committee of Public Affairs to three other agencies.

The action was part of a running dispute between leaders of the Baptist Joint Committee funded by nine Baptist bodies, including the SBC, and the new Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee which has minority representation on the Washington-based agency.

The flap erupted during the convention when Samuel T. Currin, chairman of PAC, lamented that the SBC provided 90 percent of the funding of the Baptist Joint Committee but had only 33 percent of the representation on the agency board.

James M. Dunn, BJC executive director, contended the PAC report maligned and misrepresented his agency. He said the SBC provides 60 percent, not 90 percent, of his agency's budget and the figure would drop to 53 percent next year.

Currin replied that the 1987-88 reports supported his position, but Dunn said those reports did not reflect his total budget.

In contrast to the tiff between the BJC and PAC, the report of the Foreign Mission Board warned messengers their goal of proclaiming the gospel to every person in the world by the year 2000 would fail unless they make a radical commitment.

Mission board President Keith Parks of Richmond, Va., called on Southern Baptists to put aside self-indulgence, redevelop a passion for the world and lay down their lives for the sake of the gospel.

While pleading for more prayers, missions giving and missionaries, Parks contended Southern Baptists have not decided whether it is worth the cost to reach the world for Christ.

Southern Baptists have 3,855 missionaries and 10,000 volunteers serving in 116 countries, Parks said. The missionaries baptized an average of 51 new Christians each in 1988, Parks reported.

The report of the Home Mission Board reported the largest number of new church starts since 1968 and the most new home missionaries commissioned since 1845.

President Larry Lewis said the Atlanta-based agency led in starting 1,248 new churches and commissioned 733 new missionaries, increasing the total to 3,827.

Messengers adopted 10 resolutions without major change after a motion to approve seven remaining resolutions as a group without debate failed by only 14 votes. A total of 54 resolutions were proposed.

Several messengers sought to amend resolutions on racism and support of Chinese Christians to include condemnation of apartheid in South Africa.

The resolution on racism affirmed messengers' intention of standing publicly and privately for racial justice and equality, called for Southern Baptists to repent of any past bigotry and pray for those caught in its clutches, and asked agencies and institutions to try to increase racial and ethnic representation.

The resolution encouraging laws regulating abortion called for legislation to restrict the practice of induced abortion, including prohibiting abortion except to prevent the imminent death of the mother.

In a statement on China and the support of Chinese Christians, messengers called for prayer for a peaceful solution to the crisis, for Chinese Christians as they experience change and for the spread of the gospel throughout that nation.

Other resolutions called for local, state and federal governments to establish a task force to address the problems of drugs and violence, affirmed unswerving commitment to absolute personal integrity, urged support of the International Year of Bible Reading in 1990, and expressed strong support for such proposals as a national coalition to conduct a national campaign against drunk driving.

In other actions, the messengers approved Executive Committee recommendations for the convention to meet in Dallas, June 17-19, 1997; Atlanta, June 15-17, 1999, and New Orleans, June 12-14, 2001, and recognized Carolyn Weatherford, returning executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, for 15 years of outstanding leadership. She retires in August.

A proposal for the Executive Committee to create a new Religious Liberty Commission was withheld until the 1990 meeting at the request of President Vines in the interest of a convention focus on missions and evangelism.

At an organizational meeting the Executive Committee elected Sam W. Pace of Lawton, Okla., chairman; Paul Pressler of Houston, vice-chairman, and Fred H. Wolfe of Mobile Ala., recording secretary.

Later, messengers chose Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, to preach the annual convention sermon in 1990 in New Orleans and named Jimmy Jackson, pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala., as the alternate preacher.

John McKay of Hurst, Texas, was selected to lead the music.

Sermons by President Vines, Morris Chapman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Wichita Falls, Texas, and Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, provided much of the inspiration and challenge.

President Vines said Southern Baptists have settled their disagreement over the Bible and must now emphasize personal evangelism.

"It's time for all of us to sow the seed," he said. "If you want to see the joy put back in your church, get involved with sowing and reaping.

"Let the president run the nation, let congress pass the laws, let Wall Street handle the finances, let Vegas put on the shows, but let's you and I be winners of souls, going as the Lord has commanded us to go."

Chapman, who preached the annual convention sermon, called on professors at Baptist colleges, schools, and seminaries to live up to their titles by professing their faith in the classrooms.

Baptist schools need professors who believe in the virgin birth of Christ, in the Bible as the inspired, infallible, inerrant word of God, in the sacrificial, atoning blood of Christ shed on the cross for the salvation of the world, in the resurrection of Jesus from the grave, and in the glorious second coming of Jesus, Chapman declared.

Chapman called for a moratorium on name bashing and character assassination in the denomination, emphasizing the denomination was not a demolition derby.

Stanley told the messengers their responsibility as partners is to lead people to be set free from the bondage that is destroying their spiritual lives.

Thousands of Christians are burdened by the misconception that their acceptance by God is based upon performance, Stanley said.

Those who walk the aisles to rededicate themselves are really looking for freedom from guilt, he explained.

"They are going to keep coming down the aisle until God sets them free. What they need is freedom, not rededication."

Seminary alumni luncheons and a round of sermons at a conference of Southern Baptist evangelists were sandwiched between sessions of the convention.

The conference featured sermons from such notables as Independent Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell; E.V. Hill of Los Angeles; evangelist Rick Stanley of Fort Walton Beach, Fla., step-brother of Elvis Presley; and evangelist Arthur Blessitt, who appeared with a large wooden cross.

Carrying the cross, Blessitt led about 500 on a witnessing march to the Las Vegas strip following his sermon.

While open gambling and a plethora of slot machines in convention hotels, raised the eyebrows of many messengers initially, they swiftly adjusted to the culture, packing the meeting halls and restaurants.

Dealers reported an absence of Southern Baptists in their casinos and the presence of a lot of witnessing pamphlets.

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Messenger consider
variety of motions

By Kathy Palen

N- CO

Baptist Press
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LAS VEGAS, Nev. (BP)--Messengers to the 132nd Southern Baptist Convention introduced more than 40 motions on a variety of issues during the three-day meeting.

Only two of those motions resulted in ballot votes. Most were referred, postponed or ruled out of order.

On Wednesday, messengers rejected a motion to reconsider the convention budget they had approved just 24 hours earlier.

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Almost 54 percent of messengers voting turned down a motion by Charlie Waller of Bumpass, Va., to reconsider the budget.

Waller introduced a motion Tuesday to divert \$350,000 from the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. Before messengers could vote on that action, they had to agree to reconsider the budget.

On Wednesday, Waller announced plans to amend his original motion. He said he intended to substitute a motion that had been introduced by another messenger.

That motion -- made by Kenneth R. Barnett, a Southern Baptist Executive Committee member from Denver -- called for removing \$200,000 from the convention's allocation to the BJC and re-allocating it to four other Southern Baptist entities -- \$60,000 to the Foreign Mission Board, \$50,000 to the Home Mission Board, \$50,000 to the Public Affairs Committee and \$40,000 to the Christian Life Commission.

During debate on whether to reconsider the budget, Adrian Rogers, a past SBC president from Memphis, Tenn., spoke in favor of reconsideration. "We have marched around this issue (funding of the BJC) so many times," he said, "the body now needs to speak."

But Frank Ingraham of Franklin, Tenn., who just rotated off the Executive Committee, urged messengers not to disrupt the convention's "very intricate budget process." To do so, he said, "would be to favor those who are the most winsome at the moment and not those programs the convention has set as priorities."

Messengers rejected the budget reconsideration on a 6,034-5,198 vote.

The other ballot vote came in connection with a recommendation to refer a number of motions to the Executive Committee.

Pat Pearce of North Carolina introduced an amendment to separate his motion on the scheduling of the convention's president's address from the other motions that were to be referred. His amendment was defeated 5,247-5,206.

Messengers agreed to postpone a motion introduced by Joe Arthur of Fort Worth, Texas, to remove Curtis W. Caine of Jackson, Miss., from service on the Christian Life Commission.

The Committee on Order of Business said this delay would allow time for an investigation of the legal ramifications of removing a CLC commissioner, as well as providing Caine a time for response.

Statements reportedly made by Caine during the CLC's annual meeting last September set off a flurry of controversy.

Caine reportedly called Martin Luther King Jr. a "fraud" and said "apartheid in South Africa ... doesn't exist anymore and was beneficial when it did." He also is reported to have made controversial statements about the issues of hunger and peace.

Messengers approved a motion related to future changes in SBC agency program and purpose statements. The motion, introduced by Jim Lemons of Dallas, calls for printing both the original and the revised forms of the statements in the SBC Book of Reports and/or the daily SBC Bulletin.

Among motions referred to the Executive Committee was one on a "memorial" from the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Neal T. Jones, past BGAV president from Falls Church, Va., asked messengers to receive and respond to the formal statement of concerns about the "present crisis in Southern Baptist life" that was approved by Virginia Baptists during their annual state meeting last November.

It lists for discussion questions related to communication, trustee and committee representation, resolutions and public pronouncements, and distribution of the SBC Cooperative Program unified budget.

A motion by Rudy C. Yakym Jr., a Christian Life Commission commissioner from Mishawaka, Ind., to consider expanding the program statement of his agency rather than establish a Religious Liberty Commission was referred to the Executive Committee.

Yakym moved that the Executive Committee study the "feasibility and advisability of foregoing its recommendation to establish a Religious Liberty Commission and instead expand the program statement and budget of the Christian Life Commission to include the proposed duties of the Religious Liberty Commission."

The motion also calls for the Executive Committee to report its findings to the 1990 SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

The Executive Committee also will review motions on resolutions during SBC annual meetings, establishment of a committee on the Baptist Faith and Message and evaluation of church representation at future conventions.

All motions that would require changes in SBC bylaws -- including calls to amend rules for the Committee on Nominations, to alter the election and service of convention officers and to change the schedule of business at annual meetings -- were referred to the Executive Committee.

Also referred to that body were all motions that would affect future convention arrangements, such as meeting dates and locations.

Motions concerning specific SBC agencies and institutions were referred to those entities.

Ruled out of order were motions to reconsider a 1988 SBC resolution on the priesthood of the believer; to censure the Executive Committee for an action it took in opposition to a television broadcast produced by commentator Bill Moyers; to ask messengers to refrain from "frivolous applause" during the annual meeting; to give instructions to the Committee on Order of Business; and to prohibit saving seats on the convention floor.